

# Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

**Friday 23 December 2011**

**Volume 70, No WA3**



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

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

# Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 23 December 2011

## Written Answers to Questions

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

#### Ministerial Drivers

**Mr Hussey** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) when their Ministerial Drivers first took up employment as drivers for Executive Ministers; (ii) the total amount of expenses and other related payments claimed by their drivers since May 2011; and (iii) whether their drivers were civil service appointments or political party appointments.

**(AQW 2408/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister):** Drivers for the First Minister and deputy First Minister are not employed by OFMDFM and the information which you request is therefore not held by our Department.

#### Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration

**Mr Nesbitt** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the total cost of (i) the consultation process on the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration; (ii) the independent facilitators of the public and sectoral events that formed part of the public consultation on the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration; and (iii) the Consultation Analysis Report by Wallace Consulting.

**(AQW 3677/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** The consultation on the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration attracted 288 written responses and included the wealth of views and material gathered from 11 public meetings and 15 targeted sectoral meetings in addition to information collected through an omnibus survey. The consultation responses are now available on the OFMDFM website along with the independent analysis report and the departmental response to the issues raised.

(<http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality/community-relations/csi-consultation.htm>)

The total cost of the consultation process on the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration was £93,185.70. The table below provides a breakdown of costs associated with the delivery of the consultation exercise.

#### COSTS FOR DELIVERY OF CSI CONSULTATION EXERCISE – 2010

	<b>Total Costs £</b>
Independent Facilitators	22,945.40
Independent Analysis	18,052.50
Public Survey	13,460.00
Design Costs	2,508.37

	<b>Total Costs £</b>
Printing	14,913.96
Postage	1,181.18
Newspaper Costs	7,963.37
Public Meetings	4,536.23
Sectoral Meetings	6,669.58
Translation Costs	955.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>93,185.70</b>

### Departmental Staff

**Mr Allister** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the total amount of the salaries paid to departmental staff in OFMDFM in the last 12 months.

**(AQW 3998/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister incurred a cost of £16,089,519 for the year ended 30 September 2011 in respect of salaries and related salary costs. Related salary costs include employer's National Insurance contributions and employer's pension contributions.

### Departmental Hospitality

**Mr Allister** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the persons or bodies to whom their Department has provided hospitality; and (ii) the cost of providing this hospitality in each of the last 12 months.

**(AQW 3999/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister provides hospitality within the Department and also to persons and bodies external to the Department when attending meetings, events or training provided by the Department.

The following table sets out the costs incurred by the Department in respect of hospitality during the twelve months ended 30 September 2011.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Cost (£)</b>
October 2010	12,606
November 2010	15,919
December 2010	5,300
January 2011	3,467
February 2011	9,510
March 2011	10,237
April 2011	12,316
May 2011	12,646
June 2011	14,862
July 2011	6,035

Month	Cost (£)
August 2011	10,789
September 2011	16,412
<b>Total</b>	<b>130,099</b>

A breakdown is not held centrally on the financial accounting system of whom hospitality has been provided for.

### **The Act of Settlement (1700)**

**Mr Allister** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) their position on the proposed changes to the Act of Settlement (1700); and (ii) what contact they have had with Her Majesty's Government in relation to this issue.

**(AQW 4632/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** This is not a Devolved Matter.

### **Capital Small Grants Schemes**

**Mr Weir** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what capital small grants schemes are available from their Department, or its arm's-length bodies, for a group to create a garden, at a residential home, for the benefit of people with disabilities.

**(AQW 4828/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** The question relates to a very specific issue which falls outside OFMDFM's responsibility and we do not currently have a small capital grants scheme to offer.

You may be interested to learn however that OFMDFM has provided support to Groundwork NI, an organisation which delivers practical community-led regeneration projects, in deprived areas, by working in partnership with local communities, key funding bodies, statutory authorities and other agencies. The organisation's work is guided by its purpose of "Changing Places, Changing Lives, Changing Minds."

Groundwork NI has received funding under Peace III, Theme 1.1 Regional, for a project entitled 'Reconciling Communities through Regeneration'. The OFMDFM contribution to this project is some £247k (based on a 25% OFMDFM matching contribution of the overall cost of £988,307.00). The project commenced on 1st September 2008 and is due to finish on 31st December 2011.

### **UK City of Culture 2013**

**Mr Campbell** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps are being taken to ensure that events that are being organised under the auspices of the UK City of Culture 2013 in the Londonderry area are broadly based and inclusive.

**(AQW 4865/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** Responsibility for the programme of events rests with the Culture Company 2013. We are informed that the Culture Company 2013 has made wide and significant efforts to engage the entire community in the project, including community, business and political engagement.

### **UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

**Mr Lyttle** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) recommendations to the UK that it (i) take immediate action to ensure a single equality law and Bill of Rights are adopted in Northern Ireland or that the Equality Act 2010 is extended to Northern Ireland; (ii) examine whether the legislative and policy framework for dealing with the situation in Northern Ireland could not benefit by being

underpinned by the standards, duties and actions prescribed by the ICERD and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on inter-sectionality between ethnic origin, religion, and other forms of discrimination; and (iii) inform the Committee in its next report of the results of its examination of the advisability of adopting such an approach towards the fight against sectarianism and racism, while also reporting directly on measures to address racial discrimination experienced by vulnerable ethnic minority groups in Northern Ireland.

**(AQW 5101/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:**

- (i) We are currently considering the options for legislative reform and no decision has been taken on a single Equality Bill. We continue to keep the broad spectrum of equality legislation under review and are committed to the principle of equality for all people. Our officials continue to assess and keep us informed of developments elsewhere in relation to proposals for equality legislation.

We need to ensure that residents here enjoy the same protections as others across the European Union and beyond. We will, therefore, consider fully the comments made by the Committee in deciding the future shape of equality legislation here.

The NIO has been considering proposals from the NI Human Rights Commission on a Bill of Rights as this is not a devolved matter. The UK Government published consultation responses on a Bill of Rights in December 2010. There is currently no political consensus here on the nature of any possible Bill of Rights.

As part of a separate process, Kenneth Clarke, the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, has set up a commission to investigate the creation of a UK Bill of Rights. We will examine any proposals that would affect the rights of people here and we will be nominating representatives to the advisory group to the Commission.

- (ii) We do not dispute that sectarianism and racism are directly related and our representative made this clear to the UN Committee at its hearing on the UK. It is important to state that we cannot hope to tackle racism without tackling sectarianism, and vice versa. Both racism and sectarianism have their origins in unacceptable attitudes, and find their outlets in unacceptable behaviours.

We have, of course, very robust and well-developed legislation and policy to address sectarianism, racism and other forms of discrimination and we will be very happy to report on these measures to the Committee at the next reporting round.

However, we are clear that there is still a need to distinguish and single out the issues that relate specifically to the conflict that took place and to address its specific manifestations.

We believe that this is a more effective way of addressing the problems than by conflating all issues relating to race and religion, where we might miss the causes, effects and solutions required by the particular circumstances in which the sectarianism or racism takes place.

- (iii) We will be very happy to report back to the CERD Committee on the results of the examination mentioned under paragraph (ii) at the next reporting round.

**Pledge to Halve Child Poverty**

**Mr Allister** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what was the outcome of the pledge, in the last Programme for Government, to halve child poverty by 2010.

**(AQW 5117/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** A Monitoring Framework for Lifetime Opportunities, the broad architecture and principles of which the previous Executive adopted as its anti poverty and social inclusion strategy, was published on the 14th October 2010.

Detailed within the Monitoring Framework was an assessment of progress against the Programme for Government commitment to reduce child poverty by half by 2010/11.

We monitor child poverty using three methods – relative, absolute and mixed. The assessment contained within the Monitoring Framework was that, whilst child relative income poverty rates had



fallen in comparison to the 1998/99 baseline, on the basis of current trends, it is unlikely that the rate of child relative income poverty would be halved by 2010/11. It should be noted that relative poverty here is measured against the UK median income. However, absolute child poverty decreased from a baseline of 29% in 1998/99 to 12% in 2006/07. Due to the global recession and other associated factors, this has subsequently risen again, although not to the 1998/99 level. The most up to date levels of child poverty have recently been published by DSD.

Regarding the development of the Child Poverty Strategy Action Plan, we refer you to the response issued to AQW 4782/11-15.

The Child Poverty Act 2010 requires us to lay annual reports before the Assembly. We will publish our first Annual Report in March 2012, and this will set out the progress we have made towards eradicating child poverty by 2020.

## **2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations**

**Mr Lyttle** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what activities their Department is planning for the 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, and to outline what this year could achieve for Northern Ireland.

**(AQW 5158/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** Next year, 2012 has been designated as the European Year (EY) of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations by the European Commission. The main objectives of EY 2012 are to give tomorrow's older adults the opportunity to:

- stay in the workforce and share their experience;
- keep playing an active role in society; and
- live as healthy and fulfilling lives as possible.

The European Year is also key to maintaining solidarity between generations particularly in societies with rapidly increasing numbers of older people.

The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister will work with colleagues in other departments, the new Commissioner for Older People, the Commissioner for Children and Young People and partners in the voluntary and community sector, to develop a programme of events aimed at promoting the objectives of EY 2012 in a range of areas including employment, health care, social services, adult learning, volunteering, housing and transport.

When developed, the programme of events will also include intergenerational projects and will build on earlier work, such as the Intergenerational Showcase Event which was organised by the Older People's Advocate and the Children's Commissioner.

The Showcase Event highlighted the positive impacts on communities of younger and older people working together to share experiences, skills and knowledge. The projects showcased included local community involvement in making neighbourhoods safer and cleaner, training primary school children as facilitators to offer computer training to older people and a sharing experience project between the Kinghan Church and children from the school for children with visual and auditory impairment at Jordanstown.

The European Year will benefit older people by

- promoting independent living by providing suitable housing and accessible transport; and
- promoting healthy ageing

## **Departmental Information Office**

**Mr Allister** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the current (i) number; and (ii) annual cost of staff employed in their Department's Information Service.

**(AQW 5288/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** The Department's Information Service provides a range of communication services within OFMDFM and a planning, co-ordination and corporate support role across all NI Executive departments. There are three business areas within the Department's information service, the details of which are laid out below.

OFMDFM Ministerial Press Office and Corporate Support

Within the press office there are currently four staff working directly to the four OFMDFM Ministers.

There are four staff who work on publications, the web and social media.

The Director and Deputy Director, supported by a Personal Secretary provide a strategic communications role across the twelve NI Executive departments.

There are six staff who work in a corporate support role providing a range of services which include the central management of cross department contracts and the management of a professional development programme for EIS staff.

The total cost for these staff in 2010/11 was £788,217.

### **Government Advertising Unit**

There are currently fourteen staff employed in the Government Advertising Unit. The unit is a shared service centre, funded and governed by the twelve NI Executive departments and the full cost is not directly borne by OFMDFM. It was established to apply specialist expertise to the management of government advertising to improve value for money and effectiveness in communicating with the public. The unit delivered estimated savings of more than £1 million gross to the public sector during 2010/11.

### **NI Direct**

There are currently seven staff employed in the Central Editorial Team of NIDirect. The team is responsible for the development and maintenance of the NIDirect website. All citizen information from the NI Executive departments' websites is now maintained by NIDirect. The team is not directly funded by OFMDFM but is funded through DFP's NI Direct programme. The site went live in April 2009 and to date has delivered 7.7 million visits and 23 million page impressions.

### **Community Relations Council: Funding Arrangements**

**Mr Allister** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, given that the Community Relations Council contracts with victims groups are due to expire on 31 March 2012, when the groups can expect information on the funding arrangements which will apply thereafter.

**(AQW 5349/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** It is intended that an announcement regarding the funding of the Victims and Survivors groups for the 2012-13 financial year will be made in the very near future once the necessary approvals have been confirmed. It is also intended that the application process and assessment will be completed in time to ensure funding from 1 April 2012 and that there is no gap in provision to groups whose applications are successful.

### **2008-2011 Programme for Government**

**Mr McCallister** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they expect the Executive to sign off the final Delivery Report for the 2008-2011 Programme for Government.

**(AQW 5964/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** The Executive noted and agreed the end year Delivery Report for the Programme for Government 2008-11 on 8 December 2011. We intend to make a Written Ministerial Statement on this matter shortly, following which a copy of the report will be placed in the Assembly Library.

## Community Relations Council

**Mr Allister** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 4175/11-15, to reconcile the answer provided with the response to AQW 4233/11-15.

**(AQW 5977/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** Both answers are accurate. There is no disparity to reconcile.

## Draft Programme for Government

**Mr Lyttle** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans they have to measure well-being, given the aim stated in the draft Programme for Government to improve well-being, and in light of the Office for National Statistics report measuring well-being in Great Britain.

**(AQW 6064/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** It is intended that the new Programme for Government will be supported by strategic indicators which will measure progress against priorities. It is further intended to make use of existing research on well-being and to supplement this with work being developed on subjective well-being.

# Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

## Hydraulic Fracturing

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she intends to ban hydraulic fracturing from taking place on all Government owned forestry land.

**(AQW 5383/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development):** I am aware of the concerns raised about the issue of hydraulic fracturing. While I have strong reservations about this process my Department has no role in regulating the process of gas exploration or extraction other than as a statutory consultee and we will consider any request to access forestry land according to the implications of access for the delivery of forest policy and concerns about the process of hydraulic fracturing.

## sentinel cod fishery in the Irish Sea for 2012

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what progress has been made by her Department and the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute in developing a sentinel cod fishery in the Irish Sea for 2012; what further consultation she is planning with the industry on this matter; and when she expects that her Department will be in a position to submit a firm proposal to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the European Commission on this issue.

**(AQW 5401/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Irish Sea cod will be subject to ICES benchmark assessments in February 2012. An important aspect of this process is the evaluation of data sources that are currently not included in the assessment, such as recent discard data, the Irish Sea egg production surveys and the UK Fisheries Science Partnership (FSP) surveys.

AFBI and DEFRA's scientific advisors CEFAS (Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science) agree that the already poor data situation will deteriorate further and they intend to use the ICES benchmark process to highlight the problems and suggest a way forward.

The approach could include suggestions of further work to quantify possible sources of mortality, but also an evaluation of all available sources of information to identify the most informative for the monitoring and management of the stock. The north of Ireland industry drafted some proposals for a sentinel fishery and highlighted renewed concerns about the difference in opinion on cod abundance and stock status between the industry and the scientific assessment.

Any proposal for a sentinel fishery needs to have very clear scientific objectives that will determine the overall scope of the fishery. The exact format and extent of a sentinel or “scientific” fishery is very difficult to assess prior to the completion of the ICES benchmark process. My Department will keep fishing industry representatives informed about any developments.

### **Fishing Vessel Decommissioning**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she will make an announcement about a fishing vessel decommissioning scheme.

**(AQW 5402/11-15)**

**Mrs O’Neill:** My Department has completed a Business case for restructuring the fleet which has been examined by DARD economists. The next step is to submit this to DFP for approval. I will be in a position to make an announcement when DFP views are known.

### **Hydraulic Fracturing on Forestry Land**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department would support hydraulic fracturing taking place on forestry land.

**(AQW 5435/11-15)**

**Mrs O’Neill:** I am aware of the concerns raised about the issue of hydraulic fracturing. While I have strong reservations about this process my Department has no role in regulating the process of gas exploration or extraction other than as a statutory consultee and we will consider any request to access forestry land according to the implications of access for the delivery of forest policy and concerns about the process of hydraulic fracturing

### **Management of In-Shore Fisheries**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her Department’s plans to develop the management of in-shore fisheries, particularly relating to brown crab; and to provide a timetable for when the industry can expect management of these fisheries to be progressed.

**(AQW 5458/11-15)**

**Mrs O’Neill:** We have commissioned the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute to develop a draft Inshore Fisheries Strategy for consultation by March 2012. A draft strategy will be presented to the project steering group in January 2012 and this will include consideration of the outputs from the brown crab project. It is likely to be autumn 2012 before results from consultation are considered and decisions taken on management priorities. Regular updates from the project including minutes of the steering group meetings can be viewed on a dedicated section of the AFBI website.

### **Single Farm Payments**

**Mr Lynch** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why Single Farm Payments cannot be paid in installments throughout the year instead of in one lump payment, as is the case in other European Union member states; and whether she would consider allowing part payment if only a small issue was holding up an application for a Single Farm payment.

**(AQW 5467/11-15)**

**Mrs O’Neill:** Under current Commission Regulations for the Single Farm Payment (SFP) Scheme there are two ways in which SFP may be made in two parts rather than a single payment.

The first, allows advance payments of 50% to be made between 16 October and 30 November of the scheme year concerned, with the balance paid on or after 1 December.

The second, allows an initial payment to be made at any time during the payment window (1 December to 30 June), with the balance following later within the same period.

It is important to note that both scenarios require that all necessary controls (including all on-the-spot inspections) must be carried out before an advance or part payment can be made. It is not within the scope of the EU Regulations to allow an advance or part payment of SFP either where all controls have not been completed or in cases where a particular issue is holding up the application.

Within the north of Ireland, as with other paying agencies, the timing of the completion of all required controls has ruled out the use of the advance payment facility for SFP 2011. However, options are being explored to change this in future. This will depend on making changes to our payment and inspection processes and systems.

There would be no point in making part payments after 1 December because once all the required controls have been completed on a claim, DARD would be in a position to make the full payment in any case.

On 28 November, I announced that my Department would begin to pay out 2011 Single Farm Payments in December with the aim of paying 83% of claims in December and a total of 90% by the end of January. The December payments will be worth in the region of £200 million and will provide important support to farm incomes.

### **Facilities in Davagh and Drumcairne Forests**

**Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans she has to promote the facilities in Davagh and Drumcairne Forests, to mountain bikers and other users.

**(AQW 5581/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I am aware that Davagh and Drumcairne forests already deliver significant recreational and social benefits and that the potential exists for further development particularly through working with other recreational and tourism providers.

This is in line with my wish to see forests used more widely for safe and responsible enjoyment and the forest recreation strategy acknowledges that we will have to work with partners to realise the full potential of forests to deliver against wider objectives such as health, tourism, education and sport.

My officials in Forest Service have been working closely with Cookstown District Council in finalising proposals for an enhanced recreation product in Davagh forest which would include the development of a 19km mountain bike trails project. This project is the result of Cookstown District Council seeing the potential to promote Davagh as a key recreation and tourism attraction in the Council area.

A walking trail has also been developed at Drumcairne forest as a result of close co-operation between Cookstown District Council and a local community group 'Friends of Drumcairne'.

In promoting the further development of recreation and tourism benefits, my officials in Forest Service wish to continue their work with local authorities and other recreational providers to ensure that opportunities area realised, where they can be incorporated within broader forest management plans and objectives.

### **Relocating Headquarters**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what provision will be made for staff in her Department who are currently working in Belfast and are unwilling or unable to relocate when the Department moves its headquarters to a more rural location.

**(AQW 5732/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** As yet no decisions have been taken on where the new DARD headquarters is to be sited. However when that decision is taken, the Department will develop a strategy that will allow, where possible, the wishes of individual staff regarding work location to be taken account of.

One of the main aspects of this strategy will be transfers across the NICS that will allow current DARD staff who do not wish to relocate to be replaced by other NICS staff currently located in the Belfast area who do wish to avail of the opportunity to relocate. This strategy will be informed by existing NICS policies on, for example, such factors as interdepartmental transfers, payment of excess fares and other allowances

and also the contractual rights of staff in respect of mobility. The Department will ensure that this strategy also seeks to give priority to staff with specific needs such as disability or caring responsibilities. The detail of such a policy can only be determined after the new location is known.

Although the Department, working in conjunction with the wider NICS, will endeavour to ensure that as many staff as possible are in their preferred location post relocation, the strategy must also be mindful of factors such as business continuity and for that reason it may not be possible to meet the needs of every individual. The Department will, however, continue to consult and communicate with staff and their trade unions to ensure that every possible avenue is explored to ensure that as many staff as possible are working in their preferred location in the future.

### **Agri-Food and Bio-sciences Institute Operation in Loughgall**

**Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she can confirm her Department's commitment to the Agri-Food and Bio-sciences Institute operation in Loughgall; and if she will detail the long term plans for the facility.

**(AQW 5764/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** AFBI exists primarily to provide DARD with statutory, analytical and diagnostic scientific services, scientific research and advice and a scientific emergency response capability. It also serves the agri-food industry and wider community in a local, national and international context by delivering high quality scientific services.

AFBI is located in seven specialised, DARD-owned sites across the north of Ireland. My Department is currently developing a strategic outline business case (SOC) looking at the long term investment requirements for the AFBI occupied estate. This will aim to set out a high level roadmap towards an AFBI occupied estate that is right-sized and fit for purpose, enabling AFBI to meet its business objectives in an efficient and effective manner. A re-developed estate will secure AFBI's capacity to deliver DARD'S scientific requirements and be in keeping with the overall strategic direction of AFBI. The future of the Loughgall site will be considered within the overall context of this SOC.

### **Extraction of Shale Gas from Forestry Land**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the actions that her Department would take before allowing a company to extract shale gas from forestry land.

**(AQW 5768/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I am aware of the concerns raised about the issue of hydraulic fracturing. While I have strong reservations about this process my Department has no role in regulating the process of gas exploration or extraction other than as a statutory consultee and we will consider any request to access forestry land according to the implications of access for the delivery of forest policy and concerns about the process of hydraulic fracturing.

Prior to allowing a company to extract shale gas from forestry land, my Department would seek confirmation that all statutory and regulatory permissions had been granted from the appropriate authorities.

### **Extraction of Shale Gas from Forestry Land**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether the extraction of shale gas from forestry land would require Ministerial approval.

**(AQW 5769/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I am aware of the concerns raised about the issue of hydraulic fracturing. While I have strong reservations about this process my Department has no role in regulating the process of gas exploration or extraction other than as a statutory consultee. Forest Service will consider any request to access forestry land according to the implications of access for the delivery of forest policy and concerns about the process of hydraulic fracturing. I have asked my officials in Forest Service to keep me briefed on developments.



## Hydraulic Fracturing

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how a ban by her Department on hydraulic fracturing on forestry land could be introduced.

**(AQW 5770/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I am aware of the concerns raised about the issue of hydraulic fracturing. While I have strong reservations about this process my Department has no role in regulating the process of gas exploration or extraction other than as a statutory consultee.

At this stage I am both personally and politically concerned about the process of hydraulic fracturing and its potential impact on environment on the island of Ireland.

## Illegal Gorse Fires

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department is working with the PSNI and the Department of Justice to ensure that individuals responsible for, or involved with, the starting of illegal gorse fires are being pursued.

**(AQW 5818/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Gorse fires that caused damage to my Department's forests have been reported to the PSNI. The PSNI and Department of Justice are responsible for taking forward any investigation and my officials in Forest Service will assist with any enquiries.

Any investigation into the causes of gorse fires on private land is a matter for the landowner, NI Fire and Rescue Service and PSNI.

## Assisted Rural Transport Scheme

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what is the total cost of the Assisted Rural Transport Scheme in each of the last three years, broken down by constituency or council area.

**(AQW 5850/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** DARD, in conjunction with the Department of Regional Development (DRD), introduced the pilot Assisted Rural Travel Scheme (ARTS) on the 01 December 2009. DRD contribute to the scheme by paying for the administrative and operational costs associated with ARTS and their Dial-A-Lift scheme. DARD funding covers the total cost of the ARTS subsidised fares and the area based information available is set out in the table below:

### DARD FUNDING FOR ASSISTED RURAL TRAVEL SCHEME 09/10 AND 10/11

Rural Community Transport Partnership	Council Catchment Areas	Dec 2009 To March 2010	April 2010 To March 2011
ART	Armagh City and District Council Area;	£2,377.00	£15,913.00
DART	Banbridge District Council Area; Craigavon Borough Council Area;	£1,321.50	£10,385.50
NMCT	Newry and Mourne District Council Area;	£905.00	£15,407.09
CRCT	Cookstown District Council Area;	£3,269.50	£17,615.50
DDCT	Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council Area;	£1,609.00	£17,276.00
OACT	Magherafelt District Council Area;	£3,899.45	£17,295.00

<b>Rural Community Transport Partnership</b>	<b>Council Catchment Areas</b>	<b>Dec 2009 To March 2010</b>	<b>April 2010 To March 2011</b>
DDAT	Down District Council Area; Ards Borough Council Area; North Down Borough Council Area;	£7,449.20	£38,499.85
EASILINK	Strabane District Council Area; Derry City Council Area	£6,369.30	£35,029.95
	Omagh District Council Area;	£3,645.30	£15,623.70
NCCT	Limavady Borough Council Area	£3,021.83	£18,930.34
	Coleraine Borough Council Area; Ballymoney Borough Council Area;	£625.00	£6,869.00
	Moyle District Council Area; Ballymena Borough Council Area;	£1,279.00	£15,137.75
FAST	Fermanagh District Council Area;	£3,008.50	£20,802.00
RURAL LIFT	Fermanagh District Council Area	£5,510.75	£25,536.20
LVRT	Lisburn District Council Area; Castlereagh District Council Area;	£672.80	£10,449.80
SACT	Larne City Council Area; Carrickfergus Borough Council Area; Antrim Borough Council Area; Newtownabbey Borough Council Area	£2,876.50	£17,487.75
<b>Totals</b>		<b>£47,839.63</b>	<b>£298,258.43</b>

### Payments in Relation to Flood Damage

**Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail all the payments made in (i) 2007; (ii) 2008; (iii) 2009; (iv) 2010; and (v) 2011 to date, in relation to flood damage.

**(AQW 5927/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Payments were made in relation to flood damage as follows:

- (i) 2007 - Nil;
- (ii) 2008 - Nil;
- (iii) 2009 - £500,000 for 'flooding hardship in agriculture';
- (iv) 2010 - Nil; and
- (v) 2011 - Nil.

### Gas Exploration or Extraction

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether any drilling has taken place on forestry land for the purposes of gas exploration or extraction in the last five years; and if so, to detail the location, size, depth, number of holes, and projected long term impact on the land.

**(AQW 6053/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** No drilling has taken place on forestry land for the purposes of gas exploration or extraction in the last five years.



## Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

### Culture, Arts and Leisure Provision in Rural Areas

**Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how she plans to ensure that rural areas receive sufficient support from her Department; and for her assessment of culture, arts and leisure provision in rural areas.

**(AQW 5471/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure seeks to enable a broad and diverse range of the NI population, including the rural population, to participate in culture, arts and leisure activities.

I recently met Michael Hughes, Chief Executive Officer, Rural Community Network to discuss the aspects of DCAL's work that impact on rural communities.

Provision has been made across the Department's activities to ensure rural areas are included. For example:

- We will work to further disseminate and develop the Líofo Initiative in rural areas by organising 3 localised Líofo launches outside of Belfast and Derry and facilitate rural learning where local classes might be unavailable by ensuring that online Irish language courses are signposted on the DCAL website.
- The strategy for sport, "Sport Matters" includes provision for sport in rural areas and amongst rural dwellers
- DCAL maintains, develops and promotes a public angling estate across NI
- Fisheries conservation work covers all of NI and is delivered from Bushmills, Movanager near Kilrea, Castlewellan, and Riversdale near Enniskillen
- Libraries NI has a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive library service, including rural areas. This is currently discharged through the provision of 34 branches in small rural settlements (of less than 4,500 people), around 30 mobile libraries and an on-line library service on [librariesni.org.uk](http://librariesni.org.uk).
- Departmental Officials and the Arts Council recently met the Rural Community Network to raise awareness of funding streams, including the Creative Industries Innovation Fund.
- The Arts Council have regular contact with the Rural Enablers. They have addressed meetings to update them on available programmes.
- DCAL owns/leases 22 water recreation sites in rural locations which provide a variety of paths for walking, cycling and picnicking beside lakes, rivers and canals.

### Moyle

**Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding her Department has provided to the Moyle area in the last five years; and for her assessment of the current level of culture, arts and leisure provision in that area.

**(AQW 5473/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Table 1 attached, details the funding provided by my Department in the Moyle area in the last five years.

Funding is not allocated by my Department on the basis of District Council area and I am therefore unable to make the assessment you have asked for.

**TABLE 1**

<b>Project</b>	<b>2006/07 £</b>	<b>2007/08 £</b>	<b>2008/09 £</b>	<b>2009/10 £</b>	<b>2010/11 £</b>
Community Festivals Fund (match funded by Moyle District Council)			4,400	4,400	4,600
Habitat works in upper River Bush (Moyle section)				2,500	2,500
Habitat works in Margy/ Glenshesk and Tow rivers		2,000			
Replacement signs and fixtures along Moyle section of River Bush			2,000		2,000
Habitat works on Well Water near Armoy			3,000		
Habitat works on Mosside Water and Doughery Water				2,000	
Bushmills Hatchery –associated running costs	47,000	50,000	64,000	32,000	54,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>47,000</b>	<b>52,000</b>	<b>73,400</b>	<b>40,900</b>	<b>63,100</b>

### **Purpose-Built Weed Cutting Machine for Loughbrickland Lake**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 4543/11-15, whether she will publish the business case for the weed cutting machine, information about which was provided to the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure by departmental officials on 29 September 2011.

**(AQW 5522/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I will have officials arrange to have a copy of the appropriate business case placed in the Assembly Library once the procurement process has been completed.

### **Inspection of Salmon Nets**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the process undertaken by departmental staff when carrying out an (i) announced inspection; and (ii) unannounced inspection of salmon nets which have been licensed by her Department.

**(AQW 5523/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The process undertaken by DCAL Fisheries Protection Officers when carrying out announced and unannounced inspections of licensed salmon nets is essentially the same. An inspection may comprise one or more of the following actions:

- (i) Inspection of nets for compliance with Fisheries legislation;
- (ii) Inspection of catch for compliance with tagging and logbook regulations;
- (iii) Monitoring of compliance with Fisheries legislation for closed weekends/seasons;
- (iv) Inspection of associated premises and vehicles.

Inspections may also include covert enforcement activities to monitor compliance with Fisheries legislation.

## **Ulster-Scots Academy**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the Ulster-Scots Academy.  
**(AQW 5526/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** An Ulster-Scots Academy Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) was appointed in March 2011 for a four year period. The key role of the Ministerial Advisory Group is to consider and recommend a holistic development and research strategy for the section.

The MAG is supporting discrete projects that will support an Academy approach using an interim development plan which was approved by the Department.

The Interim development plan identified three main programme strands Education; History, Heritage and Culture; and Language and Literature.

A draft development and research plan has been produced by the MAG and is being considered.

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

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 1903/11-15, how her Department monitors the licensed nets listed to ensure that they comply with the EU Habitats Directive.  
**(AQW 5606/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The Department has commissioned scientific research that will help to inform the assessment of the impact of these DCAL licensed nets on salmon populations returning to rivers that may be designated as Special Areas of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive.

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

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 1903/11-15, whether any of the licensed nets listed breach any EU or Northern Ireland regulations.  
**(AQW 5607/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The Department has no record of any prosecutions against the relevant licence holders under NI regulations.

EU environmental legislation such as the Habitats Directive or the Water Framework Directive, is not usually used to take action against individuals, but rather requires competent authorities not to permit activities that may have a negative impact on the environment.

## **Licensed Nets**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 1903/11-15, when her Department last approached the holders of the licensed nets listed to explore the option of buying out these licences; and what commercial value is placed upon each of these nets.  
**(AQW 5609/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** During a series of meetings with DCAL officials in 2008/09, the licence holders were advised that the Department was offering them the option of a buy out with similar terms to the scheme which closed in 2004.

The value of each of the nets at that time is commercial in confidence and I am unable to release this information.

## The Public Angling Estate in County Fermanagh

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what work has taken place to improve the public angling estate in County Fermanagh in each of the last five years; and what work is planned over the next five years.

**(AQW 5645/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The Department has undertaken the following works and projects to improve the Public Angling Estate in Co Fermanagh in each of the last five years. Some of the works listed below are undertaken annually.

- Annual survey of approximately 90 semi-quantitative electro fishing sites to provide data trends informing salmonid management of the catchment.
- Annual acquisition of 1,000,000 selectively bred Erne trout fry and 1000,000 quasi-wild Erne salmon fry and parr.
- Annual planning, co-ordination and delivery of the effective stocking of the trout and salmon fry.
- Annual participation in the organisation and promotion of fishing competitions, which attract anglers from across Europe to Co Fermanagh.
- Annual maintenance and repairs to existing angling infrastructure.

### 2007

- DCAL staff designed and supervised an INTERREG funded project carried out by Erne and Melvin Enhancement Company during 2007/08, which accounted for 2 km of river enhancement on the River Dooragh and River Kesh. The Department also built a carpark and slipway at Lough MacNeen.

### 2008

- The Department improved access by creating a 500m pathway at Lough Keenaghan and undertook a river enhancement project of 1km on Castle Archdale (Hollow) river.
- In 2008 DCAL was the implementing body for administering and overseeing EU Peace II funding of Measure 1.2a of approximately £60K to enhance Lough Melvin tributaries. DCAL also supervised INTERREG funding carried out by Erne and Melvin Enhancement Company during 2007/08 which accounted for 2 km of river enhancement to River Dooragh and River Kesh.

### 2009

- The Department improved access by building a 700m pathway at Cathcart's Shore

### 2010

- The Department improved access by building a pathway and carpark at Mill Lough. Three disabled angling stands were constructed at Broad Meadow. The Department undertook 50 % of 1.5km of Tempo River enhancement project.
- The Department carried out an investigation into lacustrine stocking of Erne trout to suitable Lough shore habitat.

### 2011

- Improvement works included two angling stands at Mill Lough, one disabled stand with access path and an angling stand built at Boa Island bridges. The Department also carried out a river enhancement project on 1.5 km of the Ballinamallard River.
- DCAL also commenced a salmonid index in the Garvary River and construction of a fish counter weir.

Works planned for the next five years include completing and maintaining the works outlined above and where possible to develop and increase fish stocks. The Department proposes to source sections of Erne tributaries for enhancement.

The Department is currently considering incorporating into the Public Angling Estate the six still water coarse fisheries in Fermanagh previously funded by Peace II and maintained by Fermanagh District Council.

The delivery of future activities will be determined by available budgets and Departmental priorities.

### **Impact of Increasing Emigration**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail any survey that has taken place to identify the impact that increasing emigration, particularly by young people, is having on (i) clubanna GAA; (ii) rugby clubs; and (iii) soccer clubs.

**(AQW 5653/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Neither my Department nor Sport NI is aware of any survey that has taken place to identify the impact that increasing emigration, particularly by young people, is having on clubanna GAA, rugby clubs or soccer clubs. Responsibility for undertaking such a survey would rest, in the first instance, with the governing bodies of those sports. However, under the sports strategy, Sport Matters, DCAL has established a target for sport – including GAA, rugby and soccer – to increase by 2014 the number of people in the north in membership of at least one sports club. The Department has also recently approved an action plan to deliver this target which is being implemented with support and assistance from the GAA and the governing bodies of rugby and soccer in the north.

### **Fish Stock Levels**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail any work that has been carried out in the last ten years to quantify fish stock levels in (i) Lough Melvin; (ii) Lough MacNea; (iii) Lough Erne and its satellite lakes.

**(AQW 5655/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is responsible for fish monitoring under the Water Framework Directive and with Inland Fisheries Ireland in cross border catchments.

The Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) with DCAL assistance undertake various surveys to evaluate the sustainability of fish stock as part of North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) survey work.

- (i) Inland Fisheries Ireland has carried out surveys at Lough Melvin in 2002, 2005, 2008 and 2011. All data in relation to these surveys are retained by Inland Fisheries Ireland.
- (ii) Upper and Lower Lough Macnean were surveyed in 2002, 2006 and 2010. Eels were last surveyed in Lough Macnean under the Erne Eel Enhancement Programme 1998-2000.
- (iii) A multi-mesh netting survey to a standard design is carried out on Lower Lough Erne every three years with surveys having taken place in 2002, 2004, 2007 and 2010. The next survey is due in the summer of 2013. A separate acoustically targeted survey is carried each survey year (time and weather permitting) to confirm the continued presence of the relic population of pollan in Lower Lough Erne. Inland Fisheries Ireland undertook a fyke net survey in 2010 in Upper Lough Erne for eels.

### **Inland Waterways**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure on how many loughs, lakes or inland waterways, which are licensed for fishing, are boats (i) permitted for; and (ii) prohibited from, fishing.

**(AQW 5657/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** My Department is responsible for 63 game and coarse fisheries which form the Public Angling Estate. Details of which Public Angling Estate waters permit fishing from boats and those that prohibit fishing from boats can be found on the DCAL Angling Website [www.nidirect.gov.uk/angling](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/angling).

Restrictions on which Public Angling Estate waters permit or prohibit fishing from boats are defined in Regulation 8 of the Public Angling Estate Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

- 14 Public Angling Estate waters permit fishing from boats.
- 6 Public Angling Estate waters permit fishing from boats supplied by the Department.
- All other Public Angling Estate waters prohibit fishing from boats

My Department is not responsible for private fisheries and the owners of such fisheries are free to make their own decisions regarding allowing or prohibiting the use boats for fishing on their waters.

## Inland Waterways

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure on how many loughs, lakes or inland waterways, which are licensed for fishing, have boats been prohibited from fishing in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 5659/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The Department has prohibited fishing from boats in one Public Angling Estate water in the last five years.

## Inland Waterways

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the rationale behind the decision to prohibit fishermen using boats on many inland waterways, given that the use of boats is permitted in many neighbouring jurisdictions.

**(AQW 5662/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Restrictions on which Public Angling Estate waters permit or prohibit fishing from boats are defined in Regulation 8 of the Public Angling Estate Byelaws (Northern Ireland) 2005.

A number of Public Angling Estate waters are reservoirs owned by NI Water and the majority of those reservoirs are used for the public water supply. NI Water does not permit angling from boats due to strict European Legislation on water quality, with possible fines and infractions being taken out against the British government should pollution be caused by boats.

There are also issues regarding boats being transported between waters transferring invasive species such as zebra mussels. This can only be prevented by anglers thoroughly cleaning their boats after each use. The Department does not have the resources to ensure this preventative activity is carried out at the Public Angling Estate waters in question.

## Rugby World Cup in 2023

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment that the impact of Ireland potentially hosting the Rugby World Cup in 2023 would have on the number of people playing rugby.

**(AQW 5711/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Responsibility for assessing the impact that Ireland potentially hosting the Rugby World Cup in 2023 might have on the number of people playing rugby, rests, in the first instance, with the governing body of the sport, the Irish Rugby Football Union. However, under my sports strategy, Sport Matters, Government is committed to establishing the north of Ireland as a world class venue for sporting events. Securing a Rugby World Cup in Ireland, with games being staged in the north, would mark a significant demonstration of that commitment.

## Licensed Fishing Engines

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 1903/11-15, (i) what action her staff take in relation to witness tagging; (ii) how often they verify the number of fish in the catch; (iii) at what point is each catch monitored; (iv) at what point is each catch verified; (v) what mode of transport is used to inspect the nets; and (vi) how often her staff have used the net operator's boat to inspect the nets.

**(AQW 5735/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:**

- (i) Inspections and boat and shore patrols are carried out by DCAL Fisheries Protection Officers (FPO) on the coast to ensure compliance with the Fisheries (Tagging and Logbook) Byelaws (Northern Ireland) 2001 and other Fisheries legislation by salmon net licence holders. Where breaches of legislation are detected enforcement action will be taken against those in breach of the legislation.
- (ii) In 2011 DCAL FPO's carried out 11 inspections at the point of capture and 5 licence holder cold store inspections.
- (iii) Catches may be monitored at the point of capture and at licence holders premises such as their cold store.
- (iv) Each catch is not individually verified. Catch figures, broken down by time and date, are determined by annual returns submitted by licence holders to the Department.
- (v) A combination of boat and shore patrols are used to inspect the nets.
- (vi) A net operator's boat was used on two occasions in 2011.

## Illegal or Unlicensed Nets

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) how often her Department has patrolled coastal waters to investigate the use of illegal or unlicensed nets in the last three years; (ii) in how many instances were illegal or unlicensed nets found; and (iii) what action was taken against people found to be using illegal or unlicensed nets.

**(AQW 5736/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Data is available from 1 June 2009 when the Fisheries Conservancy Board was abolished and DCAL assumed responsibility for the enforcement of fisheries legislation. Data for 2011 is only for the first quarter as subsequent information has yet to be fully verified.

- (i) The following patrols of coastal waters were carried out by DCAL Fisheries Protection Officers:
  - 1 June 2009 - 31 March 2010
  - 108 Coastal shore patrols and 2 boat patrols
  - 1 April 2010 - 31 March 2011
  - 134 Coastal shore patrols and 50 boat patrols
  - 1 April 2011 - 30 June 2011
  - 25 Coastal shore patrols and 8 boat patrols
- (ii) How many instances were illegal or unlicensed nets found:
  - 1 June 09 - 31 March 2010 - 2
  - 1 April 2010 - 31 March 2011 - 5
  - 1 April 2011 - 30 June 2011 - 0
- (iii) Action taken against people found using illegal or unlicensed nets:
  - 1 June 2009 - 31 March 2010
  - 1 net -warning letter issued to 2 persons / 1 net unattended forfeiture order completed to dispose of net.



- 1 April 2010 - 31 March 2011
- 1 net - 1 warning letter issued / 4 nets unattended forfeiture order completed to dispose of nets.

## **Fish Counters**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) how many fish counters are currently operational; (ii) how often these counters are maintained; (iii) for her assessment of their operational efficiency and fitness for purpose; (iv) whether an independent assessment of their operational efficiency has been commissioned; and (v) whether any of these counters have been out of operation for a period of more than two weeks in the last three years.

**(AQW 5737/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:**

- (i) There are five fish counters and counting facilities currently operational on the River Bush, River Maine, Lower Bann, River Dun and Shimna River.
- (ii) Operational counters are visited once a week to download data and carry out maintenance during the period when wild Atlantic salmon are migrating upstream.
- (iii) I consider that the fish counting methodology employed is operationally effective and the fish counters are fit for purpose.
- (iv) The operation and maintenance of the counters is carried out by the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), which is independent of DCAL.
- (v) The Lower Bann counter is the only one of these counters which has been out of operation for a period of more than two weeks in the last three years.

## **Salmon and Inland Fisheries Forum**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the appointment process, within each sector represented on the Forum, for membership of the Salmon and Inland Fisheries Forum; and to detail the role that she, or her predecessor, had in making appointments to the Forum.

**(AQW 5739/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Consultation on the proposed make-up, role and administration of the new Stakeholder Forum issued on the 20th December 2007 and closed on the 11th April 2008. An Assessment Panel consisting of administrative, policy and technical personnel from DCAL Inland Waterways and Inland Fisheries Branch analysed and objectively assessed the relevance, practicality and quality of the comments received.

My predecessor agreed the outcomes of the Consultation on the 29th October 2008. The CAL Committee also considered the consultation and agreed its outcomes.

Membership of the Salmon and Inland Fisheries Forum is drawn from a number of nominating bodies and recruitment by way of public advertisement for those interests where no nominating body exists.

Nominating bodies were asked to propose members for the Forum, while those responding to any publicly advertised position were interviewed by DCAL officials.

## **Support for Emerging Artists**

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what support her Department provides for emerging artists.

**(AQW 5747/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The Arts Council of Northern Ireland provides a suite of support through its Support for the Individual Artist Programme (SIAP). They aim to award 30% of SIAP grants to new and emerging artists and are on target to achieve this aim for 2011/12. Details are provided on the attached annex.



## **Annex**

### **General Art Awards – Grants up to £1,500**

Awards can be for specific projects, specialised research, personal artistic development and certain materials/ equipment.

### **Self Arranged Residencies – Grants up to £5,000**

These awards enable individual artists wishing to work outside the north of Ireland to develop exchanges and take up self-arranged residencies.

### **Major Individual Awards – Grants of £15,000 (4 awards made in 2011/12)**

A limited number of awards each year intended to create the circumstances in which established artists with national/ international recognition may develop extended or ambitious work.

### **Travel Awards – Level of grant fixed by destination (from £200 to £800)**

These awards enable individual artists to travel from the north of Ireland to develop their skills and expertise. Applicants must provide evidence that they have been invited by a host organisation in the country to which they intend to travel.

### **Artists' Career Enhancement Scheme — Grants of £5,000 (13 awards made in 2011/12)**

These awards aim to deepen the developmental impact of Arts Council's support for artists, with a targeted package of training, mentoring and support provided for successful applicants. These awards aim to support career artists whose practice is of high quality, original, challenging and innovative. The awards are designed to support artists in their professional development, enabling successful applicants to raise their profile and significantly enhance their career.

### **The British School at Rome Fellowship (one award made every other year)**

This residency offers visual artists the opportunity to work in Rome for a period of 6 months between 2nd January and 27th June 2012 on a project of their choosing. Rather than experimenting on new techniques, scholars are encouraged to use their time to work on developing ideas for a new body of work or exploring themes that will advance their practice. The Fellow is encouraged to be self reliant and adaptable.

### **Young Musicians Platform – Biennial scheme - 3 grants of £5,000**

The Arts Council, in collaboration with BBC NI, offers awards for young, exceptionally talented solo musicians/singers or ensembles who have finished their first academic, graduate level qualification and are ready to enter the professional world as artists. The financial award associated with this scheme will allow applicants to spend a sizeable amount of time learning from a master musician/ teacher/composer etc. abroad. Priority will be given to applications where the associated period of learning is taking place outside of Great Britain and Ireland. The BBC will facilitate this scheme by offering two professional broadcast performances to successful applicants.

## **Funding for Track and Field Athletes**

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) what funding is available for track and field athletes; (ii) to outline the criteria to qualify for this funding; and (iii) how this compares to other regions in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

**(AQW 5749/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Sport NI is the lead development agency for sport in the north of Ireland with responsibility for the distribution of funding. Sport NI advises that it currently has no funding programmes open to applications for track and field athletes. Its Athlete Investment Programme, however, receives applications from the governing bodies of sports, including Athletics NI, in respect of their athletes. In

order to qualify for funding under this programme, athletes must meet certain minimum performance standards previously agreed with Athletics NI. Further details on the qualifying criteria that apply to different categories of athlete can be found on the Sport NI website at [www.sportni.net/NR/rdonlyres/ED2FA556-47A2-4527-802B-5FF408D64177/0/2012AthleticsStandards.pdf](http://www.sportni.net/NR/rdonlyres/ED2FA556-47A2-4527-802B-5FF408D64177/0/2012AthleticsStandards.pdf). Furthermore, athletes must also demonstrate their future potential to achieve international sporting success at Olympic, World, European or Commonwealth level. It should be noted that these standards indicate eligibility for application and do not automatically lead to investment. Sport NI advises that the availability of this funding is similar to England, Scotland, Wales and the south of Ireland.

## Department of Education

### Reductions in Revenue Expenditure

**Ms Ritchie** asked the Minister of Education what discussions were held with school principals regarding the fact that the reductions in revenue expenditure for the 2012/13 financial year would be greater than originally envisaged.

**(AQW 5167/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education):** The scale of the savings required in education has been clear since the Budget 2011-15 process concluded in March this year. My Department has produced and published a detailed, transparent Savings Delivery Plan to close the gap of nearly £300m by 2014/15. The intention, throughout, has been to protect frontline services as much as possible. Due to the scale of the Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB) it was impossible to protect it totally. I have however reviewed the budget allocations and two weeks ago I mitigated the impact on the Aggregated Schools Budget by putting £40million from my budget into it over the next three years. Otherwise the decrease next year in the ASB would have been more than 3% compared to the current year.

Normally schools get their budget information in January/February but I was keen to get as much information out to schools at the earliest possible date.

My Department issued on Friday 25 November a letter to all schools setting out in detail the future funding position they face. I am clear that, as Education Minister, I have a duty to inform schools as soon as possible of the budget planning information I have available to ensure they are fully informed when making important future decisions.

Clearly many schools will have difficult choices to make but this early notification of future budgets will allow them to make informed decisions and plan for the future.

### Unfilled School Places in the Foyle Constituency

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of unfilled school places in the Foyle constituency broken down by (i) school; and (ii) (a) primary; and (b) post-primary, in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 5335/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The number of unfilled school places in the Foyle constituency broken down by primary and post-primary school in each of the last five years is as detailed in the tables attached.

The number of vacant places in schools is derived from the difference between a school's approved enrolment number and the number of pupils enrolled at the school.

The figures exclude the enrolments of pupils in receipt of a statement of special educational needs and pupils admitted on appeal by the independent appeals tribunals or by direction of the independent Exceptional Circumstances Body as these are admitted over and above a school's approved enrolment number.

**UNFILLED PLACES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2006/07 TO 2010/11**

<b>School Name</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2006/07</b>
Ashlea Primary School	180	172	160	169	166
Ballougry Primary School	12	3	5	15	14
Broadbridge Primary School	0	0	0	0	0
Bunscoil Cholmcille	85	77	61	66	60
Chapel Road Primary School	85	86	87	118	132
Craigbrack Primary School	69	51	39	50	43
Culmore Primary School	6	5	1	1	11
Drumahoe Primary School	63	50	43	50	31
Ebrington Controlled Primary School	241	235	227	192	193
Eglinton Primary School	42	39	26	36	32
Fountain Primary School	71	73	77	77	59
Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir	22	24	17	11	30
Gaelscoil na Daroige <sup>1</sup>	37	17	N/A	N/A	N/A
Glendermott Primary School	74	70	51	57	66
Good Shepherd Primary School and Nursery School	30	36	13	25	17
Greenhaw Primary School	21	16	8	27	37
Groarty Primary School	23	31	32	30	25
Hollybush Primary School	17	21	5	30	31
Holy Child Primary School	190	195	181	175	173
Holy Family Primary School	281	278	242	278	258
Lisnagelvin Primary School	87	103	45	78	56
Londonderry Model Primary School	77	69	59	69	79
Longtower Primary School	385	374	350	341	325
Mullabuoy Primary School	132	134	134	141	141
Nazareth House Primary School	161	158	136	114	92
Newbuildings Primary School	204	187	184	162	144
Oakgrove Integrated Primary School	15	21	14	17	1
Rosemount Primary School	311	296	303	310	296
Sacred Heart Primary School	231	240	246	236	216
St Anne's Primary School	300	272	242	231	213
St Brigid's Primary School	198	186	314	298	294
St Columba's Primary School	127	120	125	119	110
St Eithne's Primary School	112	111	58	64	44

School Name	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
St Eugene's Primary School	105	92	95	83	273
St John's Primary School	193	186	148	150	156
St Oliver Plunkett Primary School	120	119	116	115	108
St Patricks Primary School	116	121	103	81	60
St Paul's Primary School Slievemore	395	386	377	380	375
St Therese Primary School	120	120	95	92	70
Steelstown Voluntary Maintained Primary School	288	267	237	217	181
<b>Total</b>	<b>5226</b>	<b>5041</b>	<b>4656</b>	<b>4705</b>	<b>4612</b>

**Source:** NI School Census and School Access Team Data Unfilled Places in Post Primary Schools 2006/07 to 2010/11

1. This school opened in September 2009.

School Name	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09	2007/08	2006/07
Foyle & Londonderry College	42	97	113	108	108
Immaculate Conception College	359	343	326	335	335
Lisneal College	132	107	87	56	86
Lumen Christi College	1	1	2	0	0
Oakgrove Integrated College	10	8	4	8	5
St Brigid's College	77	151	115	155	112
St Cecilia's College	0	0	0	0	0
St Columb's College	21	31	49	76	58
St Joseph's Boys' School	22	34	36	30	17
St Mary's College	0	5	0	18	3
St Peter's High School	415	389	349	320	269
Thornhill College	18	17	18	13	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1097</b>	<b>1183</b>	<b>1099</b>	<b>1119</b>	<b>999</b>

**Source:** NI School Census and School Access Team Data

### Road Accidents Involving Education and Library Board and Translink School Buses

**Mr Hamilton** asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of road accidents in each of the last five years involving (i) parked Education and Library Board school buses; and (ii) parked Translink school buses.

**(AQW 5477/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I have been informed by the Education and Library Boards that the number of road accidents involving parked Board and Translink school buses for the last five years is as follows:

Year	BELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	WELB	Translink
2006/07	0	0	0	0	1	0
2007/08	1	0	0	0	0	1
2008/09	0	0	0	1	2	2
2009/10	1	0	0	0	2	1
2010/11	3	0	0	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>

### Former Maghera High School Site

**Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the disposal of the former Maghera High School site.

**(AQW 5550/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Expressions of interest in the former Maghera High School were received from

Magherafelt Council (subsequently withdrawn 5 May 2010), the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. The Maghera High School site will not be disposed of until all options for future education use have been fully explored.

### Former Maghera High School Site

**Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Education for an update on all the expressions of interest from educational bodies in relation to the former Maghera High School site.

**(AQW 5551/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Expressions of interest in the former Maghera High School were received from Magherafelt Council (subsequently withdrawn 5 May 2010), the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

### Youth Service in the North Down Area

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Education how many hours of Youth Service, per week, are currently provided in the North Down area.

**(AQW 5565/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Youth provision in the North Down area is a matter for the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB). The SEELB has advised that there are 93 youth units registered with the Board in the North Down area providing services for approximately 544 hours per average week.

There may be other youth service provision operating in the area which is not registered with the Education and Library Board.

### Work Experience Provision for Students in Post-Primary Schools

**Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the current work experience provision for students in post-primary schools; and whether the current level of provision is sufficient to allow students to make an informed choice about their career-path.

**(AQW 5582/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I warmly welcome the support employers give to schools and pupils by offering work-related learning opportunities whether through work experience, work shadowing, work-based assignments, industrial visits, mock interviews, industry days, ambassador programmes and enterprise

activities. Good links between schools, employers and the community are important for all aspects of the curriculum including careers education, information and guidance provision.

Over 100,000 school age learners each year are now participating in employability and work-related learning programmes which aim to promote creativity and innovation; introduce young people to the world of business and entrepreneurship; and provide opportunities to stimulate new ideas and thinking. Apart from work experience placements these include careers conventions, competitions, exhibitions and celebrations of excellence and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) specific programmes.

My Department has provided additional funding specifically for the delivery of business education activities, including work experience opportunities to enable pupils to gain an insight into the world of work. Particularly at Key Stage 4 it is important for pupils to keep career options open.

Funding is provided to School Employer Connections and Charter Work Experience to facilitate delivery of work experience opportunities for post-primary pupils.

In the 2010/11 financial year, School Employer Connections and Charter Work Experience facilitated over 8,000 work experience opportunities. These opportunities can take the form of work experience placements, class study visits, work inspiration programmes and work open days.

### **New Build for Bangor Central Integrated Primary School**

**Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Education whether he plans to allocate funding for a new build for Bangor Central Integrated Primary School.

**(AQW 5623/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** As I set out in my Statement to the Assembly on Monday 26 September 2011, I have commissioned the five Education and Library Boards, working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and other sectors, to co-ordinate a strategic area planning process to shape the future pattern of education delivery.

Schools previously identified as needing a new build will be critically assessed alongside all other potential projects as part of the area planning process to determine how they will contribute to the overall infrastructure needed. I recognise that this school, along with others, is facing challenges in terms of accommodation. However until the area planning work is completed, I will not be in a position to comment on a possible new build for any school.

### **Former Maghera High School Site**

**Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Education whether any expressions of interest have been received in relation to the former Maghera High School site.

**(AQW 5624/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Expressions of interest in the former Maghera High School were received from Magherafelt Council (subsequently withdrawn 5 May 2010), the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

### **Payment of Invoices to Small Businesses**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the target time for the payment of invoices to small businesses by each Education and Library Board; (ii) whether he is aware of any delays in meeting these targets; and (iii) what action has been taken to ensure that delays do not occur.

**(AQW 5641/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Each Education and Library Board (ELB) is required to agree an annual Resource Allocation Plan (RAP) with the Department of Education. The Plan includes prompt payment targets that each Board is expected to achieve. The 2011-12 RAP target across all ELBS is to ensure by 31 March 2012 that 85% of all non-disputed invoices are paid within 30 days and 50% are paid within 10 working days.

As Minister for Education I am aware of delays in the ELBs meeting these targets. The following actions have been taken to improve performance in this area:

- Guidance has been issued to all of the Department's Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) to help improve performance.
- The ELBs have issued guidance to schools highlighting the priority of invoice authorisation and need to speed up the process of getting invoices quickly to their ELB for payment. They also investigate individual cases of late payment with the relevant school; and
- ELBs have provided training and workshops to re-iterate the importance of paying suppliers on time.

### Capital School Projects

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the 39 capital school projects that were completed; and (ii) the 52 capital school projects that were not completed in the last Programme for Government period, broken down by constituency.

**(AQW 5666/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Public Service Agreement (PSA 16), contained within the Programme for Government stated that the building projects would be advanced at over 100 schools over the period to 2011.

There were 108 major capital projects on my Departments Investment Delivery Plan (IDP). Of these 39 projects have been completed (see appendix A) and there are a further 17 projects where construction work is currently progressing on site (see appendix B). This represents capital investment in the schools estate of over £536m.

The balance of 52 projects is listed in Appendix C.

Going forward I have commissioned the ELB'S working in close conjunction with CCMS and the other sectors to coordinate a strategic area planning process to determine the future pattern of education delivery. Previously identified projects, including those projects not started under the previous Programme for Government, will be critically assessed alongside all other potential projects as part of the planning process.

### Appendix A

School Projects Completed	Parliamentary Constituency
Orangefield Primary School, Belfast	Belfast East
Glendhu Nursery School	Belfast East
Ravenscroft Nursery School	Belfast East
Ashfield Girls' High School, Belfast	Belfast East
Grosvenor Grammar School, Belfast	Belfast East
Our Lady & St Patrick's College, Knock	Belfast East
Belfast Boys' Model School	Belfast North
Belfast Model School for Girls	Belfast North
Whitehouse Primary School	Belfast North
De La Salle College, Belfast	Belfast West
St Dominic's High School, Belfast	Belfast West
Moorfields Primary School	North Antrim



<b>School Projects Completed</b>	<b>Parliamentary Constituency</b>
St Mary's Primary School, Portglenone	North Antrim
St Patrick's & St Brigid's PS. Ballycastle	North Antrim
Templepatrick Primary School	South Antrim
Ballinderry Primary School	Lagan Valley
Pond Park Primary School, Lisburn	Lagan Valley
Ballymacrickett Primary School	Lagan Valley
Brookefield Special School, Moira	Lagan Valley
Towerview Primary School, Bangor	North Down
Bangor Academy	North Down
St Patrick's Primary School, Saul	South Down
St Patrick's G.S. Downpatrick	South Down
Victoria Primary School, Newtownards	Strangford
St Joseph's Primary School, Carryduff	Strangford
Assumption G.S. Ballynahinch	Strangford
St Catherine's College, Armagh	Newry and Armagh
St Colman's College, Newry	Newry and Armagh
Abbey Grammar School, Newry	Newry and Armagh
St Peter's Primary School, Cloughreagh	Newry and Armagh
Waringstown Primary School	Upper Bann
Burnfoot/Dungiven/Largy Primary School	East Derry
Lisbellaw Primary School	Fermanagh and South Tyrone
Mount Lourdes Grammar School, Enniskillen	Fermanagh and South Tyrone
Lisnagelvin Primary School	Foyle
St Cecilia's College, Derry	Foyle
St Mary's College, Derry	Foyle
Holy Cross College, Strabane	West Tyrone
Drumragh Integrated College, Omagh	West Tyrone

### **Appendix B**

<b>School</b>	<b>Parliamentary Constituency</b>
Coranny & Cornagague Primary School	Fermanagh and South Tyrone
Taughmonagh Primary School Belfast	Belfast South
Strathearn Grammar School Belfast	Belfast East
Lagan College Belfast	Belfast East



<b>School</b>	<b>Parliamentary Constituency</b>
Scoil Na Fuisseoige Primary School	Belfast West
St Marys Primary School Newcastle	South Down
Carrick Primary School Warrenpoint	South Down
Banbridge Academy	South Down
Bangor Grammar School	North Down
St Oliver Plunkett Primary School	Newry and Armagh
St Josephs Primary School Madden	Newry and Armagh
Dromintee Primary School	Newry and Armagh
St Columba's Primary School Straw	Mid Ulster
Magherafelt High School	Mid Ulster
Magherafelt Primary School & Nusery School	Mid Ulster
St Colmans Primary School Lambeg	Lagan Valley
Torbank Special School	Strangford

**Appendix C**

<b>School</b>	<b>Parliamentary Constituency</b>
Strandtown P.S. Belfast	Belfast East
Victoria Park P.S. Belfast	Belfast East
Greenwood Assessment Centre Belfast	Belfast East
Mitchell House Special School Belfast	Belfast East
Glenwood P.S. / Edenderry Nursery School Belfast	Belfast North
Little Flower Girsl School, Belfast	Belfast North
Knockbreda H.S. Belfast	Belfast South
Methodist College Belfast	Belfast South
Victoria College Belfast	Belfast South
Springhill P.S. Belfast	Belfast West
Colaiste Feirste Belfast	Belfast West
Ballykelly P.S.	East Derry
Rossmar Special School Limavady	East Derry
Enniskillen P.S.	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
Devenish College	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
St Paul's P.S. Irvinestown	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
St Patrick's Academy Dungannon	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
Ebrington P.S.	Foyle
Eglinton P.S.	Foyle

<b>School</b>	<b>Parliamentary Constituency</b>
Newbuildings P.S.	Foyle
Belmont House Special School Londonderry	Foyle
Foyle College	Foyle
Dromore Central P.S.	Lagan Valley
Holy Family P.S. Magherafelt	Mid Ulster
Rainey Endowed School Magherafelt	Mid Ulster
Edendork P.S. Dungannon	Mid Ulster
Holy Trinity College Cookstown	Mid Ulster
St Clare's & St Colman's Abbey P.S. Newry	Newry & Armagh
St Joseph's Convent P.S. Newry	Newry & Armagh
St Patrick's G.S. Armagh	Newry & Armagh
Ballymoney H.S.	North Antrim
Hollywood P.S. / Redburn P.S. / Priory College	North Down
St Columbanus College Bangor	North Down
Parkhall Controlled Integrated College, Antrim	South Antrim
Knockevin Special School Downpatrick	South Down
St Bronagh's P.S. Rostrevor	South Down
St Louis G.S. Kilkeel	South Down
Glastry College Ballyhalbert	Strangford
The High School Ballynahinch	Strangford
Lurgan College	Upper Bann
Portadown College	Upper Bann
St Mary's P.S. Banbridge	Upper Bann
St Teresa's P.S. Lurgan	Upper Bann
Tannaghmore P.S. Lurgan	Upper Bann
St Patrick's College Banbridge	Upper Bann
Artigarvin P.S.	West Tyrone
Arvalee Special School Omagh	West Tyrone
Omagh Integrated P.S.	West Tyrone
St Columbkille's P.S. Carrickmore	West Tyrone
St Conor's P.S. Omagh	West Tyrone
Dean Maguirc College Carrickmore	West Tyrone
Loreto G.S. Omagh	West Tyrone

## Sites of Former Schools

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education to list all sites of former schools owned by his Department that are currently not in use.

**(AQW 5715/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Department does not own any schools in the various education sectors. In the non-controlled sector, the Department does not normally hold information about the subsequent use of sites of former schools so it is not possible to identify if a particular site is actually vacant. The Department can, however, provide information regarding the controlled sector. The following information has been provided by the Education and Library Boards:

<b>Board</b>	<b>Former School Premises Not in Use</b>
BELB	Site at Shore Crescent
BELB	Beechfield Primary School
BELB	Grove Primary School
BELB	Mersey Street Primary School
BELB	Mount Gilbert Community College Site
BELB	Part of former Forthbridge School Site
BELB	Vere Foster Primary School
BELB	School of Music Building, Donegall Pass
SELB	Minterburn Primary School
SELB	Tamnamore Primary School
SELB	Clogher Regional Primary School
WELB	Burnfoot Primary School
WELB	Dungiven Primary School
WELB	Duke Of Westminster High School, Ballinamallard
WELB	Duke Of Westminster High School, Kesh
WELB	Faughan Valley High School
NEELB	Antiville Primary School
NEELB	Ballypriormore Primary School
NEELB	Carnalridge Primary School
NEELB	Garvagh Surplus Land
NEELB	Glenarm Primary School
NEELB	Maghera High School
NEELB	Roddensvale Site
SEELB	Drumbo Primary School
SEELB	Hillhall Primary School

<b>Board</b>	<b>Former School Premises Not in Use</b>
SEELB	Lambeg Primary School
SEELB	Lower Ballinderry Primary School
SEELB	Newport Primary School
SEELB	Newtownbreda Primary School
SEELB	Kindle Primary School
SEELB	Hilden Integrated Primary School
SEELB	Gransha High School
SEELB	Lisnasharragh High School
SEELB	Killard House General
SEELB	Ballykillaire Site
SEELB	New Special School - (Ballylesson)

### **School Amalgamation**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Education to outline the procedure that is followed when two schools amalgamate; and what is the process under which teachers can retain their current positions.

**(AQW 5729/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** A proposal to amalgamate two or more schools originates with the relevant managing authorities and requires the publication of a supporting Development Proposal. This is a statutory process which facilitates extensive consultation both with those directly affected by the proposal and with the wider community. I make a decision on the proposal, based on all the pertinent facts, which include details of the location of the amalgamated school, accommodation implications, implications for teaching and other staff and comments received.

A Collective Agreement is drawn up by the Boards of Governors of the schools to be amalgamated. The Collective Agreement provides for all permanent teachers in the merging schools to be offered employment in the new school, provided they sign a declaration accepting the conditions of the Agreement.

A teacher may either accept the terms of the Agreement and take up a post at the new school or opt for voluntary redundancy, with compensation terms at the discretion of the employing authority. There is no compulsory redundancy for those permanent teachers who transfer to the new school in the two years immediately following the date of the amalgamation.

Teachers who held posts of responsibility in the merging schools must apply for posts of responsibility in the new school which are at least equivalent to the level of the responsibility they held. If they suffer a reduction in salary as a result of the amalgamation they are eligible to apply to the Department for a re-organisation allowance.

### **Schools Budget**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Education how much of the additional £40 million allocated to the schools budget will be (i) capital spend; and (ii) revenue spend.

**(AQW 5731/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I can confirm that all of the additional £40 million allocated to the schools budget will be revenue spend.

## Boards of Governors

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Education which schools' Boards of Governors have not been reconstituted since 2008.

**(AQW 5734/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools were either fully or partially reconstituted in the 2009/10 school year. Boards of Governors contain members from several different categories and vacancies will often exist on many Boards under different categories.

The education system is working to ensure that Boards of Governors have their full complement of members. In the case of those members appointed by the Department of Education, which are considered public appointments, I am progressing appointments where I have an adequate choice of candidates and proactively advertising for more prospective governors to come forward so that this exercise can be completed.

## Year 12 Students who Achieved Five A-C GCSE Grades

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education to detail the percentage of Year 12 students from a (i) Catholic background; and (ii) Protestant background who achieved five A\*-C GCSE grades in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 5789/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The information is not available in this format for Year 12 students but is available for all those pupils leaving school each academic year and this information is provided in the table below:

### THE PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL LEAVERS ACHIEVING AT LEAST 5 GCSES A\*-C (INC. EQUIVALENTS) BY RELIGION OF PUPIL 2005/06 TO 2009/10

	(i) Catholic	(ii) Protestant
2005/2006	65.4%	62.1%
2006/2007	66.6%	62.8%
2007/2008	68.5%	65.5%
2008/2009	71.5%	68.5%
2009/2010	73.4%	70.5%

**Source:** School Leavers Survey

## Education in Border Areas

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the financial savings that could be made from increased co-operation with the Dublin Government in relation to education in border areas.

**(AQW 5790/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** My Department and the Department of Education and Skills intend to commission a survey to estimate the potential cross-border take-up of education provision. The results of the survey will inform the area planning of education delivery in the border area.

Whilst it is too early to estimate financial savings, removing barriers to cross-border take-up will ensure that we make the most efficient use of resources, as well as providing more choice for children and young people.

## Post-16 Provision for Students

**Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Education (i) whether the South Eastern Education and Library Board provides post-16 provision for students with mild learning difficulties in special schools and; (ii) what

plans there are to introduce provision for all students with mild learning difficulties in the South Eastern Education and Library Board area.

**(AQW 5804/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Special educational needs (SEN) provision is matched to the individual needs of the child. Provision for students with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) may, therefore, be made in special units attached to mainstream schools or in mainstream classes as well as in special schools.

The South-eastern Education and Library Board has confirmed that students with MLD are considered on this individual basis for post-16 education and provision is made in special schools where that is appropriate for the young person. This will continue to be the case in the future.

### Post-16 Provision for Students

**Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the number of schools in the South Eastern Education Library Board area which provide post-16 provision for students with (a) severe learning difficulties; and (b) mild learning difficulties; and (ii) the number of schools outside the South Eastern Education and Library Board area which provide post-16 provision for students with (a) severe learning difficulties; and (b) mild learning difficulties.

**(AQW 5805/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Special educational needs (SEN) provision is matched to the individual needs of the child. Provision for students with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and moderate learning difficulties (MLD) may, therefore, be made in special units attached to mainstream schools or in mainstream classes as well as in special schools.

I have been advised by the Education and Library Boards that the number of special schools which cater specifically for post-16 SLD and MLD students is as follows:-

	SLD	MLD
BELB	1	1
NEELB	6	1
SEELB	4	0
SELB	5	0
WELB	2	5*

\* 3 of these schools are classed as mixed schools in that they have pupils with MLD and SLD.

### School Children Travelling from the Cookstown District Council area to schools in Magherafelt

**Mr I McCreagh** asked the Minister of Education how many school children travel from the Cookstown District Council area to schools in Magherafelt, broken down by (a) school; and (b) the number of pupils traveling to each school.

**(AQW 5806/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The information requested in AQW 5806/11-15 and AQW 5807/11-15 is detailed in the following tables:

**(I) SCHOOLS IN THE MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA ATTENDED BY PUPILS RESIDENT IN COOKSTOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA IN 2011/12**

<b>School name</b>	<b>School type</b>	<b>Pupils from Cookstown D.C. area</b>
Anahorish Primary School	Primary	*
Castledawson Primary School	Primary	*
Desertmartin Primary School	Primary	*
Gaelscoil na Spéiríní	Primary	*
Holy Family Primary School	Primary	17
Kilross Primary School	Primary	*
Knocknagin Primary School	Primary	*
Maghera Primary School	Primary	*
Magherafelt Controlled Primary School	Primary	9
New Row Primary School	Primary	*
Spires Integrated Primary School	Primary	20
St Columba's Primary School, Draperstown	Primary	*
St Eoghan's Primary School, Draperstown	Primary	*
St Mary's Primary School, Draperstown	Primary	*
St Mary's Primary School, Bellaghy	Primary	*
St Trea's Primary School, Ballyronan	Primary	15
Magherafelt High School	Post primary	44
Rainey Endowed School	Post primary	134
Sperrin Integrated College	Post primary	100
St Colm's High School, Draperstown	Post primary	*
St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt	Post primary	311
St Patrick's Co-ed Comprehensive College, Maghera	Post primary	7
St Pius X College, Magherafelt	Post primary	374
Kilronan Special School	Special	20
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,070</b>

**(II) SCHOOLS IN THE COOKSTOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA ATTENDED BY PUPILS RESIDENT IN MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA IN 2011/12**

<b>School name</b>	<b>School type</b>	<b>Pupils from Magherafelt D.C. area</b>
Ballylifford Primary School	Primary	*
Cookstown Primary School	Primary	*

School name	School type	Pupils from Magherafelt D.C. area
Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí	Primary	16
Holy Trinity Primary School, Cookstown	Primary	*
Moneymore Primary School	Primary	26
St Joseph's Primary School, Cookstown	Primary	*
St Patrick's Primary School, Moneymore	Primary	5
St Patrick's Primary School, Loup	Primary	30
Woods Primary School	Primary	89
Cookstown High School	Post primary	20
Holy Trinity College	Post primary	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>199</b>

**Source:** NI school census

**Note:** Figures for primary schools include pupils in nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.

\* denotes fewer than 5 pupils.

In answer to AQW 5809/11-15 and AQW 5810/11-15, I am informed by the Education and Library Boards that 1,005 pupils travelling from the Cookstown district council area to schools in Magherafelt and 44 pupils travelling from the Magherafelt district council area to Cookstown are eligible to receive transport assistance for travel by bus.

### School Children Travelling from the Magherafelt District Council area to Schools in Cookstown

**Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Education how many school children travel from the Magherafelt District Council area to schools in Cookstown, broken down by (a) school; and (b) the number of pupils traveling to each school.

**(AQW 5807/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The information requested in AQW 5806/11-15 and AQW 5807/11-15 is detailed in the tables below:

#### (I) SCHOOLS IN THE MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA ATTENDED BY PUPILS RESIDENT IN COOKSTOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA IN 2011/12

School name	School type	Pupils from Cookstown D.C. area
Anahorish Primary School	Primary	*
Castledawson Primary School	Primary	*
Desertmartin Primary School	Primary	*
Gaelscoil na Spéiríní	Primary	*
Holy Family Primary School	Primary	17
Kilross Primary School	Primary	*
Knocknagin Primary School	Primary	*



<b>School name</b>	<b>School type</b>	<b>Pupils from Cookstown D.C. area</b>
Maghera Primary School	Primary	*
Magherafelt Controlled Primary School	Primary	9
New Row Primary School	Primary	*
Spires Integrated Primary School	Primary	20
St Columba's Primary School, Draperstown	Primary	*
St Eoghan's Primary School, Draperstown	Primary	*
St Mary's Primary School, Draperstown	Primary	*
St Mary's Primary School, Bellaghy	Primary	*
St Trea's Primary School, Ballyronan	Primary	15
Magherafelt High School	Post primary	44
Rainey Endowed School	Post primary	134
Sperrin Integrated College	Post primary	100
St Colm's High School, Draperstown	Post primary	*
St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt	Post primary	311
St Patrick's Co-ed Comprehensive College, Maghera	Post primary	7
St Pius X College, Magherafelt	Post primary	374
Kilronan Special School	Special	20
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,070</b>

**(II) SCHOOLS IN THE COOKSTOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA ATTENDED BY PUPILS RESIDENT IN MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA IN 2011/12**

<b>School name</b>	<b>School type</b>	<b>Pupils from Magherafelt D.C. area</b>
Ballylifford Primary School	Primary	*
Cookstown Primary School	Primary	*
Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí	Primary	16
Holy Trinity Primary School, Cookstown	Primary	*
Moneymore Primary School	Primary	26
St Joseph's Primary School, Cookstown	Primary	*
St Patrick's Primary School, Moneymore	Primary	5
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**Source:** NI school census

**Note:** Figures for primary schools include pupils in nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.

\* denotes fewer than 5 pupils.

In answer to AQW 5809/11-15 and AQW 5810/11-15, I am informed by the Education and Library Boards that 1,005 pupils travelling from the Cookstown district council area to schools in Magherafelt and 44 pupils travelling from the Magherafelt district council area to Cookstown are eligible to receive transport assistance for travel by bus.

### **School Children Travelling from the Cookstown District Council area to schools in Magherafelt**

**Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Education how many school children who travel from the Cookstown District Council area to schools in Magherafelt receive free bus transport.

**(AQW 5809/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The information requested in AQW 5806/11-15 and AQW 5807/11-15 is detailed in the tables below:

#### **(I) SCHOOLS IN THE MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA ATTENDED BY PUPILS RESIDENT IN COOKSTOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA IN 2011/12**

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St Columba's Primary School, Draperstown	Primary	*
St Eoghan's Primary School, Draperstown	Primary	*
St Mary's Primary School, Draperstown	Primary	*
St Mary's Primary School, Bellaghy	Primary	*
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<b>Total</b>		<b>199</b>

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\* denotes fewer than 5 pupils.

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**School Children Travelling from the Magherafelt District Council area to Schools in Cookstown**

**Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Education how many school children who travel from the Magherafelt District Council area to schools in Cookstown receive free bus transport.

**(AQW 5810/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The information requested in AQW 5806/11-15 and AQW 5807/11-15 is detailed in the tables below:

**(I) SCHOOLS IN THE MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA ATTENDED BY PUPILS RESIDENT IN COOKSTOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA IN 2011/12**

<b>School name</b>	<b>School type</b>	<b>Pupils from Cookstown D.C. area</b>
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Knocknagin Primary School	Primary	*
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New Row Primary School	Primary	*
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**(II) SCHOOLS IN THE COOKSTOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA ATTENDED BY PUPILS RESIDENT IN MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA IN 2011/12**

<b>School name</b>	<b>School type</b>	<b>Pupils from Magherafelt D.C. area</b>
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Woods Primary School	Primary	89
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<b>Total</b>		<b>199</b>

**Source:** NI school census

**Note:** Figures for primary schools include pupils in nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.

\* denotes fewer than 5 pupils.

In answer to AQW 5809/11-15 and AQW 5810/11-15, I am informed by the Education and Library Boards that 1,005 pupils travelling from the Cookstown district council area to schools in Magherafelt and 44 pupils travelling from the Magherafelt district council area to Cookstown are eligible to receive transport assistance for travel by bus.

## Translating Departmental Publications

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Education how much his Department has spent on translating departmental publications into minority languages in each of the last four years, broken down by language.

**(AQW 5825/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The amount the Department of Education has spent on translating departmental publications into minority/alternative languages in each of the last four years was as follows:

### 2007/2008

Language	
Albanian	£82
Arabic	£71
Bulgarian	£71
Cantonese	£622
Czech	£71
Fijian	£82
Hindi	£82
Hungarian	£71
Irish	£3,215

<b>Language</b>	
Italian	£59
Latvian	£479
Lithuanian	£1,008
Malayalam	£82
Malaysian	£82
Mandarin	£704
Nepalese	£82
Philipino	£82
Polish	£1,206
Portuguese	£841
Russian	£94
Shona	£82
Slovak	£71
Spanish	£59
Swahili	£82
Tagalog	£82
Thai	£94
Ulster-Scots	£108
Urdu	£82

**2008/2009**

<b>Language</b>	
Cantonese	£1,145
Farsi	£94
Filipino	£373
Irish	£39,422
Lithuanian	£963
Mandarin	£247
Polish	£926
Portuguese	£883
Romanian	£82
Slovak	£112
Tagalog	£607
Ulster-Scots	£238

**2009/2010**

<b>Language</b>	
Cantonese	£1,492
Filipino	£277
Irish	£31,503
Latvian	£710
Lithuanian	£1,195
Mandarin	£925
Polish	£1,081
Portuguese	£987
Slovak	£256
Tagalog	£334
Turkish	£710

**2010/2011**

<b>Language</b>	
Arabic	£45
Bengali	£45
Cantonese	£657
Hindi	£45
Hungarian	£525
Irish	£32,096
Latvian	£525
Lithuanian	£565
Mandarin	£657
Polish	£565
Portuguese	£474
Punjabi	£45
Slovak	£565
Tagalog	£40
Turkish	£525
Urdu	£45

**Average Cost of a Classroom Assistant**

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Education to detail the average cost of a classroom assistant in each Education and Library Board area.

**(AQW 5826/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I have been advised by the Education and Library Boards that the following sums represent the average cost of a classroom assistant in each of their organisations. This is a very broad average based on costs incurred in 2010/2011 divided by an average head count of Classroom Assistants for that year.

	<b>Cost per annum (including employers costs)</b>
BELB	£15,408
WELB	£18,282
NEELB	£7,175
SEELB	£20,501
SELB	£10,000

### **Grammar Schools in the Dickson Plan Area: Academic Selection**

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Education whether grammar schools in the Dickson Plan Area have the legal right to operate academic selection.

**(AQW 5827/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The position pertaining to grammar schools within the Dickson Plan area is the same as that which applies to all other schools.

Schools are required to "have regard to" the Department's guidance on post-primary transfer which recommends that schools do not use academic admissions criteria. Aside from this no legislation provides for academic admissions criteria either prohibitively or otherwise.

### **Reduction in Funding**

**Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact of the five percent reduction in funding on (i) the number of teachers employed; and (ii) the quality of education in schools.  
**(AQW 5855/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Since Budget 2010 was concluded my predecessor and I have made it clear that education faces unprecedented challenges. The intention was to protect frontline services as much as possible. Because of the scale of the Aggregated Schools Budget (ASB) it was impossible to protect it totally. I have reviewed the budget allocations and last month I mitigated the impact on the ASB by reallocating £40m from my budget into it over the next 3 years. Otherwise next year's decrease in the ASB would have been more than 3%. The harsh reality is that the cuts imposed on this Administration by the British Government have severely impacted upon the future schools budget. These reductions will in turn mean that schools will face job losses – both in teaching and non teaching staff in the future.

(i) **Number of teachers employed**

At this stage it is too early to predict the impact of the 5% reduction in funding in terms of employment of teachers. Some 80% of schools' expenditure is staff related – so there will inevitably be an impact on staff if costs are to be contained within budget.

Under the Local Management of Schools (LMS) arrangements, the final decision for schools on how to live within their budget rests with the Principal and Board of Governors. It is therefore both inappropriate and logistically impossible to anticipate the individual decisions made across 1,200 schools.

(ii) **Quality of education in schools**

Schools should make best use of resources available to them and, through their planning and budget-setting, ensure that the raising of standards for all their pupils remains a priority.



Performance data and inspection evidence indicates that we have considerable scope to improve quality of provision and the standards achieved by pupils here.

As my school improvement policy sets out, the quality of education in schools depends on the quality of leadership, the aspirations schools hold for their pupils, the quality of teaching and strong links with parents and the community. Given the budget situation we face, it is more important than ever that schools plan and prioritise to maintain and further develop these key factors.

### **Council for Catholic Maintained Schools Buildings**

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Education whether his Department pays to maintain the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools buildings through the minor works programme or by any other mechanism. **(AQW 5860/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Education and Library Boards are responsible for the maintenance of controlled and maintained school premises. The Boards have discretion to determine the amounts to be allocated each year on maintenance from within their overall budgets. Controlled and maintained schools may also use their delegated budgets for small maintenance items. The Department also provides grant aid to the Trustees of maintained schools to fund minor works projects.

### **Pupils in the North Down Area Attending Grammar Schools**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Education what percentage of pupils living in each ward in the North Down area currently attends a grammar school.

**(AQW 5870/11-15)**

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

#### **PERCENTAGE OF POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS RESIDENT IN EACH WARD IN THE NORTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY, WHO ATTENDED GRAMMAR SCHOOLS IN 2011/12**

<b>Ward Name</b>	<b>% pupils attending grammar schools</b>
Ballycrochan	61.9
Ballyholme	83.9
Ballymacconnell	62.6
Ballymagee	52.5
Bangor Castle	60.4
Bloomfield (North Down)	39.4
Broadway	67.8
Bryansburn	66.7
Churchill	65.3
Clandeboye	46.0
Conlig	48.7
Craigavad	89.4
Crawfordsburn	88.6
Cultra	85.8
Donaghadee North	71.6

Ward Name	% pupils attending grammar schools
Donaghadee South	41.9
Dufferin	26.5
Groomsport	65.7
Harbour (North Down)	62.9
Hollywood Demesne	71.0
Hollywood Priory	83.8
Loughview	31.4
Millisle	41.7
Princetown	87.5
Rathgael	39.3
Silverstream	34.2
Spring Hill	49.5
Whitehill	29.8

**Source:** NI school census

### Irish Language Officers

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 5302/11-15, what urgent work was carried out by Irish Language Officers.

**(AQW 5887/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The urgent translation work undertaken by the Department's Irish Language Officers, which was referred to in AQW 5302/11-15, included translating speeches, statements to the Assembly, press releases and letters.

### Irish Language Officers

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 5302/11-15, what tasks are carried out by Irish Language Officers, other than translation work.

**(AQW 5888/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Irish language Officer tasks include facilitating meetings where Irish is or is likely to be spoken, handling telephone calls in Irish, overseeing and supporting the Department's Language Policy for Irish and dealing with enquiries on Irish language issues.

### Bangor Central Integrated Primary School

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Education whether he will meet, as a matter of urgency, with the Principal of Bangor Central Integrated Primary School and MLAs representing the North Down constituency to discuss the future of the school.

**(AQW 5893/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** As I set out in my statement on 26 September 2011, I have commissioned the five Education and Library Boards, working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and other sectors, to co-ordinate a strategic area planning process to shape the future pattern of education provision.

Schools previously identified as needing a new build, including that for Bangor Central Integrated Primary School, will be critically assessed alongside all other potential projects as part of the area planning process to determine how they will contribute to the overall structure needed. However, until the area planning work is completed, I will not be in a position to comment on a possible new build for any school and hence it would not be appropriate to meet at this time.

### **Cost of Translating and Publishing the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Documents**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education to detail the cost of translating and publishing the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment documents, including exam papers and support materials, into (i) Ulster Scots; (ii) Polish; or (iii) any other language, in each of the last five years.  
**(AQW 5913/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment has confirmed that the cost of translating and publishing its documents, including exam papers and support materials, into (i) Ulster Scots; (ii) Polish; or (iii) any other language, in each of the last five years, is as follows:

<b>Language</b>	<b>2006-2007</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>	<b>2008-2009</b>	<b>2009-2010</b>	<b>2010-2011</b>
Ulster Scots	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Polish	£0	£0	£0	£45	£0
Other - Irish (AQW 5303/11-15)	£98,028	£75,858	£152,578	£455,213	£598,828
Other	£0	£0	£0	£135	£0

### **General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education to detail the annual running costs of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.  
**(AQW 5916/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The General Teaching Council is primarily self-funding through the collection of annual registration fees from teachers.

I can confirm the total expenditure per the accounts that were laid before the Assembly in respect of 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09 are as stated below.

2006/2007	£1,008,536
2007/2008	£1,148,308
2008/2009	£1,082,456

Accounts for the years 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 have yet to be laid before the Assembly; however draft unaudited Accounts set out total expenditure as follows:

2009/2010	£1,201,305
2010/2011	£1,156,909

### **Annual Running Costs of the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education to detail the annual running costs of the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment in each of the last five years.  
**(AQW 5918/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment has confirmed annual running costs in each of the last five years as follows:

Year	Gross Expenditure £000s	Earned Income £000s	Net Expenditure £000s
2006/07	29,248	8,341	20,907
2007/08	30,242	8,565	21,677
2008/09	30,384	9,133	21,251
2009/10	31,272	9,402	21,870
2010/11	27,822	9,569	18,253

### Education and Skills Authority

**Mr McDevitt** asked the Minister of Education whether schools can submit development proposals prior to the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority in June 2012.

**(AQW 5931/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Education and Skills Authority (ESA) will be established on 1 April 2013. The Bill to establish the ESA will contain new provisions on area planning and development proposals. Until that legislation comes into operation, development proposals may be brought forward under the existing legislation. The relevant provision is Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.

### Primary Languages Programme

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Education whether he plans to continue funding the Primary Languages Programme.

**(AQW 5952/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** As you will be aware, the education budget faces significant challenges over the period to 2014-15. I am currently reviewing my budget allocations for the next three years and until this exercise is complete I am unable to confirm any future budget allocations for the Primary Languages Programme.

### Education and Skills Authority

**Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister of Education what powers the Sector Support Bodies will have under the new Education and Skills Authority.

**(AQW 5992/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Education sectoral bodies will be non-statutory organisations, funded by grant-aid from my Department. As such they will have no formal powers in education legislation. The functions of each body will be determined following the consideration of business cases by my Department.

### Five or more GCSEs at Grades A-C

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Education what proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C, including English and Maths, in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 6034/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The table below provides details of the percentage of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (measured by their entitlement to free school meals) achieving at least 5 GCSEs A\*-C (inc. equivalents) including GCSE English and maths by school type 2007/08 to 2009/10

	Non Grammar	Grammar	Total
2007/2008	19.0%	85.5%	27.7%
2008/2009	20.1%	88.4%	29.7%
2009/2010	21.3%	87.8%	31.3%

**Source:** School Leavers Survey

### Five or more GCSEs at Grades A-C

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Education what proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who attended non-grammar schools, achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C, including English and Maths, in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 6035/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The table below provides details of the percentage of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (measured by their entitlement to free school meals) achieving at least 5 GCSEs A\*-C (inc. equivalent) including GCSE English and maths by school type 2007/08 to 2009/10

	Non Grammar	Grammar	Total
2007/2008	19.0%	85.5%	27.7%
2008/2009	20.1%	88.4%	29.7%
2009/2010	21.3%	87.8%	31.3%

**Source:** School Leavers Survey

### Five or more GCSEs at Grades A-C

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Education what proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who attended grammar schools, achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C, including English and Maths, in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 6036/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The table below provides details of the percentage of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds (measured by their entitlement to free school meals) achieving at least 5 GCSEs A\*-C (inc. equivalent) including GCSE English and maths by school type 2007/08 to 2009/10

	Non Grammar	Grammar	Total
2007/2008	19.0%	85.5%	27.7%
2008/2009	20.1%	88.4%	29.7%
2009/2010	21.3%	87.8%	31.3%

**Source:** School Leavers Survey

## Department for Employment and Learning

### **Catholic Certificate of Religious Education in Glasgow**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much it costs for a student at Stranmillis University College, Belfast to sit the Catholic Certificate of Religious Education in Glasgow; and whether his Department covers the travel and accommodation costs.

**(AQW 5392/11-15)**

**Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):** The current fee for the Certificate of Religious Education at the University of Glasgow is £480. This is funded by my Department through grant paid to Stranmillis University College. As the course is delivered through distance learning there no requirement for students to travel to the university.

### **Catholic Certificate of Religious Education**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why students from Stranmillis University College, Belfast are unable to sit the Catholic Certificate of Religious Education in Northern Ireland and must instead travel to Glasgow.

**(AQW 5393/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Certificate of Religious Education course at the University of Glasgow is delivered through distance learning. There is no requirement for students to travel to the university.

Students from Stranmillis University College are also able to study for the Certificate through the Iona Retreat Centre in Derry or through a Life-light Home Study Course.

### **Liaison Officer from the Holylands area of Belfast**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the circumstances, including the relevant dates, which led to the withdrawal of a liaison officer from the Holylands area of Belfast after an alleged threat from a student.

**(AQW 5394/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** I have written to the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ulster on this issue and he has responded with the following information.

The University Community Relations Co-ordinator responded to a complaint on 19 September 2011 from a resident regarding a property in the Holylands. On 20 September 2011 the Community Relations Co-ordinator visited the house where the alleged incident took place and spoke with the tenants. The situation was considered to be threatening by the Community Relations Coordinator who left the area and reported the incident to the University. This incident identified a number of health and safety issues and concerns about the work the Community Relations Co-ordinator has undertaken in the area in the past few years, primarily, that of undertaking visits to students' houses to investigate complaints raised by statutory agencies and local residents. The University has been advised that she cannot go out on the ground to undertake visits on her own during the day or in the evening until these health and safety issues are resolved.

The Community Relations Co-ordinator remains active in the Holylands attending Policing, Partners and Community Together (PACT) and related resident group meetings, and is still dealing with complaints about anti-social behaviour.

The University is currently investigating this incident in line with its student disciplinary procedures. The University is conducting a health and safety review of its community relations work, and is investigating the potential for joint visits with staff from Queens University and Belfast City Council.

I will be seeking further updates from the University on this issue.

I trust you find this information helpful.

## Payment of Invoices

**Mr Beggs** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what proportion of invoices for construction work his Department, and its arm's-length bodies, have paid on time in each of the last three years. **(AQW 5413/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Department for Employment and Learning and its arm's-length bodies paid the following proportion of invoices for construction work on time:

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Department for Employment and Learning	100 %*	50%*	85%
Labour Relations Agency	88%	67%	85%
CITB – ConstructionSkills Northern Ireland	100%	N/A	N/A
Ulster Supported Employment Ltd	N/A	N/A	N/A

\* The number of invoices involved for the Department is low, one for 2008-2009 and two for 2009-2010.

The basis for calculation for the percentages of invoices paid on time for construction work has been calculated as less than or equal to 30 days from invoice received date to payment date.

## Stranmillis University College, Belfast: Proposed Merger with Queen's University

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if he will give a commitment that his Department will investigate any claims from staff at Stranmillis University College, Belfast that they are being put under undue pressure over the proposed merger with Queen's University, Belfast. **(AQW 5414/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** I have stated on several occasions recently that Stranmillis University College is an autonomous body. There are internal procedures to deal with any grievances raised by staff and there are recognised trade unions within the College which assist staff in these matters. I have recently made an offer to meet with staff at Stranmillis to discuss my recent announcement.

## Stranmillis University College, Belfast

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why Stranmillis University College, Belfast did not elect a new Board of Governors in May 2010. **(AQW 5415/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** In accordance with the Colleges of Education (NI) Order 2005 and the College's Instrument of Government, only three members of the Stranmillis Governing Body are elected. The Principal is appointed by virtue of her office, while up to 10 members (including the Chair) are appointed following public competitions run in accordance with Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland (CPANI) guidelines. Of those elected, none were due for re-election in May 2010.

## Unemployment in the Kilcooley Estate, Bangor

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what his Department is doing to reduce unemployment in the Kilcooley Estate, Bangor. **(AQW 5416/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department is committed to reducing unemployment for all individuals across Northern Ireland irrespective of where they live.

Bangor JobCentre which covers the Kilcooley area offers a range of services, initiatives and programmes to help jobseekers find employment, particularly people who are unemployed, individuals with disabilities and those with other barriers to work. Services include job search, help with writing a



CV or job application forms, preparing for interviews, careers guidance, or help with travel costs for job interviews.

From 1 April 2010 -31 March 2010 and despite the economic downturn, Bangor JobCentre advertised 1,568 job vacancies. In the current year to the end of October 999 vacancies have been advertised.

Unemployed clients in Kilcooley can participate in the Steps to Work programme which is the Department's main adult return to work programme. The aim of Steps to Work is to assist people who are unemployed or economically inactive to find and sustain employment. Since its introduction in September 2008, the programme has helped 10,365 people find work across Northern Ireland.

Last year (1 April -31 March 2011) Bangor JobCentre placed 202 unemployed Steps to Work clients into employment. This year to date 256 Steps to Work clients have been placed in employment.

In the Kilcooley area there are currently 118 clients claiming Jobseekers Allowance of which sixty are on the Steps to Work programme. This represents over 50% currently being directly supported to assist them in securing employment. A further ten clients from the Kilcooley area have recently completed the programme, of these ten, three secured jobs. The remainder are not yet required to attend but will in due course also receive the support of the Bangor Jobcentre and be able to participate on the Steps to Work programme.

Other Departmental training programmes, such as ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success, are also available across Northern Ireland. These opportunities are open to eligible people from the Kilcooley area and staff at the Bangor Jobcentre provide advice on these.

### **Tackling Drug and Alcohol Abuse**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the areas in his budget that are earmarked for tackling drug and alcohol abuse.

**(AQW 5418/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** There are no areas or resources specifically earmarked in the DEL budget for tackling drug or alcohol abuse. Clients, however, seeking work with a history of drug or alcohol misuse can receive help and support through the Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS) or the new Work Connect programme being introduced in the New Year to replace the former New Deal for Disabled People programme.

### **Private Finance Initiatives**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many Private Finance Initiative capital projects his Department has agreed for new capital builds in the next three financial years.

**(AQW 5419/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department has not agreed any Private Finance Initiative capital projects for new capital builds in the next three financial years. We are of course open to examining alternative funding models, although ultimately all of these are dependant on budget availability.

### **Departmental Information Office**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many staff are employed in his Department's Information Service; and what is the annual cost of this service.

**(AQW 5420/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The number of staff employed in my Department's Information Service is detailed in the attached table. The annual cost of this service at the end of the last financial year totalled £557,923.

<b>Function</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Number</b>
Press Office	Principal Information Officer	1



Function	Grade	Number
	Senior Information Officer	1
	Assistant Information Officer	2
Marketing and Internal Communications	Senior Information Officer	1
	Information Officer	2
	Executive Officer Grade 1	1
	Assistant Information Officer	1
Information Technology (Internet; Intranet; Website design)	Staff Officer	1
	Executive Officer Grade 1	1
	Executive Officer Grade 2	1
Administrative Support	Executive Officer Grade 1	1
	Executive Officer Grade 2	1
	Administrative Officers	3

## Adult Education Programmes

**Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he intends to develop new approaches to encourage men to engage in adult education programmes and for young men to enter non-traditional professions.

**(AQW 5450/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department aims to ensure that all of its programmes and services are fully inclusive.

The Department's Careers Service continues to provide impartial careers information, advice and guidance to all clients. This includes challenging pre-conceived careers ideas, making clients aware of up-to-date labour market and occupational information, encouraging consideration of a broad range of career options, and providing information on appropriate education and training.

The Department's Training for Success and Programme-Led Apprenticeship programmes allow participants to follow training in their chosen occupational area. At present, around 70% of those on the Training for Success and Programme-Led Apprenticeships programmes are male;

similarly, current occupancy figures for apprentices indicate that approximately 50% are male.

In Further Education, colleges have a statutory duty to address any significant gender imbalance in enrolments. Colleges continue to promote provision to all sections of the community, particular those groups, including men, which might be less inclined to engage in third level learning.

## Apprenticeships

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what further action his Department can take to help young people to get into apprenticeships.

**(AQW 5480/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Apprenticeships offer a valuable option for young people to gain skills and knowledge in order to prepare them for working life and for a career.

ApprenticeshipsNI programme is employer-led, and as such, it is employers, and not my Department, that create apprenticeships. However, despite current economic and fiscal difficulties, current

occupancy figures are very encouraging, as the number of employed young people undertaking apprenticeship training is 46% of the total number of apprentices.

The apprenticeship training package on offer to employers is attractive, in that the apprentices' directed training costs are met by my Department. Such funding ranges from £2,600 to £10,800 depending on the level and occupational area of study and, on completion, an incentive bonus of up to £1,500 is paid to the employer. I am determined to protect this funding for 16-24 year olds in the anticipation that it will encourage employers to utilise apprentices whilst supporting young people with their future career opportunities.

To complement the Apprenticeship NI provision and support school leavers the Department makes available Programme-Led Apprenticeships. This programme offers unemployed 16 and 17 year olds the opportunity to achieve a level 2 apprenticeship framework and positions them to progress once they find a job in their chosen occupational area.

The Department's Careers Service offers impartial careers information, advice, and guidance to all clients. During the guidance process careers advisers discuss apprenticeships as an option, where appropriate for the client. If an apprenticeship is a suitable option, the client is provided with programme information, including details on how to access training and where provision is available.

In addition, the Department runs apprenticeship advertising campaigns each year, from July to mid-September, targeting both employers and potential apprentices and this will continue in 2012.

### **Students: Work Experience**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action his Department can take to help students get work experience positions with local businesses.

**(AQW 5481/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Through the universities' and university colleges' student employability services, current students have access to a range of course-related and non course-related work placements. Each institution's careers advisers assist students in gaining work experience and advertise a number of placement opportunities. Further information on the range of university and university college provision is attached at Annex A.

In addition, the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE) programme, funded by the Department of Education, provides higher education students with technical work experience in a number of worldwide countries. My Department funds a number of other programmes to improve higher education students' employability skills with periods of study or employment abroad, including the Study USA, Study China and the Erasmus programmes.

For students attending Further Education (FE) Colleges, all six colleges in Northern Ireland enable students enrolled in Further Education, Higher Education and training programmes to undertake work placements, where available, to support their learning.

My Department has also worked closely with Career Academies UK since 2008. Career Academies are typically aimed at middle achieving, but highly motivated, students between the ages of 16 and 19. They work alongside existing further education provision, but additionally offer students the opportunity to gain valuable experience through initiatives such as paid summer work placements within local businesses and industry led site visits. Companies which have offered local Career Academy students paid summer work placements include Northern Bank, Ulster Bank, Santander, Citi, Seagate and Autoline Insurance. Since 2008, 202 students have been enrolled on the Career Academy programme locally.

### **Annex A**

#### **The University of Ulster**

Central to the University of Ulster's vision of leading in the provision of professional education for professional life, the University is committed to supporting graduates to gain stimulating and fulfilling

employment. As part of this commitment, the University's objective is to provide students with learning experiences that will give them the confidence, knowledge and skills to enable them to take up challenging employment opportunities and to contribute to the further development of their chosen profession.

The University of Ulster is concerned with applied and vocational education and has one of the largest work-based learning programmes in the UK, with the majority of courses offering placements. In addition, wherever possible, courses are designed in partnership with relevant professional bodies so that students graduate with a qualification that is recognised by their chosen profession.

While studying at Ulster, students can access a wide range of opportunities to undertake work experience with local employers. Examples include:

- A substantial percentage of Ulster's programmes include a period of industrial placement, practice education or practice learning placements. Annually over 2000 students undertake such placements, with the University being one of the largest providers of work-based placements across the HE sector. For example, of the 2000 students undertaking placement activity, some 1200 of these are carrying out year-long work-based placements between the second and final year of their courses.
- As part of Ulster's Certificate in Personal and Professional Development framework all students are offered the opportunity to undertake an 'Employability through Work Experience' module. This enables the University to recognise and accredit students' short-term, part-time or volunteer work experiences. To gain recognition for their activity, students must successfully reflect on how experience gained during a minimum eighty hours with local organisations has improved their employability skills and knowledge of the business sector.
- In June 2011, in response to the current economic downturn and the ongoing difficulties for graduates to find employment, the University of Ulster developed and launched a Professional Experience Programme. The programme is specifically aimed at supporting current graduate leavers from Ulster who are either unemployed or underemployed. The programme includes a 6 month graduate internship with a local employer, integrated with study for Ulster's Graduate Certificate in Professional Practice.

There is no cost to the graduate and the University provides each participant on the programme with a £5000 bursary. Employer costs are minimal (approx. £2000) and include course fees, appropriate travel expenses and a contribution to a student bursary.

- The 'Ulster EDGE Award', launched in September 2011, is an exciting new initiative for undergraduate students. The Award is designed to enhance the employability of Ulster students by encouraging engagement with, and official recognition of, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities and achievements including work experience and volunteering, usually undertaken with local businesses.

## **Queen's University Belfast**

### **Course related work experience**

Where a degree programme contains work placement as an integral component, such as BSc Finance, students are provided with a high level of support. This includes a pre placement programme consisting of:

- annual careers and placement fairs
- employer presentations/briefings on campus
- feedback from students who have returned from placement
- application form/CV and interview preparation
- aptitude test familiarisation (where appropriate)
- access to vacancy database for placement opportunities
- 1:1 guidance and support as they go through the various stages of the selection process.

While on placement, students are supported through regular contact including: visits by a member of academic staff, support from a designated member of staff within the placement organisation and email communication.

Within the University's Management School, the School of Biological Sciences and in Computer Science, there are specialist staff employed to support students seeking a placement as part of their degree.

### **Non-course related work experience**

Where degree programmes do not contain a formal work placement component, students are encouraged to develop their work experience through various options, including:

- a) optional year out placement e.g. Study USA
- b) vacation internships
- c) vacation or part-time employment
- d) insight programmes with graduate employers
- e) international opportunities e.g. IAESTE placement, Study India, Washington-Ireland Programme
- f) business competitions/challenges.

Students are supported in seeking and attaining these opportunities through:

- a) access to an up-to-date vacancy database of vacation/placement opportunities
- b) annual careers and placement fairs
- c) the annual Work Experience Fair
- d) employer presentations/briefings
- e) application/CV/interview preparation and coaching where appropriate
- f) 1:1 guidance and support as they go through the selection process.

The University's Careers, Employability and Skills advisers provide centrally the range of support listed above for students seeking placement/work experience as an optional part of their degree programme

For students on degree programmes which involve education and training (for example, nursing), specialist staff organise and provide support for students on clinical placements.

The University places a high priority on the employability of its graduates and, therefore, recognises the importance of work experience/placement in relation to graduate employment. To this end there is significant engagement with local, national and international businesses to secure access to placements/work experience opportunities for our students.

Some examples of local engagement include:

- 77 (95%) students from Biological Sciences in work placement with local businesses
- 150 (94%) students from Computer Science in work placement within 68 local businesses.

In the academic year 2010/11, 222 local opportunities for work experience/placement/vacation work were advertised by the University's Careers, Employability and Skills Service.

Within degree programmes, placement is accredited through the City and Guilds Senior Licentiateship. Students on non placement degree programmes electing to take an optional placement year, or who secure other forms of work experience, are eligible to seek accreditation under the University Degree Plus framework ([www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/degreeplus/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/degreeplus/)).

### **Access to careers vacancy database**

Queen's University allows open access to its vacancy database and has a defined work placement section/search facility. In addition, information and advice is provided on the website to assist students seeking to develop their work experience and skills.

**Stranmillis University College**

The professional nature of all the College's programmes is such that placement, whether in schools, colleges, early years settings or health and leisure establishments, is an integral part of the course for all students. As such this is organised through the academic departments with responsibility for the course. Thus our careers service is not involved in assisting students find work experience.

In addition, Stranmillis launched its first internship scheme in 2011-12. It is targeted at students who graduated in July 2011 but who had not found full-time employment. Currently we have two interns – one working in the area of Sports Development and the other in the area of Student Support and Widening Access.

**St. Mary's University College**

Work-related Learning is an integral element of the BA (Hons) Liberal Arts degree programme of St Mary's University College. The college has an academic post to coordinate placements (6-week in duration) for Liberal Arts students in the second and third years of their programme. The placements enable the students to learn directly from the world of work and their learning is demonstrated through the production of a journal.

Case studies of good practice are developed and disseminated through the College website.

**Six Regional Colleges: Budget**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail whether each of the six Regional College's stayed within their budget in the last financial year.

**(AQW 5482/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Further education colleges are permitted to operate annual deficit budgets within limits set by the Department, providing they have sufficient reserves to fund such deficits. For the 2010/11 year, all of the colleges had set deficit budgets.

The Department has received final audited accounts for five of the six further education colleges for the year ended 31 July 2011. These show that all five have stayed within their agreed budgets with three returning a surplus and two achieving deficits lower than originally forecast.

The final accounts for South West College (SWC) have not yet been received and, whilst its draft financial statements identified that it too was on course to achieve a surplus for the year, a technical accounting amendment, which is now required, may result in the College not meeting its budget target.

**Universities: Dropout Rates**

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) to account for the first year dropout rate from Queen's University and the University of Ulster; (ii) for his assessment of these drop-out rates; and (iii) whether the universities could learn from the pastoral care offered by the Further Education colleges.

**(AQW 5486/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The most recent Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) figures for full-time first degree entrants, in academic year 2008/9, show that Queen's University had a non-continuation rate of 7.7%, an increase from 7.1% the previous year, and the University of Ulster had a rate of 10%, a decrease from 13.2% the previous year. For the same year, the four Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions averaged 9%, compared to 10.2% the previous year.

Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) figures for 2009/10 indicate that 9.7% of students did not continue into the second year of their studies and, for the same year, the non-continuation rate for all students on professional and technical courses in the Northern Ireland Further Education Sector was 13%.

Student retention is a complex and multi-faceted issue, influenced by various personal, social and academic factors. Both Queen's University and the University of Ulster regard the issue of student retention as an institutional priority and closely monitor retention figures. A number of pastoral care initiatives are in place at the universities to address student drop-out rates. The range of support mechanisms include enhanced advice and guidance, improved student engagement and the use of personal tutors. Further Education Colleges have similar pastoral care arrangements which are aimed at promoting the health and wellbeing of students by providing them with access to appropriate guidance and support, personal tutors and counsellors.

In recognition of the increased support requirements of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, my Department pays the two universities around £1.5m per year in the form of a Widening Participation premium to support the recruitment and retention of those students. In addition, my Department, through its widening participation commitment, is considering a number of proposals aimed at improving the retention and completion rates of students. These include; institutions reviewing their approach to teaching, learning and assessment in light of the changing pattern of students' backgrounds and that retention initiatives or interventions should be based on multiple disadvantages and should include an assessment of individual needs.

### **Employment for Working Age Benefit Claimants**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 5285/11-15, how many job vacancies currently exist.

**(AQW 5495/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** On Thursday 8th December my Department had 1,149 live vacancies, displayed on the Department's job vacancy website JobCentre Online. This equated to 2,054 positions.

The Department uses the term 'vacancy' to describe a single advertisement of one or more positions by an employer and the term 'positions' to describe the actual number of jobs available.

You should note that these figures reflect the vacancies notified to my Department and do not represent the total number of jobs available to jobseekers in Northern Ireland.

### **Employment: Benefit Age Clients**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 5285/11-15, what strategies his Department will use to assist benefit age clients to get into employment.

**(AQW 5496/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department is currently developing a strategy for the Employment Service and will publish it early in 2012. Officials are also examining the measures contained within the new "Youth Contract" announced by the Deputy Prime Minister on 29 November and I hope to be in a position to bring forward similar proposals for Northern Ireland. My ability to add new services and programmes to those already available will depend on the resources made available by the Executive.

In the meantime the full range of existing services and programmes remain open to job seekers. This includes:

- The Adviser Service available through our network of 35 Jobs & Benefits Offices and Jobcentres.
- Steps to Work - Our flagship programme to help the adult unemployed.
- Pathways to Work - aimed at assisting those with health conditions or a disability to move (back) into work.
- The Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS) – a community based employment service which complements statutory provision in areas of the highest level of social deprivation.

In addition the Disability Employment Service (DES) is responsible for the delivery of programmes and services to assist people with disabilities to find and/or keep appropriate employment.



## Education Maintenance Allowance

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, given the drop in Further Education college admissions in England following the scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), whether he can give an assurance to young people and their families that EMA will not be scrapped or cut.

**(AQW 5508/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** I can confirm that I am committed to the retention of the Education Maintenance Allowance. It is clear, however, that the funding needs to be better targeted. Findings from the review of the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme in Northern Ireland, carried out jointly by my Department and the Department of Education, highlighted that the scheme is not as economically efficient as it could be because a majority of Education Maintenance Allowance students indicated that they would have remained in education even if they had not received Education Maintenance Allowance.

However, in some cases it makes a real difference. I am determined that young people from lower income families, for whom these allowances make that real difference, continue to be assisted to stay in education and training. I would, however, agree with the Employment and Learning Committee's recommendation that the allowances could be better targeted.

I can advise that my Department and the Department of Education recently established a joint project team which is considering options for the future of the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme.

Following approval by myself and my ministerial colleague in the Department of Education, it is intended that options for the future of the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme will be presented to the Executive as soon as practically possible and this will be followed by a public consultation.

Any proposals to change the current provision of the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme in Northern Ireland will also be subject to the appropriate equality considerations.

## Queen's University, Belfast: Medical Research

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what funding his Department provides to Queen's University, Belfast for the purposes of medical research.

**(AQW 5583/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department allocates the majority of research funding to the higher education institutions by reference to quality, as assessed by their performance in the most recent (2008) Research Assessment Exercise. Funding allocated to Queen's University, Belfast, for medicine and related subjects, totalled £10,308,073 in the current academic year (2011/2012) and is paid as part of the university's overall block grant. However, Queen's University, Belfast, as an autonomous body, is free to distribute this funding according to its own strategic priorities.

## Queen's University, Belfast: Medical Research

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether Queen's University, Belfast uses animals for medical research.

**(AQW 5584/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Animals are used within Queen's University for medically related research. All this work complies with the requirements of the Animal (Scientific Procedures Act), 1986, as enforced by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Inspector.

## Queen's University, Belfast: Medical Research

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what type of medical research is carried out by Queen's University, Belfast.

**(AQW 5585/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Medical research in Queen's University, Belfast employs the full spectrum of approaches, from molecular and genetic studies through to epidemiological research and full clinical trials of new therapies. Clinical research areas include: cancer; diabetic complications; cardiovascular disease; respiratory disease; renal disease; ophthalmic disease; infectious diseases; and the role of the immune system in health and disease.

### **Stranmillis University College Students**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many Stranmillis University College students have travelled to Glasgow to sit the Catholic Certificate of Religious Education in each of the last thirteen years; and how much this has cost.

**(AQW 5592/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Certificate of Religious Education course at the University of Glasgow is delivered through distance learning. There is no requirement for students to travel to the university.

### **STEM Subjects**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether his Department considers Agri-Food related courses as STEM area subjects; and, if not, will he take steps to ensure that they are classed as STEM subjects, so that students are encouraged to apply for such courses and can access STEM bursaries.

**(AQW 5604/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Department does consider Agri-Food related courses to be STEM subjects.

### **Survey by the CBI and McGrigors**

**Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the findings of the survey by the CBI and McGrigors that 50 percent of businesses are discouraged by current employment laws from taking on new staff.

**(AQW 5605/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The CBI/McGrigors survey merits careful consideration.

There is clearly an appetite for the current employment law regime to be re-examined. This survey is timely given the recent announcements about the UK Government's plans to conduct an Employment Law Review, which covers many of the issues raised in this report.

I have already asked my officials to initiate a similar review of employment legislation here in Northern Ireland. This review will take account of the findings of the CBI/McGrigors report and GB developments but, ultimately, will look to solutions that balance the needs of our local economy and the rights of individual employees.

### **Education Maintenance Allowance**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why young people who are involved with Include Youth's 'Give and Take Scheme' do not qualify for the Education Maintenance Allowance.

**(AQW 5618/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** It is important to clarify that there is a means-tested and a non-means tested Education Maintenance Allowance which have very different target audiences.

The non means-tested Education Maintenance Allowance is payable only under the provisions of the Employment and Training Act (Northern Ireland) 1950 and, as such, to unwaged trainees on the Training for Success Programme (including Programme Led Apprenticeships). When put in place, it formed part of a package of financial incentives directed at young people undertaking specifically structured training of a minimum of 30 hours per week and leading to recognised professional and technical qualifications. The legislative basis on which the package is provided is intertwined with United



Kingdom wide Social Security and Child Benefit legislation and cannot apply to a programme such as the Give and Take scheme or to other pre-vocational training not provided by my Department under the Act.

The means-tested Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme was jointly introduced in September 2004 by my Department and the Department of Education. The main purpose of the scheme is to enable young people from lower income backgrounds to remain in post-compulsory education at school or college with the express purpose of raising participation, retention and achievement rates in the eligible group; and addressing the well-established link between low attainment and low income. In order to be eligible to receive the means-tested Education maintenance allowance, students must, amongst other criteria, be aged between 16 to 19 years and studying full-time at school or a minimum of 15 hours at a Further Education college in Northern Ireland.

Following the recent review of the means-tested scheme, my Department and the Department of Education are currently considering options for its future. It is intended that options will be presented to the Executive as soon as practically possible and this will be followed by a public consultation. I must stress, however, that these options will be based on findings from the review in relation to the scheme as it currently operates. It will not, therefore, be feasible or appropriate, either as part of or outwith the consultation, to consider widening the eligibility criteria of the means-tested allowance to schemes such as Give and Take, which are targeted at students aged 16 to 21 not in Education, Employment or Training and have entirely different objectives.

### **Education Maintenance Allowance**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what plans his Department has to entitle young people participating in Include Youth's 'Give and Take Scheme' to the Education Maintenance Allowance. **(AQW 5622/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** It is important to clarify that there is a means-tested and a non-means tested Education Maintenance Allowance which have very different target audiences.

The non means-tested Education Maintenance Allowance is payable only under the provisions of the Employment and Training Act (Northern Ireland) 1950 and, as such, to unwaged trainees on the Training for Success Programme (including Programme Led Apprenticeships). When put in place, it formed part of a package of financial incentives directed at young people undertaking specifically structured training of a minimum of 30 hours per week and leading to recognised professional and technical qualifications. The legislative basis on which the package is provided is intertwined with United Kingdom wide Social Security and Child Benefit legislation and cannot apply to a programme such as the Give and Take scheme or to other pre-vocational training not provided by my Department under the Act.

The means-tested Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme was jointly introduced in September 2004 by my Department and the Department of Education. The main purpose of the scheme is to enable young people from lower income backgrounds to remain in post-compulsory education at school or college with the express purpose of raising participation, retention and achievement rates in the eligible group; and addressing the well-established link between low attainment and low income. In order to be eligible to receive the means-tested Education maintenance allowance, students must, amongst other criteria, be aged between 16 to 19 years and studying full-time at school or a minimum of 15 hours at a Further Education college in Northern Ireland.

Following the recent review of the means-tested scheme, my Department and the Department of Education are currently considering options for its future. It is intended that options will be presented to the Executive as soon as practically possible and this will be followed by a public consultation. I must stress, however, that these options will be based on findings from the review in relation to the scheme as it currently operates. It will not, therefore, be feasible or appropriate, either as part of or outwith the consultation, to consider widening the eligibility criteria of the means-tested allowance to schemes such as Give and Take, which are targeted at students aged 16 to 21 not in Education, Employment or Training and have entirely different objectives.

## Education Maintenance Allowance

**Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consideration his Department has given to allowing young people taking part in Include Youth's 'Give and Take Scheme' to receive the Education Maintenance Allowance.

**(AQW 5625/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** It is important to clarify that there is a means-tested and a non-means tested Education Maintenance Allowance which have very different target audiences.

The non means-tested Education Maintenance Allowance is payable only under the provisions of the Employment and Training Act (Northern Ireland) 1950 and, as such, to unwaged trainees on the Training for Success Programme (including Programme Led Apprenticeships). When put in place, it formed part of a package of financial incentives directed at young people undertaking specifically structured training of a minimum of 30 hours per week and leading to recognised professional and technical qualifications. The legislative basis on which the package is provided is intertwined with United Kingdom wide Social Security and Child Benefit legislation and cannot apply to a programme such as the Give and Take scheme or to other pre-vocational training not provided by my Department under the Act.

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## Education Maintenance Allowance

**Mr McElduff** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) why young people taking part in the 'Give and Take Scheme' are not entitled to the Education Maintenance Allowance; and (ii) to what financial help they are entitled.

**(AQW 5629/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:**

- (i) It is important to clarify that there is a means-tested and a non-means tested Education Maintenance Allowance which have very different target audiences.

The non means-tested Education Maintenance Allowance is payable only under the provisions of the Employment and Training Act (Northern Ireland) 1950 and, as such, to unwaged trainees on the Training for Success Programme (including Programme Led Apprenticeships). When put in place, it formed part of a package of financial incentives directed at young people undertaking specifically structured training of a minimum of 30 hours per week and leading to recognised professional and technical qualifications. The legislative basis on which the package is provided is intertwined with United Kingdom wide Social Security and Child Benefit legislation and cannot apply to a programme such as the Give and Take scheme or to other pre-vocational training not provided by my Department under the Act.

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Following the recent review of the means-tested scheme, my Department and the Department of Education are currently considering options for its future. It is intended that options will be presented to the Executive as soon as practically possible and this will be followed by a public consultation. I must stress, however, that these options will be based on findings from the review in relation to the scheme as it currently operates and will also take account of the very difficult budgetary position currently facing my Department. It will not, therefore, be feasible or appropriate, either as part of or outwith the consultation, to consider widening the eligibility criteria of the means-tested allowance to schemes such as Give and Take, which are targeted at students aged 16 to 21 not in Education, Employment or Training and have entirely different objectives.

- (ii) My Department does not provide funding for individual participants on the Give and Take scheme. Programme funding for the scheme is, however, provided. European Social Funding and Departmental matched funding of £1,720,346 (£1,058,675 and £661,671 respectively) has been made available for the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2014. This funding accounts for around 65% of project costs. Include Youth, which manages the Give and Take scheme, provides its own match funding (35% of project costs).

### **Merger of Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis University College**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, given that the negotiations on the merger of Stranmillis University College, Belfast and Queen's University, Belfast have been suspended, whether the roles and the salaries of the two merger co-ordinators have been suspended; and, if not, why not. **(AQW 5646/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Work in relation to the proposed merger of Stranmillis University College with Queen's University is ongoing, as is the work of the associated project groups. The roles and the salaries of the merger co-ordinators is a matter for the College's Governing Body.

### **Employment Service**

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people in each constituency the Employment Service has helped to find work in each of the last five years, broken down by (i) age; and (ii) gender; and how many of these people are still in employment. **(AQW 5656/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** This information has been placed in the Assembly Library and on my department's website: <http://www.delni.gov.uk>.

### **Relocation of History Courses**

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions he had with the University of Ulster on the relocation of history courses from the Magee campus to the Coleraine campus. **(AQW 5673/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** I have had no discussions with the University of Ulster regarding the relocation of its History course provision to the Coleraine campus. Northern Ireland's universities and university colleges are independent, autonomous institutions, responsible for their own policies and procedures, including course location.

My officials contacted the University of Ulster and it has stated that, in order to achieve operational efficiencies, it is eradicating the duplication of course provision between campuses, except where current provision is of such a scale to warrant duplication. The University has also said that current students will not be affected by the changes and all students will be able to complete their course at their current registered campus.

The University has also said that, by 2014/15, it aims to increase the overall number of full-time places at its Magee campus for Northern Ireland and European Union students by 344 places.

I trust you find this helpful.

### **Catholic Certificate of Religious Education in Glasgow**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning from which budget is funding sourced to pay for students from Stranmillis University College, Belfast to obtain the Catholic Certificate of Religious Education in Glasgow.

**(AQW 5706/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Funding to enable students from Stranmillis University College, Belfast to obtain the Certificate in Religious Education is sourced from the same budget as the rest of the College's recurrent grant. It is additional funding to the recurrent grant.

### **Steps to Work Programme**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of (i) carers; (ii) people with a physical disability; and (iii) people with a diagnosed mental illness who have been mandated to undertake the Steps to Work programme in the last 12 months.

**(AQW 5763/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Only unemployed jobseekers who have been claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and are available for and actively seeking work, are mandated to undertake the Steps to Work (StW) programme after a specified period in receipt of JSA.

- (i) The Department does not maintain statistics on the number of carers who were mandated to undertake StW.
- (ii) & (iii) It is not possible to disaggregate the numbers on StW with a diagnosed mental illness from those with a physical disability.

During the period 1 October 2010 to 30 September 2011, the latest period for which validated statistics are available, 1,451 JSA claimants with a self-assessed disability were mandated to undertake the StW programme.

### **Preparation for Work**

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of people who have been referred to his Department for support in preparing for work as a result of Incapacity Benefit reassessments.

**(AQW 5816/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** As at 13 December, 2,666 claimants have been referred to my Department's Employment Service for work focused support as a result of Incapacity Benefit reassessments.

### **Capital Budgets**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline his Department's capital budget for each of the next three financial years.

**(AQW 5839/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** As published in the Budget 2011-15 document the capital budget allocation for the Department for Employment and Learning for each of the next three financial years is:

	<b>12-13 £m</b>	<b>13-14 £m</b>	<b>14-15 £m</b>
Capital Expenditure (net)	32.3	18.5	28.3

Apart from a small allocation which will mainly be used to fund IT within the Department, this budget has been allocated to the Further and Higher Education sectors as follows:

	<b>12-13 £m</b>	<b>13-14 £m</b>	<b>14-15 £m</b>
Further Education	20.3	2.0	4.0
Higher Education	11.5	15.0	23.0
Department	0.5	1.5	1.3
<b>Total Capital</b>	<b>32.3</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>28.3</b>

### **Merger of Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis University College**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what is the cost to date of the proposed merger of Stranmillis University College, Belfast and Queen's University, Belfast; and who is meeting this expenditure.

**(AQW 5842/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** To date, costs of £4,066 have been incurred and met by my Department in relation to the proposed merger. Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis University College have advised me that they have incurred, and met, costs of £154,568 and £178,620 respectively. The costs incurred total £337,254.

### **Employment Legislation**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 5228/11-15, to detail why he considers that St Mary's University College, Belfast is complying with all employment legislation when he said during Question Time on 22 November 2011 that the religious 'balance of the workforce is something I have concern about'; and will he review the submitted returns to investigate whether enough was being done throughout the years to address the workforce imbalance.

**(AQW 5845/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** I believe that St. Mary's is complying with employment legislation but an imbalance in the workforce can still result. The review of submitted returns is a matter for another statutory body, in this case the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

### **Merger of Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis University College**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, in relation to the proposed merger of Queen's University, Belfast and Stranmillis University College, Belfast, (i) on what basis were the two members of Stranmillis staff retained by the Governing body after their retirement; (ii) what were their subsequent job titles; (iii) how much each one was paid; and (iv) for how long they have been in these specific posts.

**(AQW 5910/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** This is purely an employment matter which is the responsibility of the Governing Body of the College. My Department holds no information in relation to this.

## English for Speakers of Other Languages

**Ms Lo** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he will include English for Speakers of Other Languages as an essential skill which would allow migrants, whose first language is not English, to access essential skills courses in Further Education colleges.

**(AQW 5945/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department has no plans to include English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) as an essential skill.

I recognise that ESOL provision is important to the local economy and in promoting social cohesion. Consequently, the highest level of weighted funding will continue to be applied to ESOL courses provided in further education colleges. There is no cap on ESOL provision and the funding incentive has led to increased uptake and delivery in recent years. For example, in the 2010/11 academic year, over £2.4m was drawn down by FE colleges in respect of 4,204 enrolments on ESOL provision. An exercise carried out in November 2011 with the FE colleges confirmed that ESOL demand is being met, with only one college, the South Eastern Regional College, reporting a waiting list. Provision is timetabled across a range of locations during the day, evening and, in some cases, at weekends.

## Líofa 2015

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) whether any requests have been made; or (ii) whether there are any plans to use further education colleges or any other facilities controlled by his Department to deliver Líofa 2015.

**(AQW 5979/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** In October 2011, following discussions with the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, I wrote to the six Further Education colleges, and asked them to consider contributing to the Líofa initiative.

Four colleges – Belfast Metropolitan College, South West College, South Eastern Regional College, and Southern Regional College have recently decided to list their mainstream Irish language provision on the Líofa website.

## Provision of Integrated Services for Children and Young People

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what work his Department has carried out, in conjunction with the Department of Education, in relation to the provision of integrated services for children and young people.

**(AQW 5980/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department's (DEL) work with the Department of Education (DE) is wide ranging and includes many key areas.

The DE led Transitions Inter-Departmental Working Group considered how children with Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) could better realise their potential in school and progress their after school goals through further education, training, work or day care.

The two Departments are currently working together to implement their respective policies and programmes for 14 to 19 year olds in a coherent and effective way. Both Departments recognise the need to develop a highly skilled, flexible and innovative workforce that will contribute to the twin goals of economic success and social inclusion. As part of this, they have worked together to enhance the profile of vocational education under the Entitlement Framework, which guarantees equality of access for all young people at Key Stage 4 to a broad, balanced and more economically relevant curriculum with clear progression pathways.

The means-tested Education Maintenance Allowance was jointly introduced in 2004 by DEL and DE. Following a recent review of the scheme, DEL and DE have established a joint project team which is considering options for its future in order to better target the allowance at those in most need.



DEL and DE launched the joint Careers Strategy, "Preparing for Success", which aims to develop effective career decision makers in order to increase and support appropriate participation in education, training and employment.

My Department is currently leading on the development and implementation of a new Northern Ireland Regional Integrated Strategy to Widen Participation in Higher Education and is being supported in this work by a range of stakeholders, including DE.

Finally, my Department is leading on the development of a new strategy in relation to those who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and in this regard DE is one of our key partners.

### **Financial Support for Jobseekers**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether there is any financial support available for people who receive Job Seeker's Allowance and are applying for jobs which require Access NI checks.

**(AQW 6030/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Financial support is available for people on Jobseeker's Allowance, who are applying for jobs requiring AccessNI checks, through my Department's Adviser Discretion Fund. This fund facilitates the purchase of goods or services essential in assisting an unemployed person to apply for a job, or accept a job offer. If an unemployed person requires financial support to pay for an AccessNI check, he or she should make an appointment with an Employment Service Adviser in the local Jobs and Benefits office or JobCentre so that eligibility for funding can be determined.

## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

### **Common Arrangements for Gas Proposal**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) for her assessment of the Common Arrangements for Gas proposal; (ii) whether work is continuing on the project and by whom; and (iii) whether her Department or the Utility Regulator has control over the project.

**(AQW 2162/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):** Harmonising wholesale gas transmission networks in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland will allow them to be operated and regulated as a common system, set within United Kingdom and regional development of the European Union's Internal Market in Gas. It will remove cross border barriers to transmission and trading, bring operational efficiencies and promote competition, and enhance investment confidence in developing strategic gas storage in the Larne basin. This will improve security of supply and network resilience to gas emergencies.

The Regulatory Authorities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are managing the project, working with the system operators and industry. There are technical consultations underway and the Department is preparing legislation to underpin the arrangements. The project is monitored by a Joint Steering Group from the Departments and Regulators.

### **October Monitoring Round**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail any financial pressures that have been identified by her Department as part of the October Monitoring Round.

**(AQW 3213/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** As part of October monitoring, a pressure of £4.7m was identified in Tourism Ireland Limited for dedicated marketing campaigns covering NI2012 and golf, and a pressure of £3.0m was identified in the Northern Ireland Tourist Board for additional work on the surrounding public realm and buildings to Titanic Belfast.

Departments have delegated authority to meet de minimis pressures (i.e. amounts under £1m) from de minimis reductions. A number of de minimis pressures which, taken together, totalled £1.5m were addressed in October monitoring.

## Electricity Suppliers

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 2617/11-15, in light of the number of electricity suppliers operating, whether he will consider introducing the Carbon Emission Reduction Target Scheme.

**(AQW 3285/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Great Britain Carbon Emission Reduction Scheme is due to end in December 2012. The Department of Energy and Climate Change is in the process of developing new energy efficiency measures for GB including the Green Deal and the Energy Company Obligation to replace it. These schemes will not extend to Northern Ireland.

My Department is currently carrying out a study into options for increasing energy efficiency activities in Northern Ireland, including the possible introduction of an energy supplier obligation for Northern Ireland. The outcomes of the study will form the basis of a public consultation in 2012.

## Ilex Urban Regeneration Company's One Plan for Derry Regeneration Programme

**Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, with regard to Ilex Urban Regeneration Company's One Plan for Derry regeneration programme, to detail (i) the funds from her current budget that have been committed to projects under this programme; (ii) the projects that are being funded; and (iii) the start dates for these projects.

**(AQW 4139/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:**

<b>Title of Project</b>	<b>Funds from Current Budget (2011/15) Committed to Project</b>	<b>Start Date for Project</b>
City Centre Pontoon – infrastructure required to support Clipper event identified as a key milestone in Q1 2012/13.	£736,080 <sup>2</sup>	The project has commenced. It is anticipated that installation of the Pontoon will occur in late Spring 2012.
Growing the Digital Economy	Nil - To be determined <sup>3</sup>	Project start dates will be determined by ILEX, who will advise Invest NI in advance.
Accelerating growth of Tourism & Culture economy.	Nil - To be determined <sup>2</sup>	Project start dates will be determined by ILEX, who will advise Invest NI in advance.
Establish a Co-operative and Social Enterprise Hub	Nil - To be determined <sup>2</sup>	Project start dates will be determined by ILEX, who will advise Invest NI in advance.
Eco City – A transition to Green Energy	Nil - To be determined <sup>2</sup>	Project start dates will be determined by ILEX, who will advise Invest NI in advance.



<b>Title of Project</b>	<b>Funds from Current Budget (2011/15) Committed to Project</b>	<b>Start Date for Project</b>
Maritime Museum, Ebrington	Funding allocated for 2013/14. Amount to be confirmed  Estimated costs £6.6million	Awaiting funding package before start date can be announced
<b>Built Heritage Programme</b>		
Guildhall	£2.4million	January 2012
Aras Colmcille Project	£500,000	January 2012
Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall	£800,000	January 2012
Lighting Strategy	£1.4million	December 2011
City of Culture Programme 2013	£700,000	January 2013

- The project application was submitted to the EU Interreg Programme and costed in Euros. The Sterling equivalent presented is based on the Whitehall Exchange Rate for November 2011: £1 = 1.1453 Euro.
- These projects are at development stage and it is not possible to indicate the projected levels of Invest NI contribution.

## Jobs Created in Fermanagh

**Mr Lynch** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many jobs have been created in Fermanagh in the last twelve months; and how many people came off benefits as a result.

**(AQW 4553/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Care should be taken to avoid establishing fixed relationships between job creation and unemployment within a particular geographical area. For example, a new job in Fermanagh could be filled by someone from Fermanagh who was on Job Seekers Allowance – but it could also be filled by someone already in employment elsewhere, someone from outside Fermanagh, a recent school leaver or someone currently economically inactive. As a result we do not have statistics on those who move from the claimant count register into a newly created job. However, I have enclosed statistics on the overall picture on Jobs and Unemployment within the Fermanagh area.

In terms of jobs, the following table sets out the increase in employee jobs in the Fermanagh District Council Area between September 2009 and 2010. In comparison Northern Ireland experienced a 0.5% decline in employee jobs over the same period.

### CHANGE IN NUMBER OF EMPLOYEE JOBS IN FERMANAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

	<b>Sept 2009</b>	<b>Sept 2010</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Fermanagh DC	20,972	21,172	+ 200	+ 1.0

**Source:** DFP, NI Business Register and Employment Survey 2010

**Note:** Figures exclude Agriculture but include animal husbandry service activities and hunting, trapping and game propagation.

In terms of promoting jobs, Invest NI secured £7.4 million of investment, supporting 112 jobs, in the Fermanagh DCA between 1 October 2009 and 30 September 2011. In addition, over the same period,

Invest NI also supported 160 new, locally-owned, jobs indirectly through its Enterprise Development Programme.

In terms of benefits, the number of people on Job Seekers Allowance is recorded in the claimant count statistics. Between September 2009 and 2010 the number of claimants in the Fermanagh DCA increased by 131. Between September 2010 and 2011, the number of claimants increased by a further 109 to reach a total of 1,933 people.

## Hydraulic Fracturing

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) whether hydraulic fracturing has ever taken place in Northern Ireland; and if so, (ii) to outline when and where this occurred; (iii) whether the Department of the Environment undertook an environmental impact assessment in each case; and (iv) to detail the planning application reference number in each case.

**(AQW 5407/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:**

- (i) Yes;
- (ii) Hydraulic fracturing took place in three 'tight gas sandstone' exploration wells in Fermanagh in 2002:
  - Slisgarrow No. 2 [202567m E 351853m N] Fractured January 2002.
  - Knock Beg No. 1 [206259m E 348955m N] Fractured January 2002.
  - Mullanawinna No. 1 [203351m E 342228m N] Fractured February 2002.
- (iii) No.
- (iv) Not applicable.

## Hydraulic Fracturing

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 1695/11-15, whether her Department has granted consent or given permission for hydraulic fracturing to take place; and if so, to detail when and where hydraulic fracturing took place.

**(AQW 5411/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** I refer the Member to the Answer I gave to Question 5407.

## Energy Prices

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the announcements that she and her colleague, the Minister for Social Development, have made since the Assembly debate on Energy Prices on 26 September 2011, when she said 'Minister McCausland and I hope to make some announcements in the next couple of weeks in connection with some ways in which we can help to mitigate price rises and help those who are most in need'.

**(AQW 5421/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** On Monday, 3 October, the Minister for Social Development and I launched a new sustainable energy campaign aimed at encouraging consumers to become more aware of ways to reduce energy use and thereby reduce energy costs. This campaign was developed by the Sustainable Energy Inter-Departmental Working Group (SEIDWG).

This sustainable energy campaign is branded under the name 'Energy Wise' and has involved television advertising, billboards and a dedicated online presence at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/energywise](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/energywise).

This initial campaign will run until February 2012 providing energy saving advice and information on energy efficiency. Given the current challenging financial climate impacting on every household and business in Northern Ireland there is a need for increased awareness on how energy use can be controlled and reduced.

More recently, I have made clear my desire for the development of a more diverse, sustainable and competitive energy market in Northern Ireland. This has been demonstrated by my intention to extend the natural gas network, increase levels of renewable heat and electricity and attract further investment in renewable energy, highlighted by the recent DONG Energy investment.

In addition, my colleague, the Minister for Social Development has made announcements on an innovative 'pay-as-you-go' mechanism for oil customers, as well as committing to provide double glazing and appropriate thermal installation for all Housing Executive properties (a further 50,000 homes).

Finally, the member will also be aware of the recent announcement, made by the First Minister and deputy First Minister, to provide additional winter fuel allowance payments for more than 250,000 people.

All these actions demonstrate the importance that my Department, and the Executive as a whole, gives to supporting those in the most need against increased energy costs.

### **Tourism: Angling**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much money her Department, or its agencies, has invested in marketing Northern Ireland as an angling destination, in each of the last five years; and the estimated spend during this period by tourists visiting to participate in angling activities.

**(AQW 5422/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** No angling-specific marketing is undertaken by either the Northern Ireland Tourist Board or Tourism Ireland and I am therefore unable to break down actual spend on marketing Northern Ireland as an angling destination. However, angling events are promoted on [www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com) and [www.discoverireland.com](http://www.discoverireland.com) where links are available to access up to date information related to angling.

The estimated spend in each of the last five years by direct\* GB and overseas visitors who participated in angling during their stay in Northern Ireland was as follows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Spend (£m)</b>
2010	6.1†
2009	3.6
2008	6.2
2007	6.2
2006	5.1

**Source:** Northern Ireland Passenger Survey

\* These figures relate only to 'direct' GB and overseas visitors, i.e. those who exited via a Northern Ireland air or sea port and stayed at least one night in Northern Ireland. They exclude GB and overseas visitors who stayed at least one night in Northern Ireland but exited via a port in the Republic of Ireland ('via ROI' visitors).

† 2010 figures cannot directly be compared with 2006-2009 figures due to changes in survey methodology.

### **Drilling Under the Four Active Petroleum Licences**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) whether any form or type of drilling has taken place under the four active petroleum licences; (ii) to provide details of any form of drilling that has taken place for which her Department issued consent; (iii) whether, prior to her Department issuing consent to drill, an environmental impact assessment was conducted; (iv) when her Department issued consent for drilling to take place; and (v) whether, under the current licences, any form of boring or drilling is permitted without (a) planning permission; (b) an environmental impact assessment; and (c) consent from the Health and Safety Executive.

**(AQW 5423/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:**

- (i) No.
- (ii) Not applicable.
- (iii) Not applicable.
- (iv) Not applicable.
- (v) Under the current licences some forms of drilling may be permitted without
  - a Planning Permission or;
  - b An Environmental Impact Assessment  
where these drilling operations do not exceed certain thresholds with respect of site area and duration. All drilling for minerals or petroleum must be notified to Planning Service so that they can make a determination on this.
  - c Drilling a borehole is subject to the Borehole Sites and Operations Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995. Companies are not required to obtain consent, but must notify HSENI 21 days in advance of the commencement of operations and comply with drilling specific and general health and safety regulations.

**Growth Loan Fund**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the rationale behind her Department's decision to exclude businesses in the agri-food sector from the Growth Loan Fund, given that the sector is demonstrating growth at present.

**(AQW 5424/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Processors or manufacturers in the agri-food sector will be eligible to apply to the Growth Loan Fund provided they satisfy the SME criterion.

The primary production of agricultural products is not eligible as this sector lies under the remit of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development ("DARD").

**Future Rates of Unemployment**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 4142/11-15, why her Department does not produce projections for future rates of unemployment.

**(AQW 5425/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Credible economic forecasts will be those which are produced independently and those which, through the test of time, gain a track record in terms of reliability or accuracy.

As mentioned in my response to AQW 4142/11-15 my department does not produce forecasts for unemployment. This is in line with the practice in Whitehall where, to avoid criticism of economic and fiscal forecasts being influenced by politicians, the UK Government established the independent Office for Budget Responsibility. If estimates were produced by DETI these would generate similar issues around perceived independence.

It is worth noting that our unemployment rate, based upon the internationally comparable Labour Force Survey, contains a significant sampling error of +/- 1.3 percentage points around the current unemployment rate of 7.3%. This range is significantly greater than for the UK as a whole, where the sampling error is only +/- 0.3 percentage points due to the larger scale of the survey. Therefore any projection would have a very wide range to work within, leaving it of little practical use as a reliable predictor of the rate of unemployment.

Nevertheless, there are external economic forecasters who provide their own projections of future rates of unemployment, and other economic forecasts, for Northern Ireland.

## Exploratory Drilling for Oil and Gas

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) when, and where exploratory drilling for oil and gas has taken place in Northern Ireland in each of the last 12 years; (ii) whether, prior to drilling (a) planning permission was sought; (b) an environmental impact assessment was conducted; and (c) her Department conducted a habitats assessment.

**(AQW 5428/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:**

(i) The following drilling for oil and gas has taken place in each of the last 12 years:

2000	Cairncastle No. 1	(Ballytober, Co. Antrim)
2001	Knock Beg No. 1	(Knock Beg, Co. Fermanagh)
2001	Mullanawinna No. 1	(Greaghmagleragh, Co. Fermanagh)
2001	Slisgarrow No. 2	(Conagher, Co. Fermanagh)
2001	Wind Farm No. 1	(Skeahogue, Co. Fermanagh)
2008	Ballinlea No. 1	(Ballinlea Lower, Co. Antrim)

(ii) Parts (a) & (b) are matters for the Department of the Environment.

(c) No. The wells drilled at Cairncastle and Ballinlea were not close enough to any Natura 2000 sites to trigger a formal habitats assessment at that time. At the time of drilling of the Fermanagh wells in 2001 none of the current Natura 2000 sites had been formally designated.

## Draft Tourism Strategy for 2012

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many of the additional 150,000 visitors highlighted in the draft Tourism Strategy for 2012 will be from outside Northern Ireland; and on which countries her Department is focussing to provide the additional visitors.

**(AQW 5445/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Tourism Ireland's targets will see Northern Ireland welcome an additional 150,000 visitors in 2012, all from outside Northern Ireland. The Tourism Ireland Marketing Plans for 2012, which I launched on 1 December, include a new advertising campaign with the tagline 'Jump into Northern Ireland' and will be the most extensive programme of marketing activity and campaigns ever undertaken for Northern Ireland.

While the campaign will target 22 markets around the world, the key focus will be on winning market share in our top four markets of Great Britain, the United States, France and Germany.

## Fibre-Optic Network Ring Around Enniskillen

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the fibre-optic network ring around Enniskillen.

**(AQW 5459/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The fibre-optic ring, delivered by H2O Ireland Limited under the Northern Ireland Broadband Fund was completed in November 2010 and is now fully-operational and ready for customer orders.

## Shopper Footfall in Northern Ireland

**Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how she plans to maximise shopper footfall in Northern Ireland following the planned VAT increase in the Republic of Ireland.

**(AQW 5475/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Northern Ireland Tourist Board's (NITB) remit is to promote the whole of Northern Ireland to both the domestic and Republic of Ireland markets, with a view to increasing visitor numbers and spend. Each year, NITB undertakes a series of seasonal marketing campaigns in both markets.

These award winning campaigns, have successfully driven both domestic and Republic of Ireland visitor numbers and spend over recent years.

The NITB's media strategy has always been to capitalise on market conditions. The recent increase in VAT within the Republic of Ireland market, provides an opportunity to exploit the cross border shopping audience. Our media plans for our 2012 campaigns, target the key geographical border counties catchment area, with radio and press advertising.

The creative message within the campaign, is always bespoke to the audience and highlights low price accommodation deals and the proximity of Northern Ireland.

In addition to the press and radio platforms, there will also be geo-targeted outdoor advertising on key arterial traffic routes and shopping centre locations in the Republic of Ireland border counties.

## Meetings with Tamboran Resources

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) how many meetings her Department has had with Tamboran Resources over the last three years; (ii) who was present at these meetings; and (iii) to outline the agenda of each meeting.

**(AQW 5509/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:**

- (i) Officials from my Department have met representatives of Tamboran Resources on seven occasions over the last three years.
- (ii) & (iii) The dates of the meetings, attendees and agenda outlines are listed below:

**14/15 July 2010** Availability of existing exploration data

Attendees:

Director, Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI)

Tamboran representative

Tamboran representative

**27 July 2010** Availability of existing exploration data

GSNI representative

Tamboran representative

**24 September 2010** Licence Application Interview

Interview panel

DETI, Chair

British Geological Survey representative

Department of Energy & Climate Change representative

GSNI representative

GSNI representative

Tamboran representative

Tamboran representative

**12 November 2010** Availability of existing exploration reports and rock samples

GSNI representative

Tamboran representative

**15 March 2011** Introduction of Tamboran Chairman; discussion of exploration programme.

Director, GSNI

DGSNI representative

Chairman, Tamboran

Tamboran representative  
Tamboran representative

**7 June 2011** Introduction of new Tamboran CEO; environmental protection and use of chemicals; public awareness; outline drilling methodology; royalties.

Director, GSNI  
GSNI representative  
DETI representative  
CEO, Tamboran  
SLR Consulting Ltd. representative

**1 August 2011** Meeting with NI regulators on shale gas exploration & development, abstraction, discharge and impoundment licensing, planning permission, pre-drilling monitoring programme, well construction, fracturing operations and green completions

Director, GSNI  
GSNI representative  
DETI representative  
Officials from DARD, DOE, NIEA and HSENI  
Tamboran representative  
Tamboran representative

### Gaps in Fixed Line Broadband

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether a mapping exercise has been carried out to show the locations of the gaps in fixed line broadband; and, if so, will the findings be made public, and, if not, does she have any plans to commission such an exercise.

**(AQW 5518/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Broadband services are delivered using a variety of technologies across Northern Ireland. A preliminary mapping assessment have been made but looking across a range of technology platforms including wire line, radio and mobile broadband technologies. Work is underway to make a more detailed assessment across the range of technology platforms and is expected to be completed in early 2012. There are no plans to publish this information.

### Gas Exploration in County Fermanagh

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 4894/11-15, to detail the role she played in selecting the area in west Fermanagh that would be made available for gas exploration.

**(AQW 5519/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** None.

### NI Screen

**Mr Byrne** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many applications for funding NI Screen has received from the West Tyrone constituency in each of the last five years; and how many of these applications were successful.

**(AQW 5543/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Northern Ireland Screen Commission's current strategy 'Driving Global Growth' 2010 – 2014 is designed to grow and develop Northern Ireland as a production centre for film, television and digital content. It is a progression of its last strategy 'Building on Success' which attracted some of the world's largest production companies including HBO and Universal. KPMG and Oxford Economics during their appraisal of this strategy, described the NI Screen Fund as having performed excellently, with strong additionality and having exceeded its headline targets.



NI Screen's current strategy 'Driving Global Growth' which builds on the achievements of the previous strategy is focused on continuing the growth of the positive productivity impact of the screen industry in Northern Ireland so as to optimise the impact on the local economy and ensure value for money, through a balanced portfolio of investment and the development of the local skills base. My Department through Invest NI has allocated funding of £6.3m for the current year 2011 – 2012 for development of the screen industries.

The following table illustrates the number of funding applications NI Screen received from production companies in the West Tyrone constituency in each of the last five years and the number of these responses that were successful.

	2007		2008		2009		2010		2011	
	Received	Awarded	Received	Awarded	Received	Awarded	Received	Awarded	Received	Awarded
Total Awards	3	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	8	6

## InvestNI

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail how InvestNI supported the 8,267 new local business start-ups between 2007/08 and 2009/10.

**(AQW 5576/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** In the period from 2007/08 to 2009/10 Invest NI supported new local business start-ups through two programmes.

The Start a Business Programme (SABP) was available from 2007 to 31st March 2009. The SABP provided 1:1 assessments: a series of training workshops on business development issues; a financial and business planning workshop; mentoring on ICT issues and post start-up care for those businesses with growth potential. There was also support available to develop a web package.

Additionally each participant on the SABP who completed the programme and started their business on a full time basis was eligible for a grant of £400 with part-time businesses eligible for a £200 grant. The availability of grants was discontinued from the 7th April 2008 and following a further review in February 2009 it was concluded that the grant element had a very low level of additionality and correspondingly low level of Value for Money.

The start up element of the Enterprise Development Programme (EDP) was available from 1st April 2009 to 30th September 2011 and offered a range of provision to improve business capability in the form of bespoke training, mentoring, signposting and referrals. Participants were given advice on finance, marketing, sales and other fundamentals to give their business the best possible chance of success.

## Investment Commitments Secured by InvestNI

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for a breakdown of the £2.6 billion in investment commitments which InvestNI secured between 2008/2009 and 2011/2012 to date.

**(AQW 5577/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The table below shows the level of total investment planned by Invest NI clients that had an offer of assistance approved between 1st April 2008 and 30th September 2011, broken down by Parliamentary Constituency Area (PCA) and financial year. This represents the total planned cost of implementing approved projects and includes the financial support offered by Invest NI.

It should be noted that Invest NI does not allocate budgets by geographic areas such as PCAs. The geographic location of projects is determined by those businesses which bring forward projects suitable for Invest NI assistance and are based on their specific requirements.



**INVEST NI TOTAL PLANNED INVESTMENT BY PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY AREA (2008-09 TO 30TH SEP 2011-12)**

PCA	Total Planned Investment (£m)				
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	TOTAL
Belfast East	557.01	78.00	148.18	12.72	795.91
Belfast North	33.74	45.46	8.11	28.53	115.84
Belfast South	60.73	107.33	73.10	50.72	291.88
Belfast West	9.70	12.63	1.17	0.72	24.21
East Antrim	19.01	14.73	62.30	6.90	102.94
East Londonderry	9.38	18.06	7.50	1.01	35.95
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	39.74	21.75	25.12	4.72	91.33
Foyle	18.68	68.59	13.17	20.23	120.67
Lagan Valley	9.66	24.12	34.05	12.81	80.63
Mid Ulster	47.57	67.34	22.58	6.26	143.76
Newry And Armagh	89.01	27.35	44.13	4.74	165.23
North Antrim	11.65	20.27	40.46	2.38	74.76
North Down	10.80	10.71	2.90	9.93	34.34
South Antrim	31.47	17.43	74.89	8.20	132.00
South Down	29.44	18.69	8.07	5.15	61.35
Strangford	10.50	18.80	3.73	2.33	35.36
Upper Bann	74.05	78.82	27.71	16.64	197.22
West Tyrone	13.65	21.04	4.04	2.86	41.60
Not Yet Determined	6.03	1.19	36.74	1.88	45.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,081.82</b>	<b>672.31</b>	<b>637.96</b>	<b>198.72</b>	<b>2,590.81</b>

**Notes**

- 1 Figures for 2011-12 are provisional and may be subject to amendment.
- 2 08/09 Figures include the Bombardier C Series project - 836 jobs promoted, £21m assistance, £520m planned investment.
- 3 The Not Yet Determined category represents data for which this level of detail is not available.
- 4 Invest NI revises performance data on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects implemented projects; therefore, the data above may differ to previously published information.

**Solar Power Installations in Homes or Business**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what grants are available for solar power installations in homes or business.

**(AQW 5586/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Department has recently consulted on proposals to provide financial support and incentives for those wishing to install renewable heating technologies, including solar thermal panels

for hot water. These proposals are not yet finalised and my Department is carrying out further analysis in advance of launching the incentive scheme.

There are no grants for the production of electricity from solar photovoltaic panels. This technology is incentivised through the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation which provides a revenue stream for the electricity generated.

### **Expansion of the Gas Network**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how (i) Government; (ii) consumers; and (iii) industry would contribute to the funding that is required to extend the natural gas network.  
**(AQW 5598/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Following my Department's recent consultation on the potential for extending the natural gas network, I am currently considering the best way forward, including how any new gas infrastructure could be financed. In general, new gas infrastructure would be funded initially by the company licensed to develop the network, with costs recovered from consumers over a defined licence period in agreement with the Utility Regulator. If Government were to fund part of the cost of new gas infrastructure, this would reduce the impact on consumer bills.

### **Investment in Gas**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of whether the return on investment in gas can be accurately reflected given the risks of a regulated market.  
**(AQW 5600/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Investment in new energy infrastructure is recovered from consumers over a period agreed by the licensed developer and the Utility Regulator. The company therefore receives a regulated return on their investment as part of their licence to develop new gas infrastructure, with the rate of return reflecting the overall risk associated with the project.

### **Expansion of the Gas Network**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, at current prices, how much the expansion of the gas network is expected to save (i) existing gas customers; and (ii) customers availing of natural gas for the first time.  
**(AQW 5601/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** It is estimated that extending the natural gas network to the six towns in the West and North West which were identified in my Department's 2010 feasibility study, i.e. Dungannon, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Omagh, Enniskillen/Derrylin and Strabane, would result in a small increase in retail bills for all existing gas and electricity consumers. However, it is also anticipated that consumers switching to natural gas from other fuels, such as home heating oil, would see a reduction in their energy costs.

### **Expansion of the Gas Network**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the impact the expansion of the gas network will have on reliance on home heating oil.  
**(AQW 5602/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Expansion of the natural gas network in Northern Ireland should result in more energy consumers switching to gas, thus reducing reliance on home heating oil which is a more polluting and, based on current prices, more expensive fuel.

## Heating Costs

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much, on average, it costs to heat a home with (i) home heating oil; (ii) natural gas; and (iii) renewable sources of energy.

**(AQW 5603/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Based on an example of annual energy usage of 16,500kWh for household heating, costs to heat a home in the Greater Belfast licensed area by natural gas would be in the range of £733 to £815, depending on the individual supplier and before any discounts from certain payment methods are applied. Based on 500 litres of heating oil costing around £300, home heating oil costs are estimated to be in the region of £990 for similar household energy usage. All costs include VAT.

Given the diverse range of renewable energy technologies available and their variation in costs, the Department is unable to provide an up to date comparison of costs for renewable energy sources against current natural gas and heating oil prices.

## Tamboran

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail all the permissions her Department has issued to Tamboran in relation to the drilling of boreholes.

**(AQW 5636/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** No such permissions have been issued.

## Reduction in Unemployment Targets

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline her target for the reduction in unemployment levels by the end of the Programme for Government period.

**(AQW 5638/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Department does not have a target for reduction in unemployment levels by the end of the Programme for Government (PfG) period. However, one of the key indicators of success of the NI Economic Strategy will be an increase in the proportion of the working age population in employment.

This is not a DETI target but the collective responsibility of the whole Executive.

In the PfG period, DETI has a commitment to promote 25,000 new jobs. These jobs will come from a variety of sources including Foreign Direct Investment, supporting locally owned companies & new start-up businesses and through the Jobs Fund.

## Regulation of the Home Heating Oil Market

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given that there are areas which are serviced by only one oil delivery company, and that around 70 percent of home heating oil is imported by one company, for her assessment of whether there is sufficient competition in the home heating oil market to justify not regulating the industry.

**(AQW 5639/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** I have no plans to extend the powers of the independent regulator to cover home heating oil. The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) report on its review of competitiveness in the United Kingdom energy market found that genuine competition exists in Northern Ireland's domestic heating oil market, which was clearly working well for consumers. Each Northern Ireland post code area is serviced by no less than 10 heating oil distributors who can buy from stocks held in 4 local fuel terminals, which are owned by competing oil importers.

The OFT did not see any justification for price regulation across the UK on competition grounds and reported that retail and wholesale heating oil prices in recent years had been lower in Northern Ireland than other parts of the UK, due partly to high volumes sold through a large number of local distributors.

Regulation would not guarantee lower consumer prices, as any associated costs will likely be passed on to customers.

### **Banks: Lending**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action her Department can take to encourage banks to lend to struggling businesses.

**(AQW 5647/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The availability of finance at reasonable terms is a very important issue in Northern Ireland and is crucial for our economic recovery. This is reflected in the draft Economic Strategy which is currently out for public consultation and we have recently met with the main banks in Northern Ireland to emphasise the importance of supporting business development and growth.

These discussions have included encouraging banks to promote, where appropriate, the Enterprise Finance Guarantee Scheme and also stressing the importance of communicating clearly to business customers in relation to lending decisions.

DETI, through Invest NI, continues to develop and implement an Access to Capital Strategy which supports the availability of capital within the local SME market. An important element of the strategy is the establishment of a £50m Growth Loan Fund which will help small and medium sized businesses with growth ambitions. It will provide loans of between £50,000 and £500,000 to viable companies with growth plans and will be managed on a fully commercial basis.

The Finance Minister has also been working with both the UK and Irish Governments and the local banks to try to ensure that finance is available to businesses. In particular, he has been pressing the banks to ensure that the British Bankers' Association (BBA) Business Finance Taskforce report recommendations are implemented locally.

Progress in this regard was announced at a regional Better Business Finance event in Belfast on 17th November 2011, including establishing an independent appeal process and the finance that is being made available through the Business Growth Fund.

While lending has been falling in Northern Ireland, data provided by the BBA suggests that 9 of 10 loan applications are being approved.

The Finance Minister met with Sir Mervyn King, Governor of the Bank of England, on 16th November 2011 to discuss the measures that are being taken nationally to improve the stability and liquidity of the banking sector and the mechanisms that might be put in place to ensure the benefits of these steps are felt here in Northern Ireland.

In the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor has announced up to £21 billion of interventions, known as credit easing, to ease the flow of credit to businesses that do not have ready access to capital markets. Both I and the Finance Minister welcome any steps the Government are taking to improve access to finance and we are currently determining how they will be applied in Northern Ireland.

### **Gas Network to the Ten Towns Area and the Outlying Villages**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what priority has been given to extending the gas network to the ten towns area and the outlying villages.

**(AQW 5684/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** firmus energy currently has the exclusive rights to develop gas distribution networks and supply natural gas to consumers in their 'Ten Towns' area outside Greater Belfast in line with the conditions, established by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation, in the company's gas conveyance and supply licences.

To date, natural gas networks have been installed in Londonderry, Limavady, Coleraine, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Antrim, Craigavon, Banbridge, Armagh, and Newry. firmus energy has connected around 11,000 properties in these towns to date, and is continuing with roll-out of the natural gas network

within these and other towns in their licence area such as Tandragee, Warrenpoint and Ballyclare. During 2010, firmus energy further extended its gas network towards Cullybackey village and to Portstewart.

### **Smart Metre Installation Scheme**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she will consider the combination of an energy audit for each household as part of any future smart metre installation scheme. **(AQW 5689/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The combination of an energy audit for each household as part of any future smart meter installation scheme has not been included in the development of a cost benefit analysis for smart metering in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Electricity, as network owner, is responsible for installing meters and if they were to undertake an energy audit at the time of installation, these costs would need to be recovered from consumers.

An energy audit does not necessarily need to be linked with a smart meter installation and in any case free household energy audits are already available from both energy suppliers and independent energy organisations.

### **Broadband Fund**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the findings of any evaluations into projects that are funded by her Department under the Broadband Fund. **(AQW 5708/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The main findings in respect of the technology trials undertaken by Avanti Communications and supported under the Broadband Fund have previously been provided in response to AQW 5343/11-15.

Of the remaining projects the following are the key findings:

- The Broadband Fund has helped companies delivering the projects to make the commercial model for further investment in rural networks;
- Supported projects have accelerated delivery of a range of high-speed broadband services in remote and rural prioritised areas;
- Broadband Fund has provided a strong strategic fit with Project Kelvin, with one of the network operators, North West Electronics now passing on higher bandwidth, lower cost fixed wireless services through a backhaul agreement on the Kelvin network;
- Localised support for bids and post-delivery marketing of services can ensure sustainability of solutions;
- Access to public sector infrastructure, where available, can help improve the business model for investment and offer revenue-sharing opportunities

### **Broadband Enhancement Scheme**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what types of businesses qualify for the Broadband Enhancement Scheme. **(AQW 5709/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** DETI does not run any scheme called the Broadband Enhancement Scheme.

### **Broadband Enhancement Scheme**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether agricultural businesses qualify for the Broadband Enhancement Scheme. **(AQW 5710/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** DETI does not run any scheme called the Broadband Enhancement Scheme.

## Geothermal Energy Plants

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what she is doing to make the establishment of geothermal energy plants viable.

**(AQW 5716/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Department is committed to developing all forms of renewable energy in line with targets set in the Strategic Energy Framework of 10% renewable heat and 40% renewable electricity by 2020. Deep geothermal energy is already eligible for incentives in the form of Renewable Obligation Certificates for renewable electricity generation. In addition, my Department is considering how renewable heat from deep geothermal resource could be incentivised and had a call for evidence as part of the recent public consultation on the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive.

In addition, the Geological Survey is a partner in the IRETherm project, a programme of research into the deep geothermal energy resources in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; this is funded by Science Foundation Ireland and runs from 2011-15. This project will evaluate the deep geothermal potential of the sedimentary basins and granites of Northern Ireland using innovative modelling techniques and will build on the results from previous research commissioned under the Innovation Fund.

## Geothermal Energy Facility

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action she is taking to ensure that the areas, such as Ballymena, that have been identified for basing a geothermal energy facility will not be disadvantaged because of the availability of the gas network in the area.

**(AQW 5717/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** I am aware of the significant potential geothermal energy resource that Northern Ireland has and therefore my Department recently sought evidence from stakeholders on how best this sector could be developed and incentivised.

This call for evidence was part of the consultation of the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI); my Department is now carrying out further analysis on this policy following the consultation process. In the initial proposals a deep geothermal energy project would be eligible for 0.9 p/kwh, this level of support was not dependent on the location of the project or the availability of gas, therefore there is no difference in support to a geothermal project in a 'gas area' than one in a 'non-gas area'. As part of the ongoing analysis work an assessment will be taken on the appropriate level of support for deep geothermal.

The introduction of the renewable heat market and the extension of the natural gas network are two complementary policies that will support the development of a more sustainable, secure, diverse and competitive heat market.

## Foreign Direct Investment

**Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much Foreign Direct Investment has been secured for 2011/12; and how this compares to the previous three years.

**(AQW 5751/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The table below shows the amount of inward investment committed through projects approved by Invest NI for an offer of financial support in 2008/09, 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12 to date. The year to date position is represented along with the final outturn for each of the last 3 years.

These projects have been assisted under a number of Invest NI schemes aimed at both employment creation and other business development activities, such as R&D, training, trade activities and technology and process development. This split is also represented in the table.

Invest NI Inward Investment Supported between 1st April 2008 and 30th Nov 2011

Fin Year	1st April - 30th November			1st April to 31st March		
	Job-Related	Business Development	Total	Job-Related	Business Development	Total
2008-09	672.80	24.93	697.72	692.59	42.25	734.84
2009-10	71.35	71.51	142.86	189.01	79.65	268.65
2010-11	148.70	51.90	200.60	235.79	76.46	312.25
2011-12	85.03	32.28	117.30	-	-	-

**Notes:**

- 1 2011-12 figures are provisional and may be subject to change.
- 2 2008-09 figures include the Bombardier C Series project - 836 jobs promoted, £21m assistance, £520m planned investment.
- 3 Invest NI revises performance data on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects implemented projects; therefore, the data above may differ to previously published information.

The investment represents the expected cost of the projects to externally-owned businesses and includes Invest NI's financial support. It reflects an intention to invest in the future and although the vast majority of projects are implemented, some may not proceed as planned.

In terms of future prospects for inward investment, the pipeline of new projects has reduced from previous years due to the current global economic conditions, which have contributed to flat growth and uncertainty in the market, with companies delaying their international expansion plans.

Invest NI is continuing to push the Northern Ireland proposition in its key markets to ensure that, in the medium to longer term, it is well placed to take advantage of any upturn.

Although the current market remains volatile and further downturns are predicted, Invest NI is still pursuing projects, particularly within the financial services / ICT / software sectors. Invest NI is also considering the pipeline for Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO) and contact centre employment and is actively engaging with companies with projects in this business activity through the Jobs Fund programme.

Invest NI continues to investigate new and emerging sectors which present foreign direct investment opportunities for Northern Ireland, such as creative industries, digital media, renewables and professional services.

### Permissions to Drill Boreholes

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail of any permissions to drill boreholes that her Department has issued to companies holding petroleum licences.

**(AQW 5760/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Department has not issued any permissions for borehole drilling on any of the petroleum licences currently held in Northern Ireland. My Answer to the Member's earlier question AQW5428/11-15 provides details of boreholes for which my Department issued permissions to drill on previously held licences within the last 12 years.

### Tamboran's Petroleum Licence

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether rescinding Tamboran's petroleum licence would prevent Tamboran from undertaking hydraulic fracturing in years four and five of the work programme outlined in their licence.

**(AQW 5762/11-15)**



**Mrs Foster:** Yes. A company can only carry out petroleum exploration, appraisal or development in Northern Ireland if it holds a valid petroleum licence granted by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. The Petroleum Production Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987, as amended by The Petroleum Production (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010, set out the circumstances in which the Department may revoke a petroleum licence.

### **Agri-Food: A Study for Cross-Border Cooperation Report**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment which of the recommendations included in the Agri-Food: A Study for Cross-Border Cooperation report her Department will adopt and implement.

**(AQW 5766/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Food Strategy Board may wish to consider the Report as part of its strategy for the long term development of the sector.

### **Tamboran**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the average size of drill pad that Tamboran plans to use in Fermanagh; (ii) the approximate number of drill pads it will use; (iii) the average number of bore holes in each drill pad; (iv) the average amount of water that will be needed for each drill pad per year; (v) how Tamboran plans to transport, collect and store this amount of water; (vi) the chemicals that Tamboran will use in both the drilling and fracturing process; (vii) where Tamboran plans to store any excess water or fracking fluid that comes back out of the ground; and (viii) whether any part of the fracking zone in Fermanagh has been identified as having a high level of radon gas.

**(AQW 5771/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Tamboran Resources are still at an early stage in the development of their plans for submitting an application to drill an exploration borehole to evaluate the shale gas potential of their petroleum licence area. The company have published details of their proposed methodology on their website ([www.tamboran.com](http://www.tamboran.com)) but this may be subject to modification in the light of the results from any initial exploration well and fracturing operation that might take place in the future.

### **Broadband Fund**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the number of broadband connections that have been made by each company that received funding under the Broadband Fund; (ii) the total amount of funding given to each successful applicant; and (iii) the cost to her Department of each connection for each company.

**(AQW 5834/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:**

- (i) Prioritised investment areas under the Broadband Fund include those where a range of stakeholders have lobbied my Department for improvement of services and indicated significant consumer demand. My Department's investments are designed to deliver legacy infrastructure that will be exploited over a prolonged period of time. Numbers of broadband connections will change over a period of time and my Department does not maintain information of this nature.
- (ii) On each occasion that a call for proposals under the Fund has been completed I have announced publicly the funding made available to successful applicants. Details are set out below:

<b>Call</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Funding £</b>
1	North West Electronics	£237k
	Avanti Communications	£137K



Call	Applicant	Funding £
3	Net 1 Limited	£116k
	North West Electronics	£62K
4	H2O Ireland Limited	£46k
	North West Electronics	£41K
5	BT plc	£250k
6	North West Electronics	£215K

(iii) My Department does not maintain information of this nature.

### Energy Companies: Salaries

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department, or the Utility Regulator, has any influence on the determination of pay grades for senior members of staff within energy generation or distribution companies; and if not, whether she has any plans to make influencing powers available.

**(AQW 5836/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Since electricity privatisation in 1992 and since the inception of the natural gas industry in the mid-1990s, all energy companies in Northern Ireland have been privately owned. Neither my Department nor the Utility Regulator has any power to set salary scales for private energy companies, nor would it be appropriate to intervene with private companies in this way.

### Improvement and Prohibition Notices

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many Improvement and Prohibition notices have been issued to each District Council by the Health and Safety Executive in the last five years.

**(AQW 5928/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland has issued a total of 23 enforcement notices to Councils in the last five years. The notices are set out in the table below.

Council	Improvement Notice	Prohibition Notice	Total
Ards	1	0	1
Belfast City	1	0	1
Carrickfergus	6	2	8
Coleraine	2	0	2
Craigavon	2	5	7
Fermanagh	2	0	2
Larne	1	0	1
North Down	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>23*</b>

\* The recipient of an enforcement notice may appeal to an Industrial Tribunal within 21 days of service of the notice. Therefore the table does not include notices served which are still within the appeal period.

## Department of the Environment

### Scottish Executive: Planning Policy 6 Renewables

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of the Environment (i) for his assessment of the Scottish Executive's Planning Policy 6 Renewables; and (ii) whether he would consider having a separation distance for large wind farms on the edge of cities, towns and villages or areas of clustered housing and local communities. **(AQW 3297/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment):** SPP 6 'Renewable Energy' was superseded in February 2010 by the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) document. The SPP supports the development of a diverse range of renewable technologies in order to meet climate change and renewable energy targets; increase security and diversity of supply; and support sustainable economic growth.

The SPP recommends that planning authorities should, in preparing development plans, establish a spatial framework for onshore wind farms over 20 megawatts generating capacity. This framework should comprise, areas of search where wind farm proposals are likely to be supported; areas requiring significant protection; and other areas of potential constraint where proposals will be considered on their merits against defined criteria

To assist with formulating this framework, the policy recommends a separation distance of up to 2km between areas of search and the edge of cities, towns and villages. This is not a minimum separation distance and the SPP also states that decisions on individual developments should take account of specific local circumstances and geography.

The current policy for assessing wind energy developments in Northern Ireland is set out in PPS18 'Renewable Energy'. This policy already requires a separation distance of 10 times the length of the rotor diameter to any occupied property, with a minimum distance of not less than 500m

### Recycling in Homes

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department intends to take to increase recycling in homes. **(AQW 4523/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The Department has consulted on a new recycling policy for local authority collected municipal waste and I will be considering the outcome of that consultation in the next few weeks to see what further measures can be implemented to increase recycling. I will act quickly

However, under the Rethink Waste Programme, the Department provides a range of incentives to increase levels of recycling. These range from the provision of financial assistance to technical advice.

The Rethink Waste (Capital) Fund helps increase levels of recycling by providing direct funding to local councils to cover the capital costs of improving or extending their existing collection services and infrastructure for reuse and recycling.

Councils, as well as the private and Community & Voluntary sectors, can also apply for funding under the Rethink Waste (Revenue) Fund for revenue funding for initiatives which will boost waste prevention, recycling and re-use activity particularly for household waste.

The Department also provides grant-in-aid funding to the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to provide technical advisory support to local councils for improving the quality and efficiency of collection and recycling services offered to households.

The Department is working closely with a variety of stakeholders to raise awareness of waste prevention and recycling through the Rethink Waste Campaign. Fully funded Love Food Hate Waste and composting demonstration packages have been offered by the Department to every council in Northern Ireland to assist in reducing waste to landfill through waste prevention, reuse and recycling.

In the last 9 months the Department has worked with stakeholders, primarily local government, to promote themed national weeks relating to home composting, recycling and waste reduction.

The Campaign is underpinned by a national advertising campaign that reinforces the awareness of the “3 Rs – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” with householders.

### **Reduction in Plastic Bag Use**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has any plans to reduce the amount of plastic bags that are polluting landfill sites.

**(AQW 4912/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** I agree that discarded carrier bags present a significant environmental problem. Resolving this problem is the key driver behind the proposal to introduce a bag levy from 1 April 2013 and to extend the levy to a range of reusable bags.

The levy is an environmental initiative intended to reduce bag consumption significantly and experience elsewhere has shown that introducing a levy can lower bag consumption by up to 90%. A reduction of this scale in Northern Ireland would deliver substantial environmental benefits, including significantly reducing the number of bags ending up in landfill sites.

The Department has recently completed a consultation on proposals for the introduction of the levy. This sought views on issues such as the type of bags to be covered by the new arrangements, the amount of the charge and arrangements for administration, collection and enforcement.

I am currently considering the responses received, before taking a final decision on the way forward. I can however confirm that the levy will cover all single use bags not just plastic bags. This reflects the fact that paper bags and other alternatives can be just as damaging to the environment as plastic bags.

I can also confirm that I intend to bring forward new primary legislation which extends the levy to cover certain types of reusable bags. The rationale for this is to avoid a scenario where consumers use low-priced reusable bags as a replacement for single use bags – and discard them in the same way.

Finally, I can confirm that the Executive has approved my proposal for a phased approach to the implementation of the carrier bag charging arrangements. This entails the initial introduction of a levy on single use bags from April, extending to reusable carrier bags in April 2014.

### **Search for Shale Gas in the Lough Allen Basin**

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with (i) the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment; and (ii) his counterpart in the Republic of Ireland in relation to the environmental impacts of the search for shale gas in the Lough Allen Basin.

**(AQW 5042/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** My officials in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) are participating on a working group recently established by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) on the issue of shale gas exploration and fracking. The working group consists of representatives from all government departments and agencies with a potential regulatory role in relation to fracking activities. I have said that current and future developments will be subject to any appropriate environmental assessments.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has also been in contact with the Republic of Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the fracking proposals in counties Leitrim and Cavan.

It is entirely reasonable to enquire about the impact on the Lough Allen Basin. I have therefore requested officials to in particular, discuss this issue with colleagues in the Republic and provide me with advice by the middle of January 2012.

## Slurry Spreading: Closed Period

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he is aware of any research, historical or on-going, into the effects on the environment of the closed period for slurry spreading.

**(AQW 5216/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** I am aware of a wealth of research into the effects of spreading of organic manures during the months covered by the closed period set out in the Nitrates Action Programme which was introduced to meet Northern Ireland's legal and environmental obligations under the EC Nitrates Directive. A selection of references to just some of the scientific research carried out on the subject is attached at Annex A.

A number of the measures, including a closed period for the land spreading of nitrogen fertiliser, contained in the 2010 NAP Regulations are mandatory under the Nitrates Directive and the requirement within the Directive for closed periods is based on extensive, worldwide, peer-reviewed scientific research.

Closed periods promote best practice to obtain maximum benefit from nutrients in fertilisers for crop growth while protecting the environment. Organic manures, including slurry, are potent sources of nutrients and the purpose of the closed period is to encourage application of organic manures under favourable conditions when the nutrients will be utilised by growing crops and prevent their application to land when the potential for loss of nutrients to both surface waters and groundwater is highest. The scientific evidence confirms that this risk is greatest in autumn and winter. In addition to causing short term pollution problems, nutrient enrichment of surface water contributes to eutrophication which is a widespread problem in Northern Ireland's rivers, lakes and loughs; and a large proportion of this nutrient enrichment is attributable to agriculture. The scientific evidence also shows that, in climatic regions such as Northern Ireland, during November, December and January, crops and grass continue to grow but growth rate is limited by low soil temperatures, short day length and wet soils.

The dates for the closed periods specified within the Northern Ireland action programme are based upon robust local research carried out by highly reputed scientists in the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), the University of Ulster and Queen's University. The scientific report of that work, including references to scientific research on the impact of slurry spreading during winter time on the environment, can be viewed at:

<http://www.doeni.gov.uk/nia/darddoe23oct02.pdf>

In 2010, the 2006 NAP Regulations, including the measures for the closed period, were reviewed and as part of that review, a scientific working group (consisting of scientists from DARD, AFBI and DOE) produced a report outlining changes in water quality since the introduction of the 2006 NAP Regulations. The results showed that, with the 2006 NAP Regulations having been in place from 1 January 2007 and all measures operational from 1 January 2009:

- nitrate levels in surface freshwaters and groundwater appear to be generally stable;
- long-term trend analysis shows that the monthly trends in average nitrate and phosphorus concentrations in rivers in Northern Ireland are predominantly decreasing or stable;
- there is still evidence of eutrophication in rivers, lakes and marine waters;
- it will take longer for a response to be detected in biological indicators of trophic status and in lakes and marine waters;
- trends in fertiliser use and improved use of manures are very encouraging.

The scientific report produced for the review can be viewed at: [http://www.doeni.gov.uk/nap\\_review\\_final.pdf](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/nap_review_final.pdf)

The 2010 consultation document can be viewed at:

[http://www.doeni.gov.uk/consultation\\_nitrates\\_action\\_programme\\_regulations\\_\\_northern\\_ireland\\_\\_2010.pdf](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/consultation_nitrates_action_programme_regulations__northern_ireland__2010.pdf)

As part of the review, DOE and DARD officials also engaged with the European Commission to discuss proposals for the new action programme. The Commission continues to question whether the current closed period in Northern Ireland is of sufficient length and has raised concerns regarding the application of manures in early October and during February. A research project on manure application during these periods is being carried out at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute.

In addition, as part of the monitoring and reporting requirements of the Nitrates Directive, the Departments continue to monitor water quality throughout Northern Ireland and the Commission has made it clear that future requests for derogations from the Directive will be assessed against any improvements in water quality.

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## Planning Applications for Wind Turbines

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of the Environment (i) to detail the number of planning applications received for single wind turbines in the (a) North Down Borough Council; and (b) Ards Borough Council areas in each of the last five years; and (ii) of these, how many have been approved.

**(AQW 5261/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The following applications have been received and decisions issued.

**TABLE 1: SINGLE TURBINE APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FOR ARDS AND NORTH DOWN LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISTRICTS, 2006/07 TO 2010/11**

	Ards	North Down
2006/07	3	2
2007/08	9	2
2008/09	9	1



	<b>Ards</b>	<b>North Down</b>
2009/10	4	2
2010/11	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>

**Source:** Planning NI

**TABLE 2: SINGLE TURBINE APPLICATION DECISIONS FOR ARDS AND NORTH DOWN LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISTRICTS, 2006/07 TO 2010/11**

	<b>Ards</b>		<b>North Down</b>	
	<b>Approved</b>	<b>Refused</b>	<b>Approved</b>	<b>Refused</b>
2006/07	4	0	1	0
2007/08	6	0	2	0
2008/9	11	1	1	0
2009/10	5	0	2	0
2010/11	2	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>

**Source:** Planning NI

Planning is currently engaged in an exercise to cleanse and enhance the quality of historic data held which relates to renewable energy applications. As such the data provided in this document may be subject to later revision.

## Private Cemeteries

**Mr McLaughlin** asked the Minister of the Environment what legislation governs the creation of private cemeteries.

**(AQW 5389/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** Under the provisions of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, the creation of a private cemetery would be regarded as development and, as such, would require permission following the submission of a planning application.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Water Management Unit (WMU) is required under the Water Framework Directive to improve or maintain the quality of all our waters, both surface and groundwater. WMU also has a duty to protect surface water and groundwater quality under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 and the Groundwater Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009. It is important to note that these pieces of legislation apply to extensions to existing cemeteries as well as proposed new cemetery developments.

## Outstanding Debt in Local Government

**Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the current level of outstanding debt in local government.

**(AQW 5552/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** Councils, are bodies corporate as defined in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, and as such, are independent of the NI Executive and the department, and directly responsible for decisions regarding their own financial affairs.

I am very much aware of the current level of debt and the complexity of managing debts and assets with RPA. I have no indication from the Chief Local Government Auditor that there is any such impropriety in relation to the amount of monies borrowed by councils.

### Magherafelt Area Plan

**Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of the Environment whether the Magherafelt Area Plan is on schedule to be adopted in December 2011.

**(AQW 5632/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The Magherafelt Area Plan was adopted on schedule on 14 December 2011.

## Department of Finance and Personnel

### Civil Service: Secondments

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) how many civil servants have been on secondment to the private sector in each of the last three years; and (ii) at what level has the salary of these secondments been recouped.

**(AQW 3105/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):** Over the last three years there has been only one civil servant seconded to the private sector. This secondment of a member of the senior civil service commenced in August 2011.

On occasions, the NICS will recoup salary costs for secondees from the host organisation. The level of recoupment depends on the terms agreed between the civil service and the host organisation. The arrangements currently in place are to recoup 54% of the salary costs of the SCS member who is seconded to the private sector.

### Recruitment: Civil Service

**Mr McGimpsey** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many staff he intends recruiting to the Civil Service in each year of the 2011-15 budget period.

**(AQW 3575/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The most recent available estimates from Departments on the numbers of staff required to be recruited to the General Service grades in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (which make up approximately two thirds of the total workforce) are provided in the table overleaf. The figures take account of current vacancies and past trends on how general service staff move through or leave the NICS and are based on information and forecasts which are currently available. The number of staff to be recruited to the Northern Ireland Civil Service is kept under review and estimates are revised as appropriate.

It is not possible to provide figures on the number of staff in non general service grades who may be recruited over the period up to 2015, as this information is not held by Departments.

Estimates of potential external recruitment to the General Service grades

	<b>July 2011 - March 2012</b>	<b>April 2012 - March 2013</b>	<b>April 2013 - March 2014</b>	<b>April 2014 - March 2015</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>2239</b>

The latest quarterly NICS workforce monitoring figures indicate that there is projected to be an overall net reduction of approximately 1,500 NICS posts over the Budget 2010 period.

## Business Finance

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in light of the high proportion of businesses that are dependent on banking finance, for his assessment of the optimal number of businesses that should be financed by the banking sector; and what options the Executive has for promoting a more diverse range of business finance.

**(AQW 5107/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** As you suggest, the banking sector is an important source of finance, particularly for our Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs), and I have been working with both the UK and Irish Governments and the local banks to try and ensure that credit is available to businesses at reasonable terms. Many businesses also draw on other sources of finance, such as equity funding, however this is often used to complement rather than entirely replace bank lending. Therefore it is not appropriate to talk in terms of the optimal number of businesses financed by the banking sector.

That said, I believe more of our businesses could also avail of alternative sources of finance and DETI, through Invest NI, continues to develop and implement an Access to Capital Strategy which supports the availability of capital within the local SME market. Over the next seven years, and using a combination of public sector funds leveraging in private sector monies, Invest NI will deliver a range of initiatives that will allow access to capital funds of over £100m. This offers a continuum of funding from £50k to £2m available for investment or lending to companies. The initiatives will include a seed and early stage fund of approx £12m, a co-Investment fund of £16m, a development fund of £30m and a growth loan fund of £50m. In particular, the growth loan fund will provide loans, primarily unsecured in nature, of between £50,000 and £500,000 to viable businesses in the manufacturing or tradable services sectors.

A UK Business Growth Fund has also been established following a recommendation by the Business Finance Taskforce in this regard and this is also open to businesses in Northern Ireland. It became operational in April 2011 and the total amount of equity available is £2.5 billion. The financing opportunities offered by this fund were highlighted at the Better Business Finance event which I attended in Belfast on 17th November 2011.

## Civil Service: Secondments

**Mr Dallat** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of Civil Servants, in each Department, who have been seconded to the private sector in each of the last three years; (ii) the length of the secondment in each case; and (iii) in how many cases there has been a short-fall in salary.

**(AQW 5213/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** In the last 3 years one civil servant has been seconded to the private sector. The secondment commenced in August 2011 and is still in place. The host organisation is reimbursing the NICS at a rate of 54% of the secondee's salary.

## Public Sector Salaries

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail all posts in the public sector where the annual salary is over £100,000.

**(AQW 5489/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The information requested is not readily available and can only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

## Public and Private Sector Workforce

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what percentage of the workforce, in the private and public sectors, currently earn over £100,000 per annum.

**(AQW 5490/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** At April 2011, the percentage of the Northern Ireland public sector workforce earning over £100,000 per annum was estimated to be 0.3%. In the Northern Ireland private sector, the comparable percentage at April 2011 was 0.4%.

### Public Sector Salaries

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the wage gap between the average public sector worker and the highest earning public sector worker; and how this figure compares to each of the last 10 years.

**(AQW 5491/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The information required to detail the wage gap between the average public sector worker and the highest earning public sector worker over the last ten years is not readily available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost. However, the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) can be used to compare estimated full-time median public sector earnings with the 99th percentile earnings figure. The 99th percentile is the figure above which 1% of employees had higher earnings in the public sector for 2002-2011. These estimates are provided in the attached table.

Year	Public Sector Median	99th Percentile
2002	£22,768	£64,169
2003	£23,053	£62,416
2004ex	£24,253	£77,302
2004	£24,280	£77,302
2005	£24,596	£79,837
2006inc	£25,262	x
2006	£25,019	£75,837
2007	£25,208	£75,793
2008	£25,621	£67,468
2009	£27,237	£80,902
2010	£27,365	x
2011	£28,720	£86,390

Please note that these estimates are from a sample survey and are accordingly subject to an associated degree of sampling error.

x = Statistically unreliable at the 90th percentile.

**Source:** Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

### Ex-Public Sector Workers with Pleural Plaques

**Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the process for ex-public sector workers with Pleural Plaques to apply for compensation under the new Damages (Asbestos-related Conditions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

**(AQW 5608/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The aim of the Damages (Asbestos-related Conditions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 is to ensure that a claim in negligence arising from certain asymptomatic asbestos-related conditions is not ruled out as a result of a decision of the House of Lords in 2007. Accordingly, the Act provides that those conditions are to constitute actionable damage for the purpose of a claim for damages for personal injuries. However, the Act does not provide for an automatic payment of damages, nor does it

introduce new procedural rules for the handling of claims. Each claimant will, therefore, have to pursue his or her own claim and must seek his or her own legal advice, which will take account of his or her circumstances.

### **Civill Servants and Public Sector Workers who live in the Foyle Constituency**

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of (i) civil servants; and (ii) public sector workers who live in the Foyle constituency and currently work in Belfast, broken down by (a) Department or organisation; (b) full-time posts; and (c) part-time posts.

**(AQW 5617/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The table overleaf sets out the NI Civil Service position in accordance with the most recently published data at 1 January 2011. For the purposes of this AQ, Belfast has been defined as the four Belfast Parliamentary Constituencies. It is not possible to provide information in relation to public sector workers, as details of home addresses are not held.

### **NICS STAFF WORKING IN THE FOUR BELFAST PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES WITH A HOME ADDRESS IN THE FOYLE CONSTITUENCY AT 1 JANUARY 2011**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Total</b>
DARD	5
DEL	10
DFP	22
DHSSPS	3
DOE	9
DRD	3
DSD	42
*OTHER	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>

<b>Full Time</b>	<b>Part-Time/Job Share</b>	<b>Total</b>
90	8	98

#### **Notes**

- \* "Other" category includes staff in other Departments whose numbers are too small to publish individually. Departmental numbers have been grouped to protect individual confidentiality.  
Data sourced from HRConnect @ 1st Jan 2011.  
Data provided for all NICS staff with Home and Work Location data recorded.  
Data excludes Casual Staff and Staff on Career Break.  
Data includes secondees out of the NICS, if any, shown against their parent department.  
Excludes uniformed NI Prison Service Staff

### **Tendering Process: Pre-Qualification Questionnaires**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consideration he has given to changing the tendering process so that Pre-Qualification Questionnaires (PQQ) are no longer required for contracts below a set, reasonable value, and that the cost of PQQs is no longer a financial burden on the competing companies going through the tendering process.

**(AQW 5642/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Prequalification is a normal feature of the tendering process for construction contracts. It provides government construction clients with the assurance that only competent contractors are invited to tender and, by shortlisting applicants, it reduces the costs to industry as a whole by limiting the number of contractors who are put to the considerable expense of submitting a tender.

The prequalification questionnaire should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the contract. Nevertheless, I recognise that it can be a burden on individual contractors and on Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) in particular.

In recognition of this, Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), in common with the CoPEs, already uses a simplified procurement process for procurements under £30,000 which does not require submission of a PQQ. However this is not appropriate for contracts valued over £30,000, which are required to be publically advertised.

In light of this, my officials in CPD are actively engaged with industry representatives in the development of simplified prequalification processes that could be used in relation to lower value construction related contracts, which are not subject to the detailed requirements of EU procurement regulations.

I expect the discussions with industry to bear fruit early in the New Year.

CPD Supplies and services contracts below the EU threshold do not use PQQs.

## **Procurement Contracts**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether Departments are delivering best value for money for procurement contracts.

**(AQW 5671/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Departments are subject to NI procurement policy as approved by the Executive. The core ethos of the policy is the delivery of best value for money and it is the responsibility of Departments, working with Centres of Procurement Expertise (CoPEs) to ensure that this is achieved.

In the last 3 years (2008-2011), for example, savings recorded by CPD (on behalf of Departments) amounted to £71.6m.

Procurement Policy requires Departments and CoPEs to follow best practice procurement which satisfies the 12 guiding principles including competitive supply and compliance with Procurement legislation. Adherence with these principles is key to ensuring that best value for money is achieved.

The Procurement Board's Strategic Plan for 2011 – 2014 includes a key objective for "delivering Best Value for Money in a challenging economic climate". Progress towards the targets underpinning this objective will be monitored by the Procurement Board on a regular basis.

## **Public Payroll: Salaries**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people on the public payroll earn (i) between £95,000 and £139,999; and (ii) more than £140,000 per annum.

**(AQW 5720/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The information requested is not readily available and can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

## **Vacant Properties**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many vacant properties there are in each council area.

**(AQW 5740/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The number of vacant properties in each District Council area as at 11th December 2011 are listed in the attached table.

<b>District Council</b>	<b>Number of Vacant Properties</b>
Antrim	1,135
Ards	2,250
Armagh	2,126
Ballymena	1,453
Ballymoney	782
Banbridge	1,505
Belfast	11,972
Carrickfergus	844
Castlereagh	1,173
Coleraine	2,499
Cookstown	1,407
Craigavon	2,838
Derry	2,343
Down	2,364
Dungannon and South Tyrone	2,669
Fermanagh	3,346
Larne	958
Limavady	1,113
Lisburn	2,717
Magherafelt	1,264
Moyle	715
Newry and Mourne	3,623
Newtownabbey	1,388
North Down	1,707
Omagh	2,536
Strabane	1,244
<b>Northern Ireland Total</b>	<b>57,971</b>

### **Prompt Payment of Invoices**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what arrangements are in place to ensure the prompt payment of invoices by Government bodies for services provided by local businesses.

**(AQW 5741/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** In November 2008 a letter was issued to all Accounting Officers asking for their support in meeting the UK wide commitment to pay suppliers for agreed invoices within 10 days. Since then,



Account NI, the NICS financial shared services centre, has suspended the application of normal payment terms, which were typically 30 days, meaning that where payments are otherwise ready for issue they will be released for payment within the 10 day target.

Account NI has taken steps to minimise invoice processing times, with invoices being paid once they have been fully authorised and quality assured by departmental officials and educating suppliers where invoices are being held and identified as 'in dispute'.

In addition to a range of services provided by Account NI to help suppliers ensure the prompt payment of their invoices Account NI publishes monthly statistics on the prompt payment performance. <http://www.accountni.dfpni.gov.uk/index/working-with-suppliers/faqs-3.htm>

## Late Payment of Invoices

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the position on the payment of extra fees faced by Government bodies as a result of the late payment of invoices.

**(AQW 5742/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The NICS is committed to the Better Payments Practice Code, as set out in Annex 4.6 of Managing Public Money, and is subject to the Late Payment of Commercial Debt Regulations 2002. These regulations provide a statutory right for suppliers to claim interest on late payments of commercial debt. Payment is regarded as late if it is made outside the agreed terms, or 30 days after receipt of a valid invoice where no terms are agreed.

Any expenditure incurred as a result of such claims should be treated as exceptional and must be noted in the organisation's resource accounts.

## Budget Expenditure Lines

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why budget expenditure lines are not broken down sufficiently to give transparency, and meaningful information, on actual spending allocations within each Department, particularly in relation to the high spending Departments such as the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Education.

**(AQW 5793/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The Terms of Reference for the Review of the Financial Process in Northern Ireland, agreed by the previous Executive on 10 February 2011, has the ultimate aim of a transparent financial framework of Budgets, Estimates and Accounts that will enhance scrutiny and accountability.

In the Discussion Paper issued in October on the Review, the issue of transparency of departmental expenditure plans was addressed. Recommendation 6 makes the initial proposal that spending areas in departmental expenditure plans should be re-structured in such a way as to be meaningful and informative to the reader and indicative of the range of services delivered by each Department.

Officials are currently assessing the responses to the Review, including this issue, and I will bring a Report, with final recommendations, to the Executive in the new year. I plan to report the outcome of the Review to the Assembly in the Spring of 2012.

Meanwhile, I would point out that the majority of spend by the Departments of Education and Health & Social Services flows via arms length bodies such as the Education and Library Boards or the Health and Social Care Trusts - the expenditure of these Bodies is published in detail in their annual accounts and laid in the Assembly each year.

## Payment of Invoices

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the change in meeting the targets set for the payment of invoices in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 5865/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The Department of Finance and Personnel, through its shared service centre, Account NI, is involved in the processing of invoices on behalf of Departments. Performance for the last three years is as follows:

Year	% Paid in 30 Calendar Days	% Paid in 10 Working Days
2009/10	84	57
2010/11	93	79
2011/12 (to date)	96	88

The most recent figures, for November 2011, are 99% and 90% respectively.

Departments migrated to Account NI between 2007 and 2009. The Department of Justice will join in 2012. The figures represent all invoices processed through Account NI in the relevant period.

Unless otherwise stated in a contract, the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act sets a target of paying invoices within 30 calendar days of their presentation, or within the date of receipt of services, whichever is later.

Additionally, in November 2008, the then DFP Minister announced that Northern Ireland Civil Service Departments should aim to pay valid invoices within 10 working days.

### **Civil Service: Absenteeism**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what measures are being pursued to reduce the levels of absenteeism in the Civil Service.

**(AQW 5947/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Managing attendance remains a key priority within the Civil Service and there are a comprehensive range of policies and procedures in place to address the problem. Help and support for staff at work and throughout their illness is available, including professional interventions, assistance with rehabilitation and reasonable adjustments. The revised inefficiency sickness absence policy focuses on areas such as return to work interviews, warning action and a new process for managing long term sick absence.

Prevention of illness and promotion of healthy lifestyles are integral to the overall approach adopted by the NICS in managing attendance. There have been a number of new strategies and approaches developed or trialled over the past year. For example, a central web-based health and wellbeing hub, known as NICS WELL, will be accessible to all staff in early 2012, a new training programme to equip managers to deal more effectively with sickness absence is being designed and a new approach to rehabilitation using the Welfare Support Service is being piloted.

### **Domestic Rating of Properties**

**Mr McDevitt** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has any plans to revalue the domestic rating of properties.

**(AQW 5987/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** I have no plans to revalue domestic properties in the near future. I believe that now would not be an appropriate time to begin a domestic general revaluation given the unsettled state of the housing market.

As you will be aware I cancelled the non-domestic general revaluation in light of the continued economic downturn and instability in the property market. The market evidence for a new Valuation List was both inadequate and inconsistent. If the general revaluation had proceeded it would have fallen well short of international valuation standards. The same issues are relevant to the domestic sector, while there is also an overriding need to maintain stability for the tax base.

In terms of annual rate increases the regional rate was cut in real terms for the last three years. For this year and the next three years it will be frozen in real terms. This means that rate bills are lower than they otherwise would have been. District rates are of course outside the control of the Executive.

At present the domestic rating system is based on individual capital values that were assessed using a fixed valuation date for all properties of 1 January 2005. This fixed date ensures that all properties are valued on a consistent basis, with subsequent fluctuations in market prices (both up and down) disregarded until the next general revaluation. Any properties built post 1 January 2005 continue to be valued at 1 January 2005 levels.

A general revaluation would be required to update the property values on which rates are based simply involves a redistribution of the rating burden, it does not in itself change the total amount of money that needs to be raised to pay for essential public services and a general revaluation is always accompanied by a corresponding change in the tax rate (the rate in the pound).

So, if a general revaluation were to occur at this time only those properties that have reduced in value by more than the average would experience a reduction in rates liability, while properties experiencing lower than average falls in value would have an increased rates liability. There would be both winners and losers.

## Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

### Agency Medical Staff in Prisons

**Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of agency medical staff that have been used in each prison in (i) 2009; (ii) 2010; and (iii) 2011 to date; and the cost of using these staff in each year.

**(AQW 5537/11-15)**

**Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety):** The information is set out below

	No. of agency medical staff	Prison establishment	Cost (£ 000)
9/10	0	N/A	0
10/11	2	HMP Maghaberry	41
11/12	1	Across all 3 prison establishments	72

### CT Scanners

**Mr Byrne** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the usage and activity of the CT scanners in the (i) Altnagelvin Area Hospital; (ii) Tyrone County Hospital; and (iii) Erne Hospital.

**(AQW 5544/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Over the last three years (2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11), the CT scanners in both the Tyrone County Hospital and the Erne Hospital were in operation for 37.5 hours per week, with further 24 hour emergency cover at the Erne Hospital.

During 2008/09, the Altnagelvin Area Hospital CT scanner was also in operation for 37.5 hours per week, with 24 hour emergency cover. In 2009/10 and 2010/11, the scanner was in operation for 48 hours per week, with 24 hour emergency cover.

Table 1 shows the number of CT scans that were carried out at each of these hospitals during 2008/09 and 2009/10. Due to changes to the system used to administer CT scans at the Western HSC Trust which were implemented in early 2010/11, I am advised that the a count of the number of

CT scans undertaken between 01/12/10 and 30/11/11 provides the most robust indication of CT activity at each of these hospitals within the last year.

**TABLE 1: NUMBER OF CT SCANS CARRIED OUT AT THE ALTNAGELVIN AREA, TYRONE COUNTY AND ERNE HOSPITALS**

Hospital	Year		
	2008/09	2009/10	01/12/10 to 30/11/11 <sup>1</sup>
Altnagelvin Area	6,879	7,206	9,360
Tyrone County	5,184	5,899	4,571
Erne	4,998	5,496	4,463

**Source:** Western HSC Trust

- 1 A change in recording methodology during 2010/11 means that data from this time onwards may not be directly comparable with data for previous years.

## CT Scans

**Mr Byrne** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many CT scans have been carried out at the (i) Altnagelvin Area Hospital; (ii) Tyrone County Hospital; and (iii) Erne Hospital in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 5545/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Over the last three years (2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11), the CT scanners in both the Tyrone County Hospital and the Erne Hospital were in operation for 37.5 hours per week, with further 24 hour emergency cover at the Erne Hospital.

During 2008/09, the Altnagelvin Area Hospital CT scanner was also in operation for 37.5 hours per week, with 24 hour emergency cover. In 2009/10 and 2010/11, the scanner was in operation for 48 hours per week, with 24 hour emergency cover.

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**Source:** Western HSC Trust

- 1 A change in recording methodology during 2010/11 means that data from this time onwards may not be directly comparable with data for previous years.

## **New Local Enhanced Hospital in Omagh**

**Mr Byrne** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the new local enhanced hospital in Omagh will continue to provide a CT service.

**(AQW 5546/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Western Health and Social Care Trust have confirmed that a CT scanning service is part of the planned service model for the new enhanced Omagh hospital.

## **Beech Hall Health and Well Being Centre, Belfast**

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the services that are available in the Beech Hall Health and Well Being Centre, Belfast.

**(AQW 5567/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I am advised by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust that the following services are available at Beech Hall Health and Wellbeing Centre:

Services provided by Allied Health Professionals – Occupational Therapy; Physiotherapy; Podiatry; Speech and Language Therapy.

Community Health and Nursing Services – Dentistry; Community Paediatrics Nursing; District Nursing; Health Visiting; Family Planning; Midwifery; School Nursing.

Social Work Services – Older People; Family and Child Care.

The Trust has also provided a purpose built day centre, integral to the Health and Wellbeing Centre, which provides therapeutic and rehabilitation services for people with physical disabilities.

## **Strategy to Deal with Suicide and Self-Harm**

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on his Department's strategy to deal with suicide and self-harm.

**(AQW 5574/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The "Protect Life" strategy is currently being refreshed in light of findings from a review of international evidence and best practice, a review of progress on Protect Life actions, learning from local research, evaluation of component parts of the strategy, and feedback from a major community sector and health and social care workshop held in September. The "refreshed" strategy will be published in early 2012. It will contain a number of revised objectives and actions, and will indicate where additional focus is required in addressing suicide and self harm.

In addition, an independent evaluation of Protect Life has been commissioned and will take place during 2012. The outcome of the evaluation will inform future suicide and self-harm prevention policy in Northern Ireland.

## **Clinical Psychologists**

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) new cases; (ii) visits on continuing cases; and (iii) out-of-hours visits undertaken by clinical psychologists in the (a) Western; and (b) Southern Health and Social Care Trust areas in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 5588/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Information on the number of (i) new cases; (ii) visits on continuing cases; and (iii) out-of-hours visits undertaken by clinical psychologists in the (a) Western; and (b) Southern Health and Social Care Trust areas in each of the last five years is not available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

## Dermatology Department at the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 5192/11-15, how long patients, who are referred routinely without suspected skin cancer, have to wait for an appointment at the Dermatology Department at the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine.

**(AQW 5593/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The waiting time position for a first outpatient appointment in the Dermatology specialty at the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine, at 8th December 2011, excluding patients referred with suspected skin cancer (red flag referrals), is outlined in the table below.

Specialty	Patients Waiting for a First Outpatient Appointment, by Weeks Waiting, at Causeway Hospital						Total Waiting
	0-6	>6-9	>9-13	>13-21	>21-26	>26	
Dermatology	100	52	37	108	54	182	533

**Source:** Northern Health and Social Care Trust

## Waiting Times at the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 5192/11-15, how waiting times at the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine compare with waiting times at other hospitals.

**(AQW 5597/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** To request this information at hospital level would incur disproportionate cost, given the scale of Dermatology services across Northern Ireland. Therefore, information is provided by Health and Social Care Trust.

The median waiting time for a first outpatient appointment with a consultant at the Dermatology Department at the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine, at 30th September 2011 was greater than 13 weeks, but waiting no longer than 21 weeks.

The median waiting time for a first outpatient appointment in the Dermatology specialty for HSC Trusts, at the same point in time, is shown in the table below.

HSC Trust	Median Waiting Time at 30th September 2011
Belfast	Greater than 13 weeks but waiting no longer than 21 weeks
Northern	Greater than 26 weeks
South Eastern	Greater than 9 weeks but waiting no longer than 13 weeks
Southern	Greater than 9 weeks but waiting no longer than 13 weeks
Western	Waiting no longer than 6 weeks
Northern Ireland	Greater than 13 weeks but waiting no longer than 21 weeks

**Source:** Departmental Return CH3

## Dental Decay Among Teenagers

**Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department will take to address the level of dental decay among teenagers, given that Northern Ireland has the highest level in Europe.

**(AQW 5616/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Northern Ireland teenagers do not have the highest level of dental decay in Europe.

My Department has been very proactive in introducing evidence-based programmes to improve the oral health of children in Northern Ireland.

Since 2004, we have introduced the following measures:

- Fluoride toothpaste schemes
- Fissure sealant scheme
- Enhanced capitation payments for dentists providing care to children from deprived areas
- Focussing the work of the Community Dental Service on high priority areas such as providing care for children from socially disadvantaged area and evidence-based oral health improvement programmes.

Since the implementation of these schemes, we have noticed a significant improvement in the oral health of our child population.

We have noted a reduction in extractions under general anaesthetic from 40,000 in 2004 to 26,500 last year. We have also recorded a large reduction in the number of fillings carried out in children under 18 over this period.

In addition, my Department is supporting a large research trial to investigate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of using fluoride varnish and fluoride toothpaste to prevent decay in young children.

We will continue to use these evidence-based programmes to further improve the oral health of our child population.

### **Payment of Invoices to Businesses**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the target time for the payment of invoices to small businesses by each Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) whether he is aware of any delays in meeting these targets; and (iii) what action has been taken to ensure that delays do not occur.

**(AQW 5640/11-15)**

#### **Mr Poots:**

- (1) To comply with the Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002, public sector organisations, including Trusts, are required to pay invoices within agreed terms or, if no terms have been agreed, within 30 days of the receipt of goods or a valid invoice (whichever is later). This is the requirement for paying invoices to all businesses, not just small businesses. There is a best practice target of ensuring that 95% of invoices are paid within these terms.

In addition, DFP has issued guidance asking that as many payments as possible be made within 10 days. The Department and all its bodies are aware of this commitment and make every effort to comply with this additional target.

- (2) The percentage of invoices paid by the Trusts within the 30-day target for 2010/11 and year to date 2011/12 is summarised in the following table:

#### **% OF INVOICES PAID WITHIN 30 DAY TARGET OR OTHER AGREED TERMS**

	<b>2010/2011 Final Accounts</b>	<b>2011/12 Cumulative total to 31 October 2011</b>
Northern	95.60	94.30
Belfast	89.70	92.40
Western	94.50	96.00
South Eastern	91.90	91.80



	<b>2010/2011 Final Accounts</b>	<b>2011/12 Cumulative total to 31 October 2011</b>
NIAS	97.50	96.80
Southern	90.40	89.10
<b>Overall Trust Total</b>	<b>91.88</b>	<b>92.69</b>

- (3) DHSSPS has issued guidance to all of its arms-length bodies advising of the requirement to pay invoices within 30 days or agreed payment terms and prompt payment performance is reported to my Department on a monthly basis.

Trusts have also taken a number of actions to improve performance, including:

- (a) Circulating the DHSSPS prompt payment guidance to trust staff;
- (b) Monitoring prompt payment performance;
- (c) Finance staff providing awareness sessions to other Directorates to ensure proper procedures are adhered in ordering and receiving goods;
- (d) Providing clearer instructions to managers and suppliers on where to submit/return invoices;
- (e) Implementing measures to facilitate approval of invoices; and
- (f) Performing internal audit reviews of trust compliance with the guidance.

### **Assistant Psychologists**

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of assistant psychologists currently working in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area; and whether the Trust has allocated resources to recruit any further assistant psychologists in the next three years. **(AQW 5660/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** There are currently two whole time equivalent Assistant Psychologists employed within the Western Health and Social Care Trust. The Trust is planning to recruit a 0.6 WTE Assistant Psychologist to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service early 2012.

### **Disability Living Allowance**

**Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether people in receipt of the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance and a motability scheme car are entitled to free public transport, via the Health and Social Care Trusts, to attend hospital appointments. **(AQW 5676/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I can advise that the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service's Patient Care Service (PCS) provides pre-booked non-emergency transport for patients attending outpatient appointments and those being discharged from or transferred between hospitals, provided they have been assessed by a medical practitioner as requiring transportation, based on clinical need. This is the only criteria used to assess entitlement and is not affected by any benefits patients may be in receipt of, including Disability Living Allowance.

### **Self-Referrals for Crisis Mental Healthcare**

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are available for people with mental illness to self-refer for crisis mental healthcare. **(AQW 5680/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** There are a variety of ways a person with a mental illness can self-refer when in crisis with the main referral routes being through their GP or local A & E Department. There are also a number

of voluntary and community agencies, which provide advice, support and psychological therapies, and which will signpost people to appropriate statutory mental health services when this is indicated.

### **Kinship Care for Children**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration his Department has given to the benefits of kinship care for children who are unable to live with their parents. **(AQW 5690/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Article 18(1)(b) and Schedule 2 to The Children (Northern Ireland) Order (1995), requires Health and Social Care Trusts to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within the Trust's area and to promote the upbringing of children by their families, provided that arrangement is consistent with the requirement to safeguard and promote their welfare. The legislation also requires HSC Trusts to fulfil the requirement by providing services appropriate to the needs of the children involved.

The Care Matters in Northern Ireland strategy, which was endorsed by the Executive in 2009, sets out my Department's vision for placing more children within their family of origin. That vision accords with the views of children and young people, who have indicated that, where they can no longer live with their parents, their preferred option is to be cared for by other family members or close friends. It also accords with studies carried out in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, which have shown that in general such placements give children improved stability.

We are in the process of finalising kinship care standards. The standards will specify the arrangements, services, support and procedures that need to be in place to ensure the unique needs of kinship foster carers and those of the children they foster are met. The Standards will be supported by guidance and training and it is intended that they will be issued for implementation in early 2012.

Finally, the member should note that the numbers of children in kinship foster care in Northern Ireland has increased in recent years.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Hydebank Wood**

**Ms Gildernew** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) whether the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust; or the Health and Social Care Board is responsible for the (a) provision of; (b) commissioning of; and (c) budget for, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for 15 -17 year olds in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre; and (ii) to provide details of the budget from which this expenditure is met. **(AQW 5696/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust is responsible for the delivery of Mental Health Services in Hydebank. The service is commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board and current funding is of £1.4m per annum.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for 15-17 year olds in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre**

**Ms Gildernew** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the level of funding allocated for the provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for 15 -17 year olds in the Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre in (a) each of the last three years; (b) the current financial year to date; (ii) whether the budget is ring-fenced; and (iii) the actual spend in (a) each of the last three years; and (c) the current financial year. **(AQW 5697/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Resources for prison healthcare were transferred from the Northern Ireland Prison Service to the HSC in April 2008. Recognising that mental health services in prisons needed particular attention, my Department and NIO each contributed an additional £225k recurrent to the transferring budget for mental health services, £450k per annum in total. This funding did not identify separately an allocation for 15 to 17 year olds, so it is not possible to answer the Question as asked. The service is

commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board and funding now stands at £1.4m per annum. This funding is not ring-fenced.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Hydebank Wood**

**Ms Gildernew** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for 15 -17 year olds in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre that have been commissioned in (i) each of the last three years; and (ii) the current financial year.

**(AQW 5698/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** There are no dedicated Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Hydebank Wood, although these young people may access the general mental health service commissioned by the HSC Board and delivered by the South Eastern Trust. In some instances young people access services delivered by their local Trust.

Resources for prison health were transferred from the NIPS to HSC in April 2008. However the funding transferred did not include specific funding for CAMHS for 15-18 year olds.

The HSCB/PHA have recently reviewed the need for CAMHS services at Hydebank and proposals for the development of a dedicated service within Hydebank have been accepted in principle, subject to the identification of a funding source.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Hydebank Wood**

**Ms Gildernew** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Health Trust or Health and Social Care Board (i) paediatric nurses; (ii) forensic paediatric nurses; (iii) paediatric psychiatrists; (iv) forensic paediatric psychiatrists; (v) paediatric psychologists; and (vi) forensic paediatric psychologists are providing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to 15-17 year olds in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre; and how many Health Trust or Board staff, in total, provide CAMHS care to 15-17 year olds in Hydebank Wood Offenders Centre.

**(AQW 5712/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Mental Health Services within Hydebank Wood provide care and treatment to all prisoners, this can include male offenders up to age 24 years and female prisoners or immigrant detainees.

### **STAFF WORKING WITHIN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN HYDEBANK WOOD AT DECEMBER 2011**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Headcount</b>
Psychiatrist	1
Staff Grade Doctor in Psychiatry	1
Principal Psychologist/Trainee Forensic Psychologist	2
Psychology Assistants	3
Mental Health Nurse	3
Part-time Occupational Therapist	1
Youth Addiction Counsellor	4
Nurse Support	2

**Source:** South Eastern HSC Trust

## Old School Surgery, Greenisland

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the length of time a patient must wait from requesting to see a doctor at the Old School Surgery, Greenisland until they receive an appointment.

**(AQW 5743/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** This information is not available regarding waiting times for a GP appointment at the practice. I understand the Old School Surgery have taken steps to try and minimise the length of time a patient may have to wait for an appointment with their GP. There are, however, a number of factors which can influence waiting times for appointments, for example if a patient requests to see a specific GP, particularly those GPs who are part-time; or requests an appointment at a specific time or on a specific day.

## Fire Safety Audits on Commercial Premises

**Ms Lo** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of (i) the efficiency and effectiveness of the current system of fire safety audits on commercial premises conducted by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service; and (ii) whether the limited resources employed by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service could be better used by selecting premises strategically, for example, in relation to areas with high levels of public access, or areas where emergency vehicles have restricted access due to streetscape.

**(AQW 5748/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I am confident that the current system of fire safety audits is effective and reinforces the risk-based approach to fire prevention.

The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) carries out fire risk audits in line with national guidance provided by the Chief Fire Officers' Association. This methodology allows NIFRS to target its resources effectively towards areas of high risk, whilst ensuring that all other types of non-domestic premises are also sampled annually. NIFRS may also carry out an inspection where there has been a fire or a complaint about fire safety on premises.

## The Centre for Independent Living

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many clients, from each Health and Social Care Trust area, have used the Centre for Independent Living in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 5758/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Information on the number of clients who have used the Centre for Independent Living Northern Ireland (CILNI) is not available. However, information on the number of clients using CILNI payroll services in each of the last five years is detailed in Table 1 below for your information. Please note that CILNI has operated across all HSC Trusts areas since 2008 only.

**TABLE 1: CLIENTS USING CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING NI PAYROLL SERVICES<sup>1</sup>**

Year	Number of Clients
2010/11	1,150
2009/10	900
2008/09	550
2007/08	300
2006/07	136

1 Figures provided by CILNI have not been validated by DHSSPS.

## Programme for Government: Sexual Violence

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what measures the Executive is proposing under the Programme for Government to tackle the issue of sexual violence.  
(AQW 5759/11-15)

**Mr Poots:** Under the draft Programme for Government, the Executive undertakes to build a strong and shared community, reducing the incidence and impact of various forms of violence and abuse. My Department jointly leads, in conjunction with the Department of Justice, on the 'Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse' strategy which is a multi-agency, victim focused strategy, implemented through the delivery of annual action plans.

One of the major achievements of the 'Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse' strategy will be the opening of a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in early 2013. This will be a regional facility for all victims of rape and sexual assault (children and adults) and will be jointly funded by my Department and PSNI.

My Department has also undertaken work to reduce waiting times and increase capacity in counselling services for victims of sexual violence and abuse.

A Directory of Services for supporting victims of sexual violence and abuse was produced in March 2010 and made available across Northern Ireland.

## 15-17 Year Olds in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre Diagnosed with a Mental Health Problem

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many 15-17 years olds in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre have been diagnosed with a mental health problem; and what conditions have been diagnosed.  
(AQW 5783/11-15)

**Mr Poots:** Of the juveniles aged between 15 and 17 who are currently resident in Hydebank Wood, 3 have a diagnosis of ADHD.

## Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Hydebank Wood

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many staff are providing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to 15-17 year olds in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre; and, of these, how many are (i) paediatric nurses; (ii) paediatric psychiatrists; (iii) forensic paediatric psychiatrists; (iv) paediatric psychologists; and (v) forensic paediatric psychologists.  
(AQW 5784/11-15)

**Mr Poots:** Mental Health Services within Hydebank Wood provide care and treatment to all prisoners; this can include male offenders up to age 24 years and female prisoners or immigrant detainees.

### STAFF WORKING WITHIN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN HYDEBANK WOOD AT DECEMBER 2011

Grade	Headcount
Psychiatrist	1
Staff Grade Doctor in Psychiatry	1
Principal Psychologist/Trainee Forensic Psychologist	2
Psychology Assistants	3
Mental Health Nurse	3
Part-time Occupational Therapist	1

Grade	Headcount
Youth Addiction Counsellor	4
Nurse Support	2

**Source:** South Eastern HSC Trust

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for 15-17 year olds in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre**

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety which statutory body is responsible for the provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for 15-17 year olds in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre.

**(AQW 5785/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust is responsible for the delivery of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Hydebank. The service is commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board.

### **Quality of Life for People with Mental Illness**

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has for the day support services and the recovery plans that are used to enhance the quality of life for people with mental illness, which are currently provided by Mind Wise.

**(AQW 5799/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The four Health and Social Care Trusts which use the services of MindWise have confirmed that there are no plans to discontinue contracts for the provision of day support services. The Western Health and Social Care Trust does not have any contracts with MindWise.

### **Deaths which have Occurred Post-Operatively in the Western Health and Social Care Trust Area**

**Mr Lynch** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of deaths which have occurred post-operatively in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area in each of the last three years; (ii) how many of these deaths have been attributed to (a) medical malpractice; (b) age; or (c) terminal illness; and (iii) how these figures compare to those in other Trust areas.

**(AQW 5802/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Doctors are not required to supply information on recent surgical procedures at death registration, therefore it is not possible to determine the number of deaths which have occurred post-operatively in Northern Ireland, or the reason attributed to these deaths.

### **Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) Cases in the Western Health and Social Care Trust Area**

**Mr Lynch** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) cases in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area, compared to the other Trust areas, in each of the last 12 months.

**(AQW 5803/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Information on the number of MRSA cases within the Western Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust area is not available. However, information is available on the number of MRSA patient episodes within each HSC Trust during each of the last four quarters, and is detailed in the table below.

HSC Trust	Number of MRSA patient episodes			
	Oct – Dec 2010	Jan – Mar 2011	Apr – Jun 2011	Jul – Sep 2011
Belfast	9	12	4	20
Northern	6	5	8	4
South Eastern	3	2	6	2
Southern	4	1	3	2
Western	3	5	0	3
Northern Ireland	25	25	21	31

**Source:** Public Health Agency

### Transporting Patients from the Accident and Emergency Department in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, to the Belfast City Hospital

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many taxis the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has used to transport patients from the Accident and Emergency Department in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, to the Belfast City Hospital, since the closure of Belfast City Hospital's Accident and Emergency Department.

**(AQW 5812/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Since the closure of the Belfast City hospital's emergency care department on 1st November 2011, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust have used 1 taxi to transport patients from the emergency care department in the Royal Victoria Hospital to the Belfast City Hospital.

### Closure of the Belfast City Hospital's Accident and Emergency Department

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) since the closure of the Belfast City Hospital's Accident and Emergency Department, how many times the (a) Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast; and (b) the Mater Hospital, Belfast, have been on red alert; and (ii) what contingency arrangements are in place for dealing with a red alert.

**(AQW 5814/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Belfast Trust has advised me that it has had in place for a number of years a traffic light system within its bed availability escalation policy. The Trust has further advised me that, from 1 November 2011 up to 14 December, the status was 'Red' on 5 occasions at the Royal Victoria Hospital and on 12 occasions at the Mater Hospital.

Contingency plans implemented by the Belfast Trust include maximising the number of discharges in its three acute hospitals and, where necessary, transferring patients from the Royal and Mater hospitals to the City Hospital for inpatient treatment

Since 1 November, the Health and Social Care Board in collaboration with Trusts have closely monitored the impact of the temporary closure of the Accident and Emergency department at the City Hospital.

### Accident and Emergency Waiting Times

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current average (i) trolley waiting times; and (ii) Accident and Emergency Department waiting times in the (a) Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast; and (b) the Antrim Area Hospital.

**(AQW 5815/11-15)**



**Mr Poots:**

- (i) Information on trolley waiting times is not collected by the Department and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
- (ii) Information on the average waiting times at (a) Royal Victoria and (b) Antrim Area emergency care departments is not currently available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Information on emergency care waiting times during December 2011 is not currently available, and will not be published until 26th January 2012. The latest published information on emergency care waiting times refers to the months of July, August and September 2011, and is available to view or download from:

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats\\_research/hospital-stats/emergency\\_care-3/emergency\\_care-monthly\\_waiting\\_times.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/hospital-stats/emergency_care-3/emergency_care-monthly_waiting_times.htm)

However, provisional information is available on emergency care waiting times during October and November 2011 for emergency care departments in the Belfast area. This provisional information was included in a press release issued by my Department on Friday 9th December 2011, and is available to view or download from:

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/ec1data.pdf>

**Services Provided by the Voluntary Sector**

**Mr Brady** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he can offer an assurance that existing services provided by the voluntary sector will not be targeted for cuts from April 2012.

**(AQW 5819/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The voluntary sector plays an essential and integral role in the provision of health and social care services throughout Northern Ireland. However, the financial challenges facing my Department over the Budget 2010 period are considerable. Whilst my priority is ensuring the quality of HSC services and safety of patients, my Department will have to examine all areas of its budget in order to address the financial challenges and ensure that funding is allocated in the most effective manner.

**Accident and Emergency Unit at Lagan Valley Hospital**

**Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress has been made in restoring 24 hour access to the Accident and Emergency Unit at Lagan Valley Hospital.

**(AQW 5820/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The changes which have been made to the opening hours of the emergency department at the Lagan Valley Hospital remain in place. These changes are temporary and proposals for any permanent change will be issued for full public consultation.

**Capital Investment at the Lagan Valley Hospital Site**

**Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the business case for capital investment at the Lagan Valley Hospital site.

**(AQW 5821/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Discussions are continuing with the South Eastern HSC Trust regarding preparation of a business case for redeveloping the Lagan Valley Hospital site. This is just one of a number of projects I would like to progress. I am currently revisiting the planned capital programme to ensure that I am addressing the highest priorities across all programmes of care. Unfortunately the level of funding available to me is insufficient to meet all the demands being placed on the health service and I am investigating how best to supplement the capital budget by alternative funding mechanisms. I will also be looking closely at the implications of the recommendations arising from the recently announced HSC Review and how this will affect planned capital projects.

## Waiting Lists for Hip Replacements

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people currently on the waiting list for a hip replacement operation, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust area.

**(AQW 5823/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The number of people on the waiting list for a hip replacement operation, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, at 30th September 2011 (the most recent date for which official data are available) is shown in the table below.

HSC Trust	Number of people on the waiting list for a hip replacement operation at 30th September 2011
Belfast	712
Northern	N/A
South Eastern	1
Southern	149
Western	338
NI Total	1,200

**Source:** DHSSPS Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

## Waiting Times for Hip Replacements

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average waiting time for a hip replacement operation in each Health and Social Care Trust area.

**(AQW 5824/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The average waiting time for a hip replacement operation, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, at 30th September 2011 (the most recent date for which official data are available) is shown in the table below.

HSC Trust	Average waiting time for a hip replacement operation at 30th September 2011
Belfast	128 days (18 weeks)
Northern	N/A
South Eastern	38 days (5 weeks)
Southern	116 days (16 weeks)
Western	167 days (24 weeks)
Northern Ireland	137 days (20 weeks)

**Source:** DHSSPS Inpatient Waiting Times Dataset

## Wasted Medication

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to ensure that medication is not wasted in the home or in pharmacies.

**(AQW 5829/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** My Department in collaboration with the Health and Social Care Board and the Government Advertising Unit, OFMDM, has developed a public information campaign to address the issue of unused

and wasted prescription medicines in Northern Ireland which is estimated to cost around £18m annually.

Phase 1 of the campaign, which ran from December 2010 to March 2011, was aimed at reducing the level of prescription drug wastage caused by patients over-ordering medicines on repeat prescriptions through the message “Don’t Use it? Don’t Order it”.

Phase 2 of the campaign commenced in November 2011 with the message “Follow the Advice Use it Right”. The aim remains the prevention of medicine waste but places additional emphasis on the health of the individual, particularly in the management of long term conditions, advising patients to use medicines as directed and only order those that they use.

### **Discussion with all Representatives of Pharmacies as a Group**

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to hold a discussion with all representatives of pharmacies as a group.

**(AQW 5830/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I would welcome the opportunity to engage with the pharmacy profession to discuss how we can take forward community pharmacy services for the benefit of patients in Northern Ireland.

Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland (CPNI), the representative body for community pharmacists in Northern Ireland, sought and was granted a Judicial Review of the new remuneration and reimbursement arrangements for community pharmacists. Against this background it would be inappropriate for me to meet with representatives of the pharmacy profession until the outcome of the hearing is known.

I can confirm however that I have already undertaken to engage with CPNI representatives as soon as reasonably practical thereafter.

### **Ministerial Sub-Group on Suicide and Self-Harm**

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the work of the Ministerial Sub-Group on suicide and self-harm.

**(AQW 5846/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention meets on an ad hoc basis in response to issues which require cross departmental action.

The refresh of the Protect Life strategy is due for publication in early 2012, and it will contain a number of cross cutting actions which will need the support of Ministerial colleagues to take forward. It is therefore my intention to convene a further meeting of the Ministerial Co-ordination Group around that time in order to agree the necessary next steps.

### **Resuscitation Area at the Belfast City Hospital**

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that the resuscitation area at the Belfast City Hospital is closed, where is a person who has had a cardiac arrest, outside of hospital, transferred to for immediate resuscitation care, and what protocols are in place.

**(AQW 5847/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** In the event of an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, the same procedures as always will apply; when 999 is called, an emergency ambulance will be dispatched to the scene. The patient will then be brought to the closest Emergency Department – in Belfast that would be either the RVH or the Mater Hospital.

The ambulance crew will alert the receiving Emergency Department, who will prepare a team in the resuscitation room for receipt of the patient. The immediate resuscitation of the patient will be provided by the paramedics in the ambulance.

If the cardiac arrest should occur within the grounds of the BCH, the same procedure should be followed; dial 999 for an Emergency Ambulance.

If the cardiac arrest occurs within the BCH building, there is a resuscitation team available, who will be contacted by the switchboard.

### **Accident and Emergency Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast**

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average waiting time at the Accident and Emergency Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, since the closure of the Accident and Emergency Department at Belfast City Hospital.

**(AQW 5862/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Information on the average waiting time at the Royal Victoria emergency care department is not currently available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Information on emergency care waiting times during December 2011 is not currently available, and will not be published until 26th January 2012. The latest published information on emergency care waiting times refers to the months of July, August and September 2011, and is available to view or download from:

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats\\_research/hospital-stats/emergency\\_care-3/emergency\\_care-monthly\\_waiting\\_times.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/hospital-stats/emergency_care-3/emergency_care-monthly_waiting_times.htm)

However, provisional information is available on emergency care waiting times during October and November 2011 for emergency care departments in the Belfast area. This provisional information was included in a press release issued by my Department on Friday 9th December 2011, and is available to view or download from:

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/ec1data.pdf>

### **Accident and Emergency Department in the Royal Victoria Hospital**

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide a breakdown of the waiting times at the Accident and Emergency Department in the Royal Victoria Hospital since 1 December 2011 to date.

**(AQW 5863/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Information on emergency care waiting times during December 2011 is not currently available, and will not be published until 26th January 2012. The latest published information on emergency care waiting times refers to the months of July, August and September 2011, and is available to view or download from:

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats\\_research/hospital-stats/emergency\\_care-3/emergency\\_care-monthly\\_waiting\\_times.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/hospital-stats/emergency_care-3/emergency_care-monthly_waiting_times.htm)

However, provisional information is available on emergency care waiting times during October and November 2011 for emergency care departments in the Belfast area. This provisional information was included in a press release issued by my Department on Friday 9th December 2011, and is available to view or download from:

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/ec1data.pdf>

### **Health and Social Care Review**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, when determining the way forward after the publication of the Health and Social Care Review, what weight will he attach to a Health and Social Care Trust putting forward a sustainable and resilient case for retention of an acute hospital in an area which serves a rural population and which sees a massive increase in its

population between March and September each year due to the number of high profile events attracting tens of thousands of visitors.

**(AQW 5866/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** My Statement to the Assembly on 13 December explained that our aim must to have safe, resilient and sustainable services with the focus on the individual and not the institution. The Report on the Review of Health and Social Care identifies the services that a major acute hospital must be capable of delivering and sustaining. It will be for the Local Commissioning Groups and Health and Social Care Trusts initially to develop plans for their respective populations which take account of the principles and criteria set out in the Review.

### **Support Allowance for Cancer Patients**

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans, in conjunction with the Minister for Social Development, to create a permanent cancer care and support allowance to alleviate the financial difficulties facing many cancer patients during their treatment and recovery.

**(AQW 5890/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The announcement by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of the Fuel Allowance Initiative to help those who are already experiencing significant levels of fuel poverty, indicated this would be a one off payment towards household fuel costs for those eligible. I have no plans to create any permanent allowance for cancer patients to help address financial difficulties during their treatment and recovery.

### **Enhanced Role the Crompton Review**

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the enhanced role the Crompton Review affords to community pharmacies to deliver the new model, whether additional funding will be allocated to community pharmacies to support them in their roles, as many are currently operating on reduced budgets.

**(AQW 5891/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The “Transforming Your Care” proposals envisage a changing model of care which will move care as close to home as possible. This will require additional investment in the primary and community care sectors to develop a greater range of services which people can access within the community. Community pharmacists and, indeed, other care providers will expect to be funded for any additional services they provide in the context of the review.

Community pharmacy and other healthcare providers have to look at the way they work and make any changes needed to better meet patients needs. Subject to negotiation, it is intended to put in place a new community pharmacy contract to improve medicines management services and allow pharmacies to offer help in a range of areas including health promotion. Due to the ongoing Judicial Review instigated by CPNI of the remuneration arrangements for community pharmacists, however, it would be inappropriate for me as Minister to comment further on the development of a pharmacy contract for Northern Ireland until the outcome of the hearing is known.

### **Pharmacists**

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department has taken, or intends to take, to help pharmacists prescribe medicines in a more efficient and cost effective manner.

**(AQW 5892/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** My Department’s policy is that, where it is appropriate to do so, a medicine should be prescribed generically. The use of generic medicines in favour of branded equivalents is a central strand in the Department’s strategy to promote improved quality in medicines management through cost effective prescribing. GPs and pharmacists are updated regularly on generic prescribing policy. In

July and August this year the Department also wrote to the HSC Board and Trusts and to all GPs and community pharmacists to reaffirm the Department's policy on the best use of medicines – including the need to adhere to the policy on generic prescribing.

Generic substitution, whereby a pharmacist may substitute a generic product if one is available, in place of a branded product named on a prescription, may have a part to play in improving medicines management and cost effective prescribing. I have not ruled out taking steps to introduce generic substitution but I have no immediate plans to do so. If I do decide to introduce generic substitution in Northern Ireland it will be necessary to undertake a public consultation.

The HSC Board has been mandated to negotiate with CPNI a new pharmacy contract which should include services aimed at delivering more efficient and cost-effective medicines management arrangements.

## **Planning and Commissioning of Children's Services**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQO 703/11-15, for his assessment of the introduction of a statutory duty on Departments to co-operate in the planning and commissioning of children's services.

**(AQW 5894/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** There are established mechanisms to facilitate cooperation across departments and agencies in the planning and commissioning of children's services. These include the Ministerial Sub-Committee for Children and Young People, which is chaired by Junior Ministers in the Office of the First and deputy First Minister, and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, chaired by the Health and Social Care Board. At this stage there are no plans to introduce a statutory duty to cooperate for the purpose of planning and commissioning children's services. A decision to introduce a statutory duty to cooperate would require Executive endorsement.

## **Agenda for Change**

**Mr Lynch** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the Agenda for Change, to detail (i) how many members of staff have appealed the grading offered to them; (ii) the number of outstanding appeals; and (iii) when staff will be informed of the outcome of the appeals.

**(AQW 5906/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** At 1 December 2011 12,064 of the 12,116 staff who applied for a review of their grading have been notified of their outcome. The remaining staff will be notified of the outcome of their review as soon as is practicable.

## **Accident and Emergency Department: Trolley Waits**

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of (i) trolley waits; and (ii) patients who have had to wait on a trolley for more than (a) four; and (b) eight hours at the Accident and Emergency Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, since 1 December 2011.

**(AQW 5911/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Information on the number of (i) trolley waits; and (ii) patients who have had to wait on a trolley for more than (a) four; and (b) eight hours at the Royal Victoria Hospital emergency care department is not collected by the Department and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

## **Medical Records of Patients with Mental Health Problems**

**Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the procedure his Department has in place for handling the medical records of patients with mental health problems; and for how long the records are kept.

**(AQW 5953/11-15)**



**Mr Poots:** Guidance for Health and Social Care organisations on the handling and retention of medical records is contained in Good Management Good Records, originally published by the Department in 2004. The records of patients with mental health conditions (within the meaning of the Mental Health Northern Ireland Order 1986) are retained for 20 years.

### Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

**Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 5954/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Information is not available on the number of people that have been diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome in each of the last five years, however information is available on the number of admissions to HSC Hospitals in Northern Ireland with a diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome was recorded.

Year	Admissions
2006/07	49
2007/08	37
2008/09	76
2009/10	79
2010/11	113

**Source:-** Hospital Inpatient System

Deaths and discharges are used as an approximation of admissions. It should be noted that these figures do not represent individuals as a person may be admitted to hospital more than once in a year or across a number of years.

## Department of Justice

### Prisoners Released on Licence

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Justice how many prisoners, who were released on licence in the last ten years, have been (i) prosecuted; and (ii) convicted of a subsequent offence; and how many prisoners released on licence in the last ten years have been rearrested and are currently being held in prison without charge.

**(AQW 4647/11-15)**

**Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice ):** Neither the Department of Justice (DOJ) nor its partner agencies routinely collect the information requested at (i) and (ii). Precise figures are only available for recalled life sentence prisoners. Collating accurate data for the other categories of licensees could only be achieved at disproportionate cost.

Persons are released into the community on a range of licences in order to allow their behaviour for the period of time covered by the licence to be controlled and managed in a way that can help ensure that the risk they present to the public is managed effectively. Licence periods can last from very short periods of time to life. The Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland (PCNI) are responsible for drawing up licence conditions for life sentence prisoners; multi-agency assessment panels make recommendations to the DOJ for sex offender licences; and the DOJ is responsible for setting conditions for public protection licences following advice from the Prison Service and the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI).

Persons released on licence may be recalled to prison to continue serving their sentence if they are deemed to present an increased risk of harm to the public. Individuals released on a sex offender



licence can be recalled if a warrant to do so is granted by the court following an application by PBNI while all other licensees may be recalled directly by the DOJ, usually following a recommendation from the PCNI. However recall does not necessarily mean that an individual will have been prosecuted or convicted of a further offence. Equally it does not mean that every licensee prosecuted or convicted of a further offence will necessarily be recalled to prison. The decision to take such action is based wholly on behaviour and associated risk.

Since December 2001 41 life sentence prisoners have been recalled to prison. Of these, 28 have been prosecuted for a further offence. Of these 28 prosecutions, 23 resulted in conviction. Records indicate that at least 14 other life licensees have received letters warning them about their behaviour. Of these, 10 were prosecuted and convicted of a further offence but in these cases none of the offences suggested that the risk to the public had increased to a level to justify recall.

Finally I can confirm that no prisoners released on licence in the last 10 years are currently being held in prison without charge. Those who have been returned to custody have either had their licences revoked or suspended and are therefore liable to lawful detention under the terms of their original sentence. There may also be others who have been released on a licence which is now spent and who are now back in custody either on remand on another charge or following sentencing on conviction.

### **Threats from Prisons**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Justice how many times members of the public have complained of being threatened over the phone by prisoners from inside each prison, in each of the last five years. **(AQW 5454/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** This data is not collated by the Prison Service. However, there have been a very small number of reports of prisoners making threatening phone calls, all of which were dealt with promptly by NIPS.

Prisoners may only phone numbers, provided in advance, from a maximum list of 20 numbers. Prisoners are also aware that their phone calls are recorded and monitored and that access to the phone is a privilege which may be withdrawn if there is evidence of abuse.

### **Prison Staff: Gardening Leave**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice how many Prison Service staff are currently on 'gardening leave'. **(AQW 5514/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** There are currently no Prison Service staff on 'gardening leave' as I understand the term.

### **National Offender Management Service**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice whether his Department makes a financial contribution to the National Offender Management Service; and, if so, how much has been contributed since May 2010. **(AQW 5520/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** My Department does not make any direct financial contribution to the National Offender Management Service.

### **Departmental Information Office**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Justice how many staff are employed in his Department's Information Service; and what is the annual cost of this service. **(AQW 5533/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** There are twenty four members of staff employed in the Department and its Agencies Information Services. The annual cost of this service is £677,391 approximately.

The responsibilities of the twenty four staff are as outlined below:

<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Information Officers on loan from the Executive Information Service	10
Administrative staff who provide a media monitoring service for other NI Departments	10
Provide a press office function within the NI Courts and Tribunal Service	4

Of the ten Information Officers on loan from the Executive Information Service, seven are in DOJ core, two in NIPS and one in YJA.

### **Speeding Offences**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 4576/11-15, why the revenue resulting from speeding offences has decreased when the number of offences detected has increased.

**(AQW 5614/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Since June 2010 the Speed Awareness Scheme and Young Drivers Scheme are now offered by PSNI to those motorists who are detected speeding at the lower end of the offending scale, as an alternative to the Fixed Penalty. As a consequence income through safety camera detections has reduced. Information on each initiative is available on the PSNI website.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour Orders**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice how many Anti-Social Behaviour Orders are currently active in each court division, broken down by (i) adult; and (ii) juvenile.

**(AQW 5651/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** As of 1 December 2011 there were 44 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders in force in Northern Ireland. The table below sets out the number of active Anti-Social Behaviour Orders for each court Division broken down by adult and youth defendants.

<b>Division</b>	<b>Number of Active Orders</b>	
	<b>Adult</b>	<b>Youth</b>
Antrim	9	4
Ards	2	0
Armagh & South Down	4	0
Belfast	11	11
Craigavon	2	0
Fermanagh & Tyrone	1	0
Londonderry	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>15</b>

**Notes:**

- 1 Data for orders made prior to 2011 are based on information provided by the relevant authorities to the Department of Justice.
- 2 Data for orders made during 2011 provided by NI Courts and Tribunals Service.
- 3 All figures are based on operational information and may be subject to change.
- 4 Adults aged 18 or over; Youths aged under 18 at the time the ASBO was made.

## Officer's Mess at Maghaberry Prison

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice whether the Officer's Mess at Maghaberry Prison is closed; and if so, when it closed and who took the decision that it should close.

**(AQW 5652/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The mess at Maghaberry Prison is not closed. However, since 1 May 2010, food has been provided using vending machines. The decision to provide food in this way was taken by NIPS management.

## Transport Costs: Robert Black

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice how Robert Black was transported to Northern Ireland for sentencing on 8 December 2011; and how much his transport cost.

**(AQW 5704/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Robert Black was transferred to court on the 8 December from Maghaberry Prison, where he has been in custody since 8 September.

The cost to transport him to and from court on the day was £147.75.

## Attempted Suicide

**Ms Gildernew** asked the Minister of Justice (i) how many 15 -17 year olds in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre have, on at least one occasion, attempted suicide in the last ten years; (ii) how many of these young people had a statement of special educational needs; and (iii) how many were on the Child Protection Register.

**(AQW 5713/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Since January 2010, when NIPS introduced its policy on Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPAR), three inmates aged under 18 have been recorded as having attempted suicide. Details on the number of cases prior to January 2010 would only be available by conducting a manual search and this information can only be provided at disproportionate cost to the public purse.

The Prison Service does not hold information on young people in custody with a Statement of Educational Needs. Nor does it have records of young people in custody who are on the Child Protection Register as responsibility for the Healthcare Function was passed to the South Eastern Trust in 2008.

## Key Workers

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Justice to outline the qualifications that must be held by prison staff known as 'key workers'.

**(AQW 5714/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The term 'key worker' is used within the Northern Ireland Prison Service, in the context of healthcare, to describe a designated staff member who will be allocated specific cases which they will monitor throughout a period in custody.

A 'key worker' will be either a qualified nurse who is on the Register of the Nursing and Midwifery Council or a Healthcare Assistant with an NVQ level 2 qualification in a healthcare science.

## Convictions for Animal Cruelty

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice how many convictions have been secured for animal cruelty in each of the last three years, broken down by court division.

**(AQW 5772/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Animal cruelty offences span a number of statutes but I understand that the member is interested specifically in cruelty to animals offences prosecuted under Section 13 of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.

The table below gives the number of convictions for animal cruelty for the calendar years 2006 to 2008 (the latest year for which figures are currently available).

#### **NUMBER OF CONVICTIONS FOR ANIMAL CRUELTY BY COURT DIVISION, 2006-2008**

<b>Court division</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
Antrim	2	7	4
Ards	4	2	1
Armagh and South Down	2	4	3
Belfast	0	6	3
Craigavon and Lisburn	1	0	0
Fermanagh and Tyrone	2	1	2
Londonderry	2	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>

Data for 2006 should not be directly compared with data from 2007 to 2008 as the data sets are sourced from different systems.

#### **Bangor Courthouse**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice what assurances he can give on the speed of the delivery of justice in North Down, should Bangor Courthouse close.

**(AQW 5778/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** I do not anticipate that the proposed closure of Bangor Courthouse will have an adverse impact on the speed of the delivery of justice in North Down. Under the current proposals, all of the scheduled court sittings at Bangor, together with any outstanding business, would be transferred to Newtownards Courthouse. There would be no reduction in the number of sittings available.

Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service staff who work in Bangor Hearing Centre are already based at Newtownards Courthouse and no job losses are anticipated should Bangor Hearing Centre close.

My Department has no plans to make alternative use of Bangor Courthouse should it be permanently closed. In the first instance it would be offered to other departments to utilise and, if not required, may be placed on the open market. Approval for the sale of any of the Hearing Centres would be subject to a business case approved by the Department of Finance & Personnel.

#### **Bangor Courthouse**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice what plans his Department has for the use of Bangor Courthouse building, if the building is no longer to be used for court proceedings.

**(AQW 5779/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** I do not anticipate that the proposed closure of Bangor Courthouse will have an adverse impact on the speed of the delivery of justice in North Down. Under the current proposals, all of the scheduled court sittings at Bangor, together with any outstanding business, would be transferred to Newtownards Courthouse. There would be no reduction in the number of sittings available.

Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service staff who work in Bangor Hearing Centre are already based at Newtownards Courthouse and no job losses are anticipated should Bangor Hearing Centre close.

My Department has no plans to make alternative use of Bangor Courthouse should it be permanently closed. In the first instance it would be offered to other departments to utilise and, if not required, may be placed on the open market. Approval for the sale of any of the Hearing Centres would be subject to a business case approved by the Department of Finance & Personnel.

### **Bangor Courthouse**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice what assurances he can give to staff working in Bangor Courthouse, if the Courthouse is to close.

**(AQW 5780/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** I do not anticipate that the proposed closure of Bangor Courthouse will have an adverse impact on the speed of the delivery of justice in North Down. Under the current proposals, all of the scheduled court sittings at Bangor, together with any outstanding business, would be transferred to Newtownards Courthouse. There would be no reduction in the number of sittings available.

Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service staff who work in Bangor Hearing Centre are already based at Newtownards Courthouse and no job losses are anticipated should Bangor Hearing Centre close.

My Department has no plans to make alternative use of Bangor Courthouse should it be permanently closed. In the first instance it would be offered to other departments to utilise and, if not required, may be placed on the open market. Approval for the sale of any of the Hearing Centres would be subject to a business case approved by the Department of Finance & Personnel.

### **Bangor Courthouse**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice, should Bangor Courthouse be closed, whether the outstanding cases that would have been heard there will be heard in Newtownards Courthouse.

**(AQW 5781/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** I do not anticipate that the proposed closure of Bangor Courthouse will have an adverse impact on the speed of the delivery of justice in North Down. Under the current proposals, all of the scheduled court sittings at Bangor, together with any outstanding business, would be transferred to Newtownards Courthouse. There would be no reduction in the number of sittings available.

Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service staff who work in Bangor Hearing Centre are already based at Newtownards Courthouse and no job losses are anticipated should Bangor Hearing Centre close.

My Department has no plans to make alternative use of Bangor Courthouse should it be permanently closed. In the first instance it would be offered to other departments to utilise and, if not required, may be placed on the open market. Approval for the sale of any of the Hearing Centres would be subject to a business case approved by the Department of Finance & Personnel.

### **Cases Processed at Each Courthouse**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice how many cases have been processed at each courthouse, in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 5782/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The table below sets out the number of cases processed at each court office and in the Civil Processing Centre across all business areas.

<b>Processing office <sup>[1]</sup></b>	<b>Cases Dealt With <sup>[2]</sup></b>					
	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Total</b>
Antrim	2622	2966	2606	2901	3257	14352
Ballymena	4338	4728	4343	4180	3448	21037

Processing office <sup>[1]</sup>	Cases Dealt With <sup>[2]</sup>					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
Coleraine	4730	4408	3739	3784	3852	20513
Larne	1233	1001	925	896	757	4812
Bangor	2557	2298	2115	1795	1846	10611
Downpatrick	3330	2957	2689	2407	2315	13698
Newtownards	5402	5575	5431	5620	6317	28345
Armagh	2320	1947	2086	2249	2098	10700
Banbridge	1627	1300	1180	1539	1274	6920
Newry	4850	5103	5490	5456	5705	26604
Belfast	27354	24745	23322	23547	25283	124251
Craigavon	4912	4751	4823	4450	5180	24116
Lisburn	4163	4260	3859	4379	4472	21133
Dungannon	5477	4765	4404	4686	4415	23747
Enniskillen	2801	2110	1986	2314	2542	11753
Omagh	4060	3789	3561	3485	3617	18512
Strabane	2082	1450	1165	1353	1226	7276
Limavady	1460	1425	1190	1363	1109	6547
Londonderry	7675	7065	5745	6701	6325	33511
Magherafelt	1282	1149	1146	1211	1204	5992
Civil Processing Centre	8270	11012	11464	12665	12475	55886
High Court	20752	20022	24365	20992	22965	109096
<b>Total</b>	<b>123297</b>	<b>118826</b>	<b>117634</b>	<b>117973</b>	<b>121682</b>	<b>599412</b>

- [1] Court offices based on the processing office as recorded on ICOS for 2007-2010. In 2006 Crown Court, Magistrates' Court, family and Children Order business were recorded on manual forms and reflect the court office which disposed of/dealt with the case. The Civil Processing Centre is a centralised office for small claims and civil bill business. Cases may relate to any County Court division but be processed there. In 2006 civil County Court business was recorded on ICOS and therefore the court offices are based on the processing office as recorded on ICOS. A case may be processed at one venue and heard at another.
- [2] Cases dealt with are based on criminal defendants, civil and family cases, Children Order cases and applications disposed of. Debt cases in the Magistrates' Court (from 2007 onwards) and licensing in the Magistrates' and County Court are excluded as these numbers are held manually and not centrally collated.

### Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Justice how many 15 -17 year olds in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre have, on at least one occasion, attempted suicide in the last ten years.  
(AQW 5786/11-15)

**Mr Ford:** Since January 2010, when NIPS introduced its policy on Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPAR), three inmates aged under 18 are recorded as having attempted suicide. Details on the number

of cases prior to January 2010 would only be available by conducting a manual search and this information can only be provided at disproportionate cost to the public purse.

### Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Justice how many of the 15-17 year olds who are detained in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre are (i) on remand; and (ii) sentenced prisoners.

**(AQW 5787/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** There are currently five 15-17 year olds detained in Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre, of these inmates one is on remand and four are sentenced.

### Cost of the Case Against Patricia Young

**Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Justice to detail the cost to date of the case against Patricia Young, including the defence costs paid that were through legal aid and the costs of the Public Prosecution Service; and what is the anticipated final cost of this case.

**(AQW 5813/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The proceedings against Patricia Young comprised two different cases. The table below sets out the costs of the initial proceedings (Case No. 10/80754).

Cost Type	Estimated Cost
PSNI Prosecution	£1037
PPS Prosecution	£150
Probation Board for Northern Ireland	£208
Defence (Legal Aid Costs)	£1258
Court (Judiciary and Staff Costs)	£233
Facilities (e.g. Courtroom Accommodation)	£90
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2976</b>

The current proceedings against Patricia Young (Case No.11/16273) have not yet reached hearing stage and have so far consisted of several adjournment hearings, a judicial review and a case stated. The total court and judicial costs associated with these hearings are estimated at £2,638.

The Public Prosecution Service (PPS) has identified billed costs and fees to date of approximately £10,600 in relation to the Judicial Review and £180 for the original contest on 21 January 2011. However, the invoice for junior counsel has not yet been received and there is an ongoing case stated appeal. Adjournment hearings have been attended by PPS prosecutors and there has not been any cost over and above their PPS salary costs.

The Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission has confirmed that it is not possible to provide an estimate of legal aid costs at this stage as these are dependant on case outcome.

The police have confirmed that there are no additional police costs associated with the current proceedings.

As the nature of the final hearing is not known, it is difficult to assess with any accuracy what the final costs are likely to be. The estimated court and judicial costs associated with a one day contested hearing in the Magistrates' Court would be approximately £930.



## Bangor Courthouse

**Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Justice to outline the rationale behind the plans to close Bangor Courthouse.

**(AQW 5840/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service (NICTS) is currently consulting on proposals for the permanent closure of five Hearing Centres, including Bangor, and for the transfer of court business to alternative venues.

The NICTS now faces a more challenging economic environment and must deliver efficiencies. It is estimated that the proposed closures could save approximately £400,000 per annum in operating costs, £80,000 of which relates to Bangor Courthouse. In addition it is estimated that the Hearing Centres would require in excess of £3m capital expenditure to ensure that they are fit for purpose in future years, £544,000 of which relates to Bangor Courthouse. The closure of the Hearing Centres would allow any available capital resource to be utilised on other court venues.

## Disqualified from Driving

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice whether a person who has been disqualified from driving for a protracted period, can apply to have this period of disqualification reduced after a specific timeframe if they have not re-offended.

**(AQW 5841/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Under article 47 of the Road Traffic Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 an individual who has been disqualified from driving may after a fixed period, which depends on the length of their disqualification, apply to the court to remove the disqualification.

The application can be made after two years for disqualifications up to four years; after half the disqualification has elapsed for disqualification periods of four to ten years; or after five years for disqualifications longer than ten years. Subsequent applications can not be made until at least three months after the refusal date. A person disqualified until they pass an appropriate driving test is excluded from making an application.

The court will consider the character of the person disqualified and their conduct subsequent to the imposition of the disqualification, the nature of the offence, and any other circumstances of the case as appropriate. The court can remove the disqualification from a specified date or refuse the application.

## Court Hearings: Social Workers

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice, in light of Lord Justice Stevens' direction that social workers must attend court hearings to advise on the suitability of defendants' bail addresses and conditions, in relation to vulnerable witnesses and children, whether he intends to introduce legislation to enforce this matter.

**(AQW 5844/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The Northern Ireland Law Commission is currently undertaking a review of the law on bail in criminal proceedings with a view to the creation of new legislation. The Commission has a copy of Mr Justice Stevens' judgment and will be taking it into account in its analysis and recommendations. I expect to receive the Commission's legislative proposals this coming Spring.

## Convictions for Rape

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice how many convictions for rape have been secured in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 5852/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Rape offences may be prosecuted under Common Law and under Article 3(1) of the Criminal Attempts and Conspiracy (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 and Article 18 (1) Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

The table below gives the number convicted for the calendar years 2004 to 2008 (the latest year for which figures are currently available).

#### **NUMBER OF PEOPLE CONVICTED FOR RAPE 2004-2008**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Convictions</b>
2004	18
2005	8
2006	11
2007	14
2008	16

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

Data for 2004-2006 should not be directly compared with data from 2007 to 2008 as the data sets are sourced from different systems.

I remain committed to working with Ministerial colleagues on the implementation of the Regional Strategy on Sexual Violence and Abuse.

Prevention is key, but the strategy also aims for an improved conviction rate for sexual offences through better support for victims and an effective justice response.

#### **Use of the Internet for Human Trafficking**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Justice what action his Department is taking to restrict the use of the internet for human trafficking.

**(AQW 5877/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Restrictions to the internet to prevent its misuse for human trafficking purposes are a law enforcement issue. PSNI works closely with other law enforcement agencies including the Serious Organised Crime Agency and the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre to disrupt criminal activities which use the internet to facilitate crime, including human trafficking. This includes taking steps to close down internet sites.

#### **Bangor Courthouse**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Justice to detail the estimated savings to his Department should Bangor Courthouse close.

**(AQW 5907/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** It is estimated that savings of £80,000 per year could be realised if Bangor Hearing Centre were to close. In addition it is estimated that £544,000 of capital expenditure would be required to ensure that Bangor Courthouse was fit for purpose in future years.

No job losses are anticipated should Bangor Hearing Centre close. Staff who work there are currently based at Newtownards Courthouse.

## Bangor Courthouse

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Justice whether there will be any job losses should Bangor Courthouse close.

**(AQW 5908/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** It is estimated that savings of £80,000 per year could be realised if Bangor Hearing Centre were to close. In addition it is estimated that £544,000 of capital expenditure would be required to ensure that Bangor Courthouse was fit for purpose in future years.

No job losses are anticipated should Bangor Hearing Centre close. Staff who work there are currently based at Newtownards Courthouse.

## Police Museum

**Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Justice which Department or organisation is responsible for producing the business case to develop the Police Museum; and what is the time table for submitting it to the Department of Finance and Personnel for approval.

**(AQW 5937/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The RUC GC Foundation is responsible for producing the business case for the Police Museum. My Department has provided resources to help complete the business case and continues to work with the RUC GC Foundation to progress the museum. However there remain some issues to be resolved before the outline business case can be ratified by my Department and submitted to the Department of Finance and Personnel for approval. Further work is underway by my officials, RUC GC Foundation and the PSNI with a view to having all matters concluded over the next few weeks. However, the timeframe for submission of the business case is dependent on key stakeholders addressing the outstanding issues and producing a financially sound business case to meet DFP approval criteria.

## Car Insurance

**Ms Ritchie** asked the Minister of Justice, in light of the report published by the Office of Fair Trading into the cost of car insurance in Northern Ireland, what steps his Department intends to take to address the higher cost of car insurance in Northern Ireland compared with Britain.

**(AQW 5940/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** I welcome the examination by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) into the cost of car insurance in the UK, and in Northern Ireland specifically. The report has highlighted a number of factors that impact on the level of insurance premiums for drivers.

My department is considering the OFT findings carefully to identify matters within my area of responsibility which may impact on the level of insurance premiums paid by drivers in Northern Ireland.

## Robert Black

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice whether Robert Black retained the same legal team prior to, and throughout, the duration of his trial; and whether he will be using the same team for his proposed appeal.

**(AQW 5995/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The same solicitor firm was retained for the duration of the Crown Court proceedings in the case of Robert Black, case number 10/644. Five different counsel have been on record at various times during the course of the proceedings.

As of 16 December 2011, no appeal has been lodged in this case.

## Access NI Vetting Application

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice how many versions of the Access NI clearance/vetting forms there have been since it was established.

**(AQW 5997/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** When AccessNI commenced work on 1 April 2008 there was a single application form on which applications could be made for basic, standard or enhanced checks.

With the development of the Vetting and Barring Scheme, originally due to commence on 26 July 2010, it was necessary to create a new enhanced/ standard check application form and, as a result, a separate form for basic checks.

At that time AccessNI undertook an extensive publicity campaign with Registered and Umbrella bodies concerning the change.

While the previous Vetting and Barring Scheme was suspended and then cancelled by the UK Government, I agreed that the new forms should be introduced anyway as they were shorter than the previous form and created efficiencies in the processing of applications. The new forms were put on line and relevant bodies notified.

## Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice to detail the functioning Neighbourhood Watch Schemes in the North Down constituency.

**(AQW 5998/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** There are currently 29 functioning Neighbourhood Watch Schemes in North Down covering 1116 households. A list detailing the schemes is attached at Annex A.

### Annex A

#### DETAILS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME IN THE NORTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY

	Name of Scheme	No of Households
1	Clandeboyne Road Neighbourhood Watch	50
2	Harbour Ward (Southwell Road)	50
3	Grange Avenue Neighbourhood Watch	20
4	Station Road Neighbourhood Watch	29
5	Church Avenue Neighbourhood Watch	32
6	Helen's Bay and Crawfordsburn Residents Association	40
7	Crawfordsburn Road Neighbourhood Watch	92
8	Meadow Way/Burnside Park Neighbourhood Watch	34
9	Brandon Grove Neighbourhood Watch	25
10	Cargoes Crescent and Cootehall Park Neighbourhood Watch	62
11	Fort Road Neighbourhood Watch	70
12	Cootehall Road/Cooleen Gardens Neighbourhood Watch	50
13	Briarwood Neighbourhood Watch	28
14	Sheridan Drive Neighbourhood Watch	54

	<b>Name of Scheme</b>	<b>No of Households</b>
15	Tughan Court Neighbourhood Watch	42
16	Belgravia Road Neighbourhood Watch	25
17	Towerview Gardens, Bangor, Neighbourhood Watch	14
18	Innisbrook Gardens Neighbourhood Watch	10
19	Grey's Point Helen's Bay Neighbourhood Watch	20
20	Corvally Court Neighbourhood Watch	7
21	Pinehill Neighbourhood Watch	31
22	Briarwood Park Neighbourhood Watch	32
23	Craigdarragh Neighbourhood Watch	32
24	Woodlands Neighbourhood Watch	12
25	Tonic Fold Neighbourhood Watch	105
26	Cranley Road Neighbourhood Watch	58
27	Stratford Neighbourhood Watch	30
28	Vernon Park Neighbourhood Watch	12
29	Cedar Grove 2 Neighbourhood Watch	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1116</b>

### **Neighbourhood Watch Schemes**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice how many Neighbourhood Watch Schemes have been established in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 5999/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The Department of Justice came into being on the 12 April 2010, since that time 175 Neighbourhood Watch Schemes have been established.

- 58 Schemes April – December 2010
- 117 Schemes January 2011 - present

### **Access NI Checks**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Justice whether there are any plans to change the requirement for separate Access NI checks for every job application.

**(AQW 6027/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** In August 2011 I published a report by Sunita Mason, the Independent Advisor for Criminality Information in England and Wales, on the criminal records regime in Northern Ireland. Recommendation 6 of that report said "I recommend that a system of portable disclosures and updated online checking be introduced as quickly as possible".

On 14 December I issued a public consultation document in response to that report. Paragraph 1.11 of that document states that I have accepted this recommendation and that I will seek to make the required legislative changes in the next Justice Bill.

## Access NI Checks

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Justice, on average, how long it takes to process an Access NI check. (AQW 6028/11-15)

**Mr Ford:** The following table sets out the average time taken to deliver a check by AccessNI between 1 April and 30 September 2011:

Type of check	Average days to deliver
Basic	6.5
Standard	6.5
Enhanced	19.4

AccessNI publishes estimated average turnaround times each week on the DoJ website.

## Access NI Checks

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Justice why applicants who apply for multiple Access NI checks within the same month are charged the full amount for each check. (AQW 6029/11-15)

**Mr Ford:** AccessNI is required by legislation to charge a fee for each application received. The levels of fees are set out in Regulations.

AccessNI recommends that certificates should not be transferred from one job to another in view of the potential risk to safeguarding vulnerable groups. Conviction information on that certificate may have changed even in a relatively short period of time or the positions applied for across applications may be different or with a different group of vulnerable people.

In August 2011, I published a report by Sunita Mason, the Independent Advisor for Criminality Information in England and Wales, on the criminal records regime in Northern Ireland.

Recommendation 6 of that report said "I recommend that a system of portable disclosures and updated online checking be introduced as quickly as possible". On 14 December I issued a public consultation document in response to that report. Paragraph 1.11 of that document states that I have accepted this recommendation and that I will seek to make the required legislative changes in the next Justice Bill. Where an applicant opts to use that system there will be no need for multiple applications to be made.

## Bangor Courthouse

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Justice on how many days a week Bangor Courthouse currently operates. (AQW 6040/11-15)

**Mr Ford:** Bangor Courthouse currently has scheduled Magistrates' Courts two days a week, on a Wednesday and Friday. In addition it is used occasionally for County Court business.

## Closure of Courthouses

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Justice, in regard to the proposals to close the courthouses in Larne and Limavady, what consideration has been given to the winter travelling conditions which can exist between Larne and Ballymena and Limavady and Coleraine due to the high elevation of the connecting roads; and how this is factored into the provision of a local and accessible service. (AQW 6065/11-15)

**Mr Ford:** Under the proposals the business currently dealt with at the Hearing Centres would be transferred to an alternative court venue. Although some people may have to travel further to court I

believe that the proposals still make appropriate provision for access to justice. While the majority of court users travel by private transport, there are convenient bus links for those using public transport.

During the development of the proposals it was confirmed that the main roads between Larne and Ballymena and Limavady and Coleraine are on the Roads Service main salting routes throughout the Winter. In the event of adverse Winter travelling conditions, where the court is notified that a person is unable to attend or will be delayed in attending due to transport difficulties, this will be conveyed to the judiciary who will determine how best to deal with the matter.

### **Closure of Courthouses**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Justice, in light of the affirmations in the proposals for Hearing Centres in 2009 that the steps outlined in these proposals were not a precursor to full closure, whether his Department is now proposing what was denied in 2009.

**(AQW 6068/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** In 2009 the former Northern Ireland Court Service stated that the Hearing Centres initiative was about making best use of scarce resources, including staff, and that it was not a precursor to the full closure of the premises involved. At that time consultees were advised that full closure would not occur without another public consultation. Circumstances have changed and the Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service is now operating within a more challenging economic environment and must deliver efficiencies. A reduction in the court estate is one of a wider package of savings plans which includes the proposed closure of the five Hearing Centres.

## **Department for Regional Development**

### **Definition of Brownfield Sites**

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the current definition of brownfield sites; and to detail whether how this definition has been changed, or proposed to be changed, over the last four years.

**(AQW 5485/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development):** The current definition of Brownfield land is set out in the Adjustments to the Regional Development Strategy 2025 (June 2008). This specifies that previously developed land (also commonly referred to as Brownfield land) is that which is, or was, occupied by a permanent structure within a defined settlement limit. The term may encompass vacant or derelict lands; infill sites; land occupied by redundant or under-used buildings; a piece of industrial or commercial property that is abandoned or under-used and often environmentally contaminated.

The following are excluded from the definition of “previously developed land”:

- open space of public value as defined in Planning Policy Statement 8 ‘Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation’; and
- the gardens of dwellings and apartments (broadly defined as those areas within the curtilage of a dwelling not containing buildings”).

In January 2011, my Department issued a consultation document entitled the “Regional Development Strategy 10 year review”. This suggested a change in the definition of Brownfield land to restrict this to “land that was formerly industrial or commercial, including vacant or unused land and buildings which have been last used for industrial/commercial purposes”.

This is being reconsidered on foot of the consultation and representations made to my Department.



## **Emails or Letters that Roads Service Receives from Elected Representatives**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development what percentage of emails or letters that Roads Service receives from elected representatives are replied to via email or letter; and what is the average time taken to respond.

**(AQW 5579/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that all emails and letters from elected representatives are responded to in the same medium they are received. However, it does not maintain separate records of the number of emails and letters received from public representatives and therefore is unable to provide details of the average time taken to respond.

Roads Service annually reports its performance for responding to written enquiries from customers (which include public representatives). Figures for the 2011/12 financial year are not yet available, however, in 2010/11, 94% of written enquiries were responded to within the 15 working day target.

## **Proposed A6 Road Upgrade**

**Mrs Overend** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the current position of the proposed A6 road upgrade.

**(AQW 5580/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that following the recent publication of the Magherafelt Area Plan, the Department proposes to reconvene the Public Inquiry into the Annaghmore Road/Bellshill Road alternative junction arrangement, in mid-February 2012.

In addition to a successful outcome to the Public Inquiry, delivery of this scheme will be subject to successful procurement and the availability of finance.

Recent developments relating to the Irish Government's proposed funding of the A5 and A8 will also undoubtedly affect the funding available to my Department. When funding is confirmed, I will review spending priorities across my Department, including the impact on the Strategic Roads Programme.

## **Public Inquiry on the A5 Road Scheme**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total cost to date of the public inquiry on the A5 road scheme.

**(AQW 5596/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that the total cost associated with the Public Inquiry into the A5 Western Transport Corridor scheme is £1.21m.

This amount reflects all external costs associated with organisation of, and preparation for, the Public Inquiry as well as the running of the 8 week Inquiry and progression of follow-up works undertaken by Roads Service's advisors and the Inspectors.

## **NI Water: Compensation to Customers**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 4814/11-15, (i) under what circumstances NI Water pays compensation to customers for the interruption of their water supply; (ii) what are the criteria applied; and (iii) why the Ballymoney residents, who were without their supply for a week, are not eligible for compensation.

**(AQW 5667/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** (i) The Water and Sewerage Services (NI) Order 2006 places water supply duties on Northern Ireland Water (NIW) and if a person sustains loss or damage as a result of a breach of these duties (subject to the legislation) they are entitled to make claims against NIW. (ii) NIW is responsible for handling claims in respect of its duties and considers each individual case on its merits. (iii) I have been advised by NIW that as a precaution in the Ballymoney incident, a boil water notice was issued

for consumption for food preparation, cooking and drinking. Although this was both inconvenient and regrettable during the incident the water supply was maintained to all properties and could be used for washing and sanitary purposes in the normal manner. In these circumstances there was no breach of the supply duties.

### **Speed Limit on the Bann Road, Ballymoney**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the extension of the miles per hour speed limit on the Bann Road, Ballymoney.

**(AQW 5672/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that legislation for the new speed limit on the Bann Road, Ballymoney is currently being finalised. The new speed limit is expected to become operative towards the end of January 2012.

### **Grit Bins**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department plans to provide grit bins in town and city centres this winter.

**(AQW 5699/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that the winter service policy and procedures, which set out the criteria for the salting of roads, are based on the well established practice of targeting the limited resources available for this service on the busier main through routes.

That said, on roads adopted/maintained by Roads Service, which do not qualify for inclusion onto the gritting schedule, salt bins or grit piles may be provided for use by the public, on a self help basis. Providing the necessary criteria is met, there are no restrictions placed on the location or limits placed on the number of salt bins which may be provided although they will not normally be provided within 100m of another bin. This criteria also applies to town and city centres.

Roads Service has advised that arrangements are in place to maintain approximately 4,500 salt bins and almost 40,000 grit piles at pre-agreed strategic locations on public roads across Northern Ireland.

### **Encouraging Car Users to Use Public Transport**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to encourage car users to use public transport.

**(AQW 5701/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's current proposals to promote a move from the use of private cars towards the use of public transport are included in the current Regional Transportation Strategy 2002-2012. The Strategy and the Plans which stem from it provide for, and encourage, greater use of public transport and include proposals for improved bus and rail services, Park and Ride and Rapid Transit.

Public consultation on a revised Regional Transportation Strategy closed on 28 June 2011. The review proposes a new approach to regional transportation, one which places even more emphasis on securing a shift away from the use of the private car to more sustainable forms of transport and focuses on moving people, and goods, rather than vehicles.

Earlier this year, my Department also published a Strategic review of Park and Ride. This recognises the importance of Park and Ride in promoting sustainable transport and makes a number of recommendations which aim to maximise modal shift to public transport. The Review identifies the Park and Ride sites which the Department will prioritise as available funding permits.

To support modal shift, my Department continues to invest in measures which aim to improve the quality and reliability of public transport. Within the Belfast Metropolitan area, for example, there are now almost 50km of bus lanes, making travel by public transport a more attractive alternative at peak times. My Department has also provided several bus turning circles in the Belfast Metropolitan area,

allowing bus services to be extended. A further bus turning circle in West Belfast will be constructed in 2012/13, subject to funding and proposals are currently being considered to introduce bus priority measures in Londonderry; My Department's Roads Service also considers new or improved footways, crossing and cycling facilities where a need has been identified, especially on schemes where they would provide a link to bus and rail services.

My Department is currently developing a new pilot Rapid Transit system in Belfast which will link East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter with and through the city centre. By providing an attractive alternative, the Belfast Rapid Transit system, which will include Park and Ride facilities at key locations, will encourage car users onto public transport.

### **Road Calming Measures**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development what new road calming measures are planned for the North Down area in the next financial year.

**(AQW 5702/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 1815/11-15.

### **Purchase of Salt or Grit**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department purchases salt or grit for the road network from a local supplier, and if not, from where is the salt or grit purchased.

**(AQW 5703/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that it purchases salt from the Irish Salt Mining and Exploration Co. Ltd, 10 Fort Road, Kilroot, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim.

Grit supplies are readily available from local quarries and are purchased, under contract, as required by local section offices.

### **Regional Transportation Strategy Consultation Document**

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister for Regional Development, given that the Regional Transportation Strategy consultation document acknowledges the desirability of moving people away from using car and towards more sustainable means of transport, why the twelve proposed objectives in the document do not include an objective to achieve such a modal shift; and whether he will consider the inclusion of a specific target to achieve a modal shift in the finalised strategy.

**(AQW 5744/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** In developing the New Approach to Regional Transportation, we have outlined the Strategic aims and objectives which we want to work towards revolving around: Support the Growth of the Economy, Enhance the quality of life for all, and Reduce the Environmental Impact of Transport.

Modal shift from individual car use to more sustainable patterns of travel will play an important part in achieving these Strategic high level aims and objectives; but it is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

As the costed Delivery Plan is developed, specific targets for achievement will be set, including targets for modal shift. The targets will assume full implementation of the Strategic Transportation Interventions in the Delivery Plans and will be both challenging and realistic.

### **Regional Transportation Strategy Consultation Document**

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister for Regional Development, given that the Regional Transportation Strategy consultation document acknowledges that greenhouse gas emissions from transport must be reduced, why the document does not contain a specific target to achieve such a reduction; and whether he will consider the inclusion of a specific target for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from transport in the finalised strategy.

**(AQW 5745/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** In developing the New Approach to Regional Transportation, we have outlined the Strategic Objectives which we want to work towards including “Reduce Greenhouse gas emissions from transport”.

The use of the proposed Policy Prioritisation Framework will ensure that potential Strategic Transport Interventions are assessed for their ability to contribute to this Strategic Objective before they are included in the Delivery Plan. As the costed Delivery Plan is developed, specific targets for achievement will be set, including targets for greenhouse gas emissions. These targets will assume full implementation of the Strategic Transportation Interventions in the Delivery Plans and will be both challenging and realistic.

### **Integrating the Port of Larne with the Larne Railway Line**

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister for Regional Development what action his Department is taking to integrate the Port of Larne with the Larne Railway Line.

**(AQW 5746/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** The railway station at Larne Harbour is integrated with the ferry passenger terminal and the majority of rail services are planned to link with both ferry departures and arrivals to ensure good connectivity. I am not aware of any commercially viable freight opportunities which would support the development of direct rail connections to the freight handling area within Larne Harbour. Northern Ireland Railways, along with representatives from my Department, continues to participate in the All Ireland Freight Forum, which examines suggestions for the transfer of freight from roads to rail (or coastal shipping).

### **Winter Salting Programme**

**Mr Irwin** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to ensure that the 200m stretch of road from St John’s Primary School, Middletown to the main Armagh/Monaghan Road is included in the winter salting programme.

**(AQW 5765/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department’s Roads Service has advised that the 200 metre stretch of road from St John’s Primary School, Middletown, to the main Armagh/Monaghan Road, does not meet the criteria for inclusion on the gritting schedule. However, the school will be added to the list of rural schools which will receive priority secondary treatment during periods of ice and snow.

### **Speed Signs**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will consider increasing the signage on roads where the speed limit drops from 50 mph to 30 mph, to encourage motorists to reduce their speed.

**(AQW 5773/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I can advise the Member that my Department’s Roads Service has developed detailed policy on the determination of local speed limits and follows national guidance, contained within Chapter 5 of the Traffic Signs Manual, in relation to the erection and maintenance of speed limit signs.

The setting of speed limits on different categories of rural and urban roads that fall outside the default national limits is a complex matter and is dependent on many factors, including collision history, alignment, access points, exposure to vulnerable road users and road function. However, Roads Service officials advise that whilst there is no specific policy on increasing signage where speed limits change, local traffic engineers will always ensure that there is adequate forward sight distance for drivers to be able to have visual warning in advance of any change. Furthermore, where road users driving at excess speed into the lower speed limit have been identified, the normal solution is to erect vehicle activated signs, or visual speed indicating devices that warn drivers to slow down.

## West Belfast: Bus Stops

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the number of bus stops in the West Belfast constituency; (ii) the number of these that have real-time digital information on display; and (iii) how many new real-time digital information display units are planned for West Belfast.

**(AQW 5800/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Translink has advised that there are 352 bus stops in the Belfast West constituency area and my Department has provided real-time passenger information displays at eight of these stops. At present, there are no plans to provide any further passenger information displays, however, the system has the facility to be expanded, should sufficient funding become available in the future.

## NI Water: Fines for Water Pollution

**Mr McLaughlin** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total amount paid in fines by NI Water for river pollution offences in the last twelve months; and what he is doing to eradicate such offending.

**(AQW 5801/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that during the period 1 December 2010 to 30 November 2011 it paid £15,050 in fines for river pollution offences. These offences occurred during 2008, 2009 and 2010.

I have highlighted this issue to the Chairman of NIW and the Economic Regulator which sets NIW targets for the reduction of pollution incidents. Officials within NIW and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency are having discussions aimed at reducing the risk of future NIW pollution incidents.

The Executive's budget allocates over 600 million pounds for investment in water and sewerage services over the budget period. This investment will fund the upgrade of wastewater treatment works and the sewerage network which will, in time, help reduce pollution incidents.

## Platform Staff at Antrim Railway Station

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any plans he has to reduce the number of platform staff at Antrim Railway Station.

**(AQW 5817/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Translink advises that following a consultation with the relevant Trade Unions, it is currently involved in a process to achieve employee efficiencies across the NI Railways network.

No employees based at Antrim Station are affected by this reduction in manpower. However whilst there will not be any reduction to staff numbers at Antrim their current range of duties/deployment will be changed to facilitate improved levels of service quality to customers.

## Hydraulic Fracturing

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the risk that the use of hydraulic fracturing would pose to the water supply.

**(AQW 5838/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it has been invited by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) to input into a multi-agency group on the subject of Hydraulic Fracturing in Northern Ireland. The group, which includes representatives from parties with an interest in ground water and drinking water protection, will be responsible for risk assessment and mitigation. NIW's role will be to ensure that the public health and safety aspects of the quality and quantity of drinking water provided to its customers are taken fully into account.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is responsible for the issue of licences for ground water abstraction. NIW will continue to work closely with the NIEA to ensure that protection of the public water supply remains a priority.

### Removal of Snow and Ice from Town Centre Footpaths

**Mr Beggs** asked the Minister for Regional Development which Councils have signed up to an agreement with Roads Service on the removal of snow and ice from town centre footpaths during periods of severe winter weather.[R]

**(AQW 5867/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has confirmed that the following eight Councils have signed an agreement for the removal of ice and snow from town centre footways during severe winter weather:

Councils That Have Signed An Agreement		
Ballymena	Craigavon	Lisburn
Belfast City	Cookstown	North Down
Carrickfergus	Limavady	

In addition, working arrangements are in place with a number of other Councils and work is ongoing with others to confirm their position.

### Taxi Fares for Translink Staff

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Regional Development how much Translink has spent on taxi fares for staff transport in each of the last five years; and why their own rail services are not used when appropriate.

**(AQW 5925/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Translink informed me that the tables below details how much has been spent on taxi fares for staff transport in each of the last five years:

NI Railways	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Total	£37,519	£43,605	£52,848	£53,312	£69,597

Bus	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Total	£603	£293	£545	£366	£297

In relation to railways taxis are sometimes required to move train crews between depots (inter-depot working). Inter-depot working allows for major depots to cover smaller country depot staff requirements without the requirement for localised overtime. Employee taxi hire arises on occasions when train crews are required to be transferred from one location to another. Some of the staff involved may not drive or have access to a car. Likewise, there may not be appropriate public transport links at the time of day they require to travel, i.e. early starts/late finishes. Some depots/sign-on points are not located on public transport routes.

Equally, taxis are also used during service disruptions, such as security alerts, line closures, train failures and accidents, when there is a requirement to reinstate services promptly and ensure reliability of the timetable as far as is possible in order to minimise the impact of disruption on customers. In such instances, train crews often need to be re-positioned following completion of their shifts.

Costs relating to Bus are much lower due to the difference in the operational model. It is much easier to move vehicles and staff about than it is for trains and rail crews.



Translink argues that taxis are only used in bus and rail service provision when it is the most economically viable solution.

### Road Links from Enniskillen

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to improve the road links between Enniskillen and (i) Cavan town; (ii) Monaghan town; and (iii) Donegal town; and (iv) Sligo town.

**(AQW 5967/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Strategic Road Improvement (SRI) Programme is set out in the Investment Delivery Plan for Roads, which was published in April 2008, reflecting the outlook of the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2008 – 2018.

The SRI Programme was developed against the Government's five key criteria for Transport, that is, environment, safety, economy, accessibility and integration. Within this framework, priority was given to Key Transport Corridors, followed by the link corridors and then the trunk roads.

The SRI Programme includes two schemes to improve the traffic flow in and around Enniskillen. The schemes are the A32 Cherrymount Link, which is currently under construction, and the A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass. Proposed upgrades to the strategic network outside Enniskillen include the A4 Fivemiletown bypass, and works to improve the A32 Enniskillen to Omagh Road to enhance access to the new hospital.

The new draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland covering the period 2011 – 2021, which is currently out for consultation, would facilitate the delivery of significant upgrades to our road network. However, it will mean that some schemes included in the Department's current Investment Delivery Plan may not be delivered to the timescale initially envisaged and it is unlikely that further schemes on the routes referred to in the Member's question could be included within the investment period.

My Department's Roads Service will continue to concentrate structural maintenance resources on the trunk road network in line with published targets.

### Donaghmore Sewerage Plant

**Mr Molloy** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to upgrade the Donaghmore sewerage plant.

**(AQW 5975/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it has commenced a detailed appraisal study to identify a solution which will address the heavily loaded treatment process at Donaghmore, taking account of existing and proposed development in the area. The identified solution and associated costs will be prioritised against other competing projects. However, it is presently scheduled to be completed within the early phase of the PC13 funding period (2013 – 2015).

### Parking Tickets Issued in Bangor

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many parking tickets have been dispensed in Bangor in each of the last two financial year.

**(AQW 6041/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Details of the number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued in Bangor in each of the last two financial years are provided in the table below:

Year	PCNs Issued In Bangor
2009/10	3,672
2010/11	3,156



## Income Generated from Parking Fines

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development how much money has been raised through parking fines in each of the last two financial years.

**(AQW 6042/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that income from Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) in the 2009/10 financial year was £4.8 million and £4.5 million in the 2010/11 financial year.

All revenue generated by the payment of PCNs is used, along with income from car-parking and other charges, to supplement the overall financing of Roads Service by Central Government.

## Fines: Environmental Infringements

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the (i) number; and (ii) total value of fines that NI Water has received for environmental infringements in each of the last five financial years.

**(AQW 6043/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that since its formation on 1 April 2007 it has received 37 convictions for environmental offences totalling £52,650. Details of the fines within each financial year are provided in the table below.

Period	Number of fines	Total Fines (£)
01/04/2007 - 31/03/2008	2	200
01/04/2008 – 31/03/2009	6	15,500
01/04/2009 – 31/03/2010	8	15,000
01/04/2010 – 31/03/2011	7	7,450
01/04/2011 – 20/12/2011*	14	14,500

\* partial year

The number of prosecutions taken in 2011 reflects the delay in the Public Prosecution Service system for taking historical pollution incidents to court. It is not an indication of a significant increase in pollution incidents. Year on year, progress has already been delivered in this area, with NIW outperforming the targets set by the Utility Regulator, whilst addressing the legacy of underinvestment in sewerage and treatment systems.

## Incorrect Contact Number for NI Water

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps his Department has taken to rectify the incorrect contact number for NI Water which was printed on a leaflet distributed to every household.

**(AQW 6044/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that it decided not to reprint the leaflet with the incorrect number based on a number of considerations. These included the fact that the correct number was displayed prominently elsewhere (including on the back of the leaflet), and because the rest of the information on the leaflet was correct and still performed its purpose of providing advice on what to do in advance of and during a freeze thaw. It was considered that reprinting the leaflets would not represent best value for money, but immediate action was taken to ensure the online version of the leaflet was corrected and the right number will appear on any future prints. As the incorrect number is not operational, no cost would be incurred by anyone using it.

## Roads in the Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon Districts

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 5691/11-15, what plans there are to replace these water mains.

**(AQW 6081/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that, as the use of asbestos cement water mains for the supply of drinking water is not a health concern, there is no specific programme to replace them. Asbestos cement water mains will be replaced progressively as part of NIW's ongoing Water Mains Rehabilitation Programme. Decisions on mains replacement are taken on the basis of normal serviceability criteria such as water quality, the number of burst mains per kilometre, low water pressure or the number of interruptions to the supply to customers.

## Health Implications of Asbestos Cement Water Pipes

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Regional Development what investigations his Department has undertaken into the health implications of asbestos cement water pipes.

**(AQW 6082/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the use of asbestos cement pipe work for the distribution of drinking water has been widely researched by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Studies carried out by WHO in 1993, 1996, 1998 and 2004 concluded that whilst asbestos is a known human carcinogen by the inhalation route, available epidemiological studies do not support the hypothesis that an increased cancer risk is associated with the ingestion of asbestos in drinking water. WHO has concluded there is no consistent, convincing evidence that ingested asbestos is hazardous to health and there are therefore no guideline values for asbestos in drinking water.

The health concerns regarding asbestos cement pipes are related to occupational exposure during their manufacture, installation and disposal and these are covered by industry regulations. Any work undertaken by NIW staff on asbestos cement pipe work is in accordance with legislative requirements and associated Health and Safety guidance. NIW employs a 'Safe System of Work' in line with industry practice and is confident that employees are not being put at risk whilst working with these pipes.

## Department for Social Development

### Derry-Based Civil Servants Working in Belfast

**Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 2169/11-15, why some Derry-based Civil Servants working in Belfast have been refused transfer to the state retirement pension service, when Belfast-based Civil Servants who are being relocated to Derry to fill vacancies are receiving travel and accommodation expenses for up to three years.

**(AQW 5013/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development):** The Human Resources aspects of the relocation of State Pension Branch are being delivered under an agreed Recruitment, Training and Redeployment Strategy. The current position is that for those phases of the recruitment process which are complete, no member of staff who currently works in Belfast, whether or not they live in Londonderry, and who has applied for a relocated post has been refused.

For the vast majority of staff who are transferring to State Pension Branch as part of the current recruitment process, the relocation to Londonderry will actually represent a saving in terms of their travelling expenses and travelling time. On that basis, and because all the moves are voluntary, the Department does not anticipate that any accommodation expenses or enduring travelling costs allowances will be payable as a result of this exercise.

In the period running up to the relocation staff will be based in Belfast. During this period some staff not currently based in Greater Belfast may incur additional travelling costs and, if they meet the

relevant qualifying conditions, might qualify for an element of financial support under the Excess Fares Allowance. It is anticipated that any allowance will cease once the branch and its staff transfer to the new location in Londonderry in Spring 2012.

### Departmental Spend in West Belfast

**Mr P Maskey** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail his Department's, and its arm's-length bodies', spend in the West Belfast constituency in each of the last three years; and the proposed spend for each year until 2015.

**(AQW 5311/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The table below provides a breakdown of my Department's and its arm's-length bodies' spend in the West Belfast constituency in each of the last three years plus the budget in respect of the current year:

2008/09 Spend (£m)	2009/10 Spend (£m)	2010/11 Spend (£m)	2011/12 Budget (£m)
55.24	64.97	32.77	43.81

The above details include costs in respect of the Social Security Agency's Jobs & Benefits Offices at Kennedy Centre, Falls Road, Andersonstown and also the Belfast West & Lisburn District Support Office but does not include costs for Department for Employment & Learning staff based in the Jobs & Benefits Offices. Details in respect of Housing Executive offices in West Belfast and Dairy Farm District are also included, although the final spend will depend upon the necessary approvals being secured and valid claims being submitted, particularly in relation to the Social Housing Development Programme.

It is not possible at this early stage to determine proposed spend up to 2015 in West Belfast as many factors including, for example, Welfare Reform changes such as the introduction of Universal Credit and Social Fund Reform and other budgetary considerations will influence spend in all areas. It should be noted however, that all schemes will be subject to funding and the necessary approval processes being completed.

### Pension Credit

**Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 4313/11-15, how and when the qualification age for the Guarantee Credit element of pension credit will gradually rise from age 60 to 65; and how his Department intends to communicate these changes to those affected.

**(AQW 5382/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** Pension Credit is a means tested benefit for persons of state retirement age. It is a non-contributory, non taxable benefit made up of two components, Guaranteed Credit and Savings Credit.

The State Pension age for women is gradually increasing to 65, to match the State Pension age for men. The minimum age to qualify for Guarantee Credit component of Pension Credit for both men and women is also gradually rising from age 60 to 65. The minimum age for the Savings Credit component is 65.

Under existing legislation the changes began to increase from 60 in April 2010 and will increase women's State Pension age to 65 between April 2010 and April 2020. This was announced in 1993 and provided for in the Pensions (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

The Pensions Act 2011 will bring forward the increase in the State Pension Age in Great Britain to November 2018. In line with the principle of parity, it is anticipated that corresponding proposals will be introduced in Northern Ireland in January 2012.

The increases will be phased in so that people whose State Pension age increases the most have a longer notice period. The Department will advise those affected at the earliest opportunity. It is anticipated that a direct mailing exercise will be undertaken to communicate the changes. Paper and web-based information products such as the NI direct website are being updated along with the State Pension Forecasting service. Winter Fuel Payments

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister for Social Development how many people decided not to accept a Winter Fuel Payment in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 5472/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The information requested is not available.

### Neighbourhood Renewal Areas

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister for Social Development to provide a breakdown of the £140 million spend on Neighbourhood Renewal areas in each of the last seven years.

**(AQW 5538/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** Actual expenditure on Neighbourhood Renewal in each of the last 7 years for this Department is as set out in the following table.

	2004/ 05	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08	2008/ 09	2009/ 10	2010/ 11	Total
Amount (m)	2.92	7.88	16.74	22.08	25.45	27.39	21.28	123.74

### Neighbourhood Renewal Schemes

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the level of funding that has been allocated to capital projects as part of Neighbourhood Renewal Schemes in each of the next three years; and whether any of the funding has been allocated to projects in the Foyle area.

**(AQW 5554/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The following table sets out the level of capital funding allocated to Neighbourhood Renewal schemes in the next 3 years.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Amount (£m)	£6.0	£8.0	£8.0

As North West Development Office Neighbourhood Renewal budgets have not been finalised for the next three years, no information can be supplied in respect to capital projects in the Foyle area. When budget allocations have been finalised, funding for capital projects will be informed by the priorities identified in the Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans.

### Work Capability Assessments

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of Work Capability Assessments that have been carried out in each constituency, in each of the last three years; and of these how many people (a) passed; (b) failed; and (c) appealed the assessment; and (ii) on what date the first appeal was lodged.

**(AQW 5556/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:**

- (i) The Work Capability Assessment was introduced in October 2008 to determine eligibility to Employment and Support Allowance. The information requested is not available by parliamentary constituency. The table below provides details of the number of Work Capability Assessments carried out in each of the past three years since October 2008:

Year	WCA Outcomes
October 2008-2009	742
2009-2010	12,924
2010-2011	16,709
April 2011- November 2011	19,524
<b>Total</b>	<b>49,899</b>

- a) 22,291 customers have been allowed Employment and Support Allowance following a Work Capability Assessment.
- b) 27,608 customers have been disallowed Employment and Support Allowance following a Work Capability Assessment.
- c) 15,702 customers have appealed being disallowed Employment and Support Allowance for not having limited capability for work:
- (ii) The first appeal was received on 22 January 2009.

### Departmental Information Office

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the current (i) number; and (ii) annual cost of staff employed in his Department's Information Service.

**(AQW 5563/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The current number of staff employed in the Department's Information Service is 20 and the approximate annual cost is £635,084.

### Portrush Harbour Area

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the further progress that could be made in improving the Portrush Harbour area either as part of the town Masterplan, or in addition to it.

**(AQW 5566/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The extension and development of Portrush harbour was one of the proposals outlined in the Portrush Western Peninsula Strategy published in August 2007. Further development in this area could make a very significant contribution to the regeneration of the town as a whole.

My Department is working in partnership with Coleraine Borough Council to deliver a number of the proposals outlined in the Portrush Western Peninsula Strategy. The recent establishment of a local development group involving private sector and community stakeholders interested in the regeneration of the town will strengthen existing partnership arrangements between the Council and my Department. The development of the harbour is one of our highest priorities for Portrush and a number of technical studies are underway to test the feasibility of various options for redevelopment.

### PricewaterhouseCoopers' report on the Fundamental Review of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on PricewaterhouseCoopers' report on the Fundamental Review of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive,

**(AQW 5590/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) has completed an independent review of the Housing Executive. Their report contains a number of proposals and recommendations, I have asked that they discuss their proposals with key stakeholders in the Housing Sector and provide me with feedback on any issues or concerns raised. I have made no decisions yet on the way forward, however I can assure

you that I will carefully consider every issue including any impact on staff and I am determined that any proposals I bring forward, which will be subject to full consultation, will be for the benefit of tenants and the citizens of Northern Ireland.

### **Housing Executive Properties: Economy 7 Heating**

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department has any plans to replace Economy 7 heating with Economy 10 heating in Housing Executive properties.

**(AQW 5591/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** As there is no Economy 10 tariff available in Northern Ireland, this is a matter outside the scope of the Housing Executive.

### **Staff Transferred to the Pension Service in Londonderry**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development how many civil servants, outside of the Social Security Agency, will need to be transferred to the Pension Service in Londonderry.

**(AQW 5665/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** To date 7 DSD staff from outside of the Social Security Agency (SSA) have transferred to State Pensions with a further 11 staff scheduled to take up posts between January and April 2012. The remaining posts have been advertised to staff across the Northern Ireland Civil Service via the Elective Transfer process. That process closed on 16 December 2011 and the outcome in terms of numbers of successful applicants will be confirmed early in the New Year.

### **Welfare Reform**

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Development what steps his Department is taking to limit any negative impact of Welfare Reform on people with distinct needs and disabilities.

**(AQW 5678/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** In trying to assess the impacts across the Section 75 groupings, my Department issued an Equality Impact Assessment for consultation. We will be carefully considering all of the responses received and will publish our response early in the New Year.

In seeking to identify impacts, work is ongoing at present to develop a Policy Simulation Model (PSM) which will be used for scenario analysis. The PSM will produce outputs including the financial impacts on different demographic groups from policy changes to the benefits system.

### **Work Capability Assessments**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister for Social Development how many people he expects to attend a Work Capability Assessment between 2011 and 2014.

**(AQW 5681/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Work Capability Assessment is used to assess functional capability for work for customers claiming Employment and Support Allowance and by those customers in receipt of Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support (paid on the grounds of incapacity) who are having their claims reassessed.

The Work Capability Assessment includes completion of a questionnaire by the customer and a paper scrutiny of all available evidence by a trained healthcare professional to establish the customer's capability for work. Only those customers whose functional capability cannot be established at scrutiny will be required to undergo a face-to-face medical assessment.

While it is estimated that 76,000 existing Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support (paid on the grounds of incapacity) customers will be reassessed and will undergo a Work Capability Assessment it is not possible to predict the number who will be required to attend



a face to face assessment between now and 2014. In addition, it is not possible to determine the number of fresh claims that will be received for Employment and Support Allowance in that period.

### **Claimants Moving from Incapacity Benefit to Employment Support Allowance**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to those claimants moving from Incapacity Benefit to Employment Support Allowance (i) what is the timescale for the completion of the changeover; (ii) how many claimants will this affect; and (iii) how many medical examinations will take place. **(AQW 5692/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The reassessment of customers in receipt of Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support (paid on grounds of incapacity for work) commenced in February 2011 and is due to be completed by 5 April 2014. It is estimated that approximately 76,000 existing customers will be affected.

All customers undergoing reassessment will undergo a Work Capability Assessment. The assessment is used to assess functional capability for work. It includes completion of a questionnaire by the customer and a paper scrutiny of all available medical evidence by a trained healthcare professional to establish the customer's functional capability for work.

Only those customers whose functional capability cannot be established at scrutiny will be required to undergo a face-to-face medical assessment. At this time, it is not possible to provide an accurate figure of the number of customers who will have a face to face assessment until April 2014 as each case is assessed on the information provided on their medical questionnaire.

### **Claimants Moving from Incapacity Benefit to Employment Support Allowance**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to the medical examinations for claimants moving from Incapacity Benefit to Employment Support Allowance (i) how much notice of an appointment is given; (ii) how long each examination is expected to last; (iii) how long claimants should be expected to wait on the day of their appointment; and (iv) what action is taken if delays occur. **(AQW 5693/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:**

- (i) Customers receive a minimum of 7 days notice of their appointment unless an earlier date is mutually agreed.
- (ii) There is no set time limit for the length of an assessment. This depends upon the individual case including the type and nature of medical conditions. Time with the health care professional is usually between 20 minutes and 60 minutes.
- (iii) The aim is to see customers within 10 minutes of their appointment time, but many customers are seen before this and have no waiting time.
- (iv) Receptionists will keep customers advised of any waiting time and keep them updated. If the delay is prolonged, explanations are provided and the customer will have the opportunity to rearrange their appointment and travel expenses will be paid.

### **Funding Allocated for New Build Housing**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) how much funding was allocated for new build housing in the current financial year; (ii) how many units were planned within the allocation of funding; (iii) how many units are expected to be completed; and (iv) what is the projected underspend. **(AQW 5694/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** This year, 2011/12, a gross programme of 1973 units has been developed that could deliver up to 1400 new homes. A total of £142.6 million has been allocated to deliver this new housing and the Housing Executive, who manage the programme on behalf of my Department are not forecasting any under spend at this time.



## Tenders for New Build Projects

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Social Development how many firms were invited to tender for new build projects in this financial year; and what tender criteria were used.

**(AQW 5695/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** In procuring construction works under the Social Housing Development Programme housing associations must comply with the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 and as a condition of Housing Association Grant comply with Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy. In so doing Associations must publicly advertise all opportunities to carry out construction works with a value exceeding £30k. Those with a value exceeding the current EU Threshold of £3.927m must be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union. In meeting this requirement associations are inviting all construction firms, which meet pre-determined selection criteria, to tender for the works. Selection criteria which are project specific examines, amongst other things, the capacity and capability of the tenderer, including previous experience, to perform the contract, will be project specific.

## Housing Stock: Lagged Water Pipes

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development whether the Housing Executive has identified whether all of its housing stock has lagged water pipes to prevent the pipes from bursting.

**(AQW 5700/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Housing Executive is satisfied that the vast majority of its properties have lagged pipes. However, there may be a small number of properties where a pipe has not been lagged or the lagging needs to be replaced. To address this they issued instructions to their contractors to double check that all pipes are lagged when they are carrying out work to their properties through both planned maintenance schemes and response maintenance requests. Any issues are brought to the Housing Executive's attention and appropriate action is taken. Additionally when their District Maintenance staff inspect properties after response maintenance work they check whether pipes in the property are lagged and take appropriate action to remedy where necessary. The instances where work has been required to provide lagging have been minimal.

## Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings Scheme

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 4525/11-15, to detail the total cost of housing the Security Force personnel in each year; and the number of properties purchased through Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings Scheme in each constituency.

**(AQW 5725/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not hold information on the total cost of housing the Security Forces personnel.

During the period 1 November 2008 to 31 October 2011 the Housing Executive purchased 81 properties through the Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED) scheme. Of these, 44 were owned by Security Force Personnel. The total cost of purchasing the properties and a breakdown of the properties purchased is as follows:-

- 01/11/2008 – 31/10/2009: 11 properties at a total cost of £2.692m
- 01/11/2009 – 31/10/2010: 19 properties at a total cost of £4.032m
- 01/11/2010 – 31/10/2011: 14 properties at a total cost of £2.898m

The information has not been provided by constituency on the basis of the confidentiality of the SPED scheme.

## Carer's Allowance

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister for Social Development how many people in each constituency are in receipt of Carer's Allowance.

**(AQW 5757/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The number of Carers Allowance recipients by Assembly constituency area is set out in the table below. Due to system configuration these figures are rounded to the nearest ten.

Assembly Constituency Area	Number of Recipients
Belfast East	1,440
Belfast North	2,720
Belfast South	1,250
Belfast West	3,710
East Antrim	1,170
East Londonderry	1,850
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	1,730
Foyle	2,800
Lagan Valley	1,240
Mid Ulster	2,130
Newry And Armagh	2,410
North Antrim	1,560
North Down	930
South Antrim	1,280
South Down	2,170
Strangford	1,310
Upper Bann	2,300
West Tyrone	2,250
Unknown	280
<b>Total</b>	<b>34,530</b>

Data source MIDAS/GMS scans May 2011

## Pensioners' Bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate, Bangor

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development whether the pensioners' bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate, Bangor, will be included in the plans to install double glazing in Housing Executive properties, under the draft Programme for Government.

**(AQW 5794/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** As a number of double glazing schemes were carried out prior to the introduction of computerised recording systems the Housing Executive's records on the level of double glazing in its stock is incomplete. However, it is estimated that approximately 50% of the stock already has some degree of double glazing.

The Housing Executive currently installs double glazing as part of its External Cyclical Maintenance programme. Extra funding secured through the monitoring round has enabled an increase in this activity. The Housing Executive is working to identify those additional properties which still require double glazing. Once this information is available, as required in the draft Programme for Government, by March 2012 it will prepare a programme for the installation of double glazing to all Housing Executive homes by the end of 2015.

### **Flats at Barnagh Park, Donaghadee**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development what plans his Department has to refurbish the flats at Barnagh Park, Donaghadee.

**(AQW 5795/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The flats at Barnagh Park, Donaghadee were built in 1991 and had External Cyclical Maintenance works carried out in 2004/05. Gas heating systems were installed in 2006. The flats are included in a kitchen replacement scheme programmed for 2012/13 and further external works are programmed for the next two financial years, subject to available funding.

### **Disability Living Allowance**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

**(AQW 5833/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** There were 187,951 recipients of Disability Living Allowance at 27 November 2011, the most recent figure available.

### **Double Glazing in Housing Executive Properties: North Down**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development which areas in North Down might benefit from the double glazing installation proposed in the draft Programme for Government.

**(AQW 5849/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The information is not available in the format requested as a number of double glazing schemes were carried out prior to the introduction of computerised recording systems and therefore the Housing Executive's records on the level of double glazing in its stock is incomplete. However, it is estimated that approximately 50% of the stock already has some degree of double glazing.

The Housing Executive currently installs double glazing as part of its External Cyclical Maintenance programme. Extra funding secured through the monitoring round has enabled an increase in this activity. The Housing Executive is working to identify those additional properties which still require double glazing. Once this information is available, as required in the draft Programme for Government, by March 2012 it will prepare a programme for the installation of glazing to all Housing Executive homes by the end of 2015.

All Housing Executive dwellings in North Down which currently have single glazing will benefit from these proposals.

### **Flats at Kilclief Gardens and Ballynoe Gardens, Kilcooley**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the refurbishment of the flats at Kilclief Gardens and Ballynoe Gardens, Kilcooley.

**(AQW 5853/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** An Economic Appraisal detailing the options for these homes is currently being finalised by the Housing Executive.

I expect that work to complete in the coming weeks and I expect to make an announcement shortly after that is complete.

## Employment Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit Allowance Appeals

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many Employment Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit Allowance decisions were appealed; and (ii) how many appeal decisions found in favour of the appellants, in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 5957/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The information requested is set out in the table below:

Year	Appeals received	Appeals upheld in customer favour
2008-2009	3,331	930
2009-10	6,784	1,644
2010-11	7,414	1,804
April 2011-November 2011	6,016	1,424
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,545</b>	<b>5,802</b>

## Employment Support Allowance: Medical Assessments

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Social Development what mechanisms are in place to ensure consistency in the medical assessments for Employment Support Allowance claimants; and what training is provided for those carrying out the assessments.

**(AQW 5958/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** All Employment and Support Allowance customers are subject to the Work Capability Assessment which may include a Work Capability Medical Assessment. Medical assessments are carried out on behalf of the Social Security Agency by Healthcare Professionals employed by Atos which are subject to monthly audits of completed assessments. These are reported to the Agency Health Assessment Advisor who is responsible for reviewing the quality and consistency of medical assessments.

A training programme is provided for all Healthcare Professionals employed to undertake medical assessments for Employment and Support Allowance. Following training, all assessments carried out by the new Health Care Professionals are audited to ensure they are of a consistent quality and standard. A training needs analysis for all Health Care Professionals is completed on a yearly basis to enable identification of training needs and to inform ongoing training.

## Health and Safety Schemes: North Down

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development what new health and safety schemes are planned for the North Down area in the remainder of this financial year.

**(AQW 5973/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** I assume the Member is referring to Housing Executive schemes. The Housing Executive does not have any health and safety schemes planned for North Down in the remainder of this financial year.

## PricewaterhouseCoopers' Report on the Fundamental Review of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive

**Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister for Social Development, with regard to PricewaterhouseCoopers' Report on the Fundamental Review of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, for his assessment of (i) whether the review was fundamental in its reach; (ii) the recommendation to establish an Independent Housing

Regulator; (iii) who will benefit from the handing of the power to set rental rates to an Independent Housing Regulator; and (iv) whether the review satisfies equality and rural proofing requirements.

**(AQW 6018/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) has completed an independent review of the Housing Executive. Their report contains a number of proposals and recommendations, I have asked that they discuss their proposals with key stakeholders in the Housing Sector and provide me with feedback on any issues or concerns raised. I have made no decisions yet on the way forward, however I can assure you that I will carefully consider every issue including any impact on staff and I am determined that any proposals I bring forward, which will be subject to full consultation, will be for the benefit of tenants and the citizens of Northern Ireland.

**Work Capability Assessments for Employment and Support Allowance**

**Mr McCartney** asked the Minister for Social Development, for each of the last 12 months, to detail (i) the percentage of claimants who undertook a Work Capability Assessment for Employment and Support Allowance which resulted in a successful outcome; (ii) how many claimants from the Foyle constituency were awarded zero points in their assessment; and (iii) the success rate of appeals since the assessments have been carried out by ATOS Healthcare.

**(AQW 6080/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:**

- i) Details of the percentage of claimants who undertook a Work Capability Assessment for Employment and Support Allowance which resulted in a successful outcome, in each of the last 12 months, are set out in the table below:

<b>Month</b>	<b>WCA success rate</b>
December 2010	41%
January 2011	46%
February 2011	59%
March 2011	51%
April 2011	52%
May 2011	37%
June 2011	46%
July 2011	58%
August 2011	48%
September 2011	58%
October 2011	62%
November 2011	50%
Average	51%

- ii) The information requested is not available by Parliamentary constituency.
- iii) It is not possible to provide information in the format requested as the management information system does not differentiate between customers who have appealed being deemed 'fit for work' having been examined by ATOS Healthcare and those who have been deemed fit for work before ATOS Healthcare took over on 20 June 2011.

# Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

## Secretariat Staff Complement

**Mr Beggs** asked the Assembly Commission to provide an update on its target to reduce the secretariat staff complement to 375.

**(AQO 968/11-15)**

**Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission):** A reduction in staff numbers over the four year period of the Comprehensive Spending Review is planned and it is anticipated that this reduction will be achieved through the control of vacancies and through natural wastage. At present, a freeze on external recruitment is in place.

At the 1st April 2011, the number of staff in post in the Assembly Secretariat was 409.5 Full Time Equivalents staff. As of the 1st December 2011, that number has reduced to 397.1 which includes 4.3 FTE agency workers and 3 on attachment from other organisations.





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