

Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

Friday 7 December 2012

Volume 80, No WA1

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

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Wells, Jim (South Down)
Wilson, Sammy (East Antrim)

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 7 December 2012

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the personal lawyers of witnesses in the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry are allowed to attend the Inquiry in the capacity of 'companions'.

(AQW 15781/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): Victims and survivors are welcome to bring a companion with them when speaking either to the Statutory Inquiry or to the Acknowledgement Forum. There is no bar on a lawyer attending in the capacity of a companion. However, the role of the companion is to assist and support the victim or survivor in recounting their experiences. It is not the role of a companion to represent them in a legal capacity or otherwise. There is no fee for anyone who attends as a companion and this would include lawyers acting in that capacity.

Literacy and Numeracy in Primary Schools

Mr Rogers asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide details of their announcement on 10 October 2012 about providing extra teaching jobs to address specifically the issues associated with literacy and numeracy in primary schools.

(AQW 16002/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department of Education, as lead department for the Improving Literacy and Numeracy Signature Project, will be responsible for developing Delivery Plans in the coming weeks for both programmes that have been designed under this project, with the aim of having work rolled out at the earliest possible opportunity. Once developed, we will discuss with departments the details of their plans particularly in relation to appropriate delivery mechanisms and target beneficiaries. Once agreed, funding can be drawn down by the department.

Social Investment Fund

Mrs Dobson asked First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 15293/11-15, to detail the amount of money spent on each activity; and the total funding remaining in the Social Investment Fund.

(AQW 16069/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The net funding spent to date on finalising policy proposals and establishing the Steering Groups is detailed in the table below:

Spend	Amount
Public consultation, engagement and information sessions	£16,899
Initial Gateway Review	£10,000
Central Procurement Directorate costs to tender for technical assistance support	£6,669

Spend	Amount
2-day workshop for nominees of 9 Steering Groups	£1,347
Total	£34,915

A further £360,000 has been allocated for the technical assistance support. The funding remains ring-fenced at £80 million and the remainder of the funding is still available.

Executive Meetings and Forums

Ms Brown asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on Executive meetings and forums focusing on the economy.

(AQO 2768/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The economy is a standing agenda item of each Executive meeting. The Executive meeting of 25 October 2012 was, in addition, dedicated exclusively to the discussion of economic matters and the Executive commissioned further work which it discussed at its meeting on 7 November.

The Executive's Budget Review Group has met on six occasions since May 2011. At its most recent meeting on 27 September, the Budget Review Group discussed the progress of its work programme, including alternative options for accessing finance; realising the value of surplus and under-utilised assets; the review of Arm's Length Bodies; and other priority areas. The Budget Review Group will meet again on 12 December 2012.

Childcare Strategy

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the £12 million allocated to the Childcare Strategy, (i) to detail the amount of the allocation that has already been spent; (ii) for a breakdown of the administration and project costs; (iii) to list the specific projects and the amount of funding allocated to each; (iv) to detail the costs associated with the research being undertaken; (v) if no costs have been paid for research to date, to detail projected costs of research being undertaken; (vi) how many further bids for funding are with the Department for consideration; and (vi) to outline the overall amount of these additional bids.

(AQW 16451/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:

- (i) To date, a total of £322,000 has been spent from the Executive's Childcare Fund and we have taken decisions that would allow up to a further £4.5 million to be allocated from the Fund.
- (i) The resources in the Childcare Fund are ring-fenced to support the development of the Childcare Strategy. They are not used to support administration costs.
- (ii) The first tranche of awards from the Executive's Childcare Fund were made in 2011/12 and totalled £322,000. This £322,000 was allocated as follows:

DHSSPS £250,000:

- a to expedite work undertaken by the Health and Social Care Board to reduce the backlog in the registration and inspections of childminding and daycare settings and to implement revised procedures to mitigate future delays.

OFMDFM £20,000:

- b to enable PlayBoard to provide additional grant funding to the South Armagh Childcare Consortium. This was funding to enable the Consortium to continue its development towards financial sustainability.

DCAL £52,000:

- c allocated to NI Screen to extend the after schools Film Club in extended service schools.
- (iv) & (v) OFMDFM has commissioned RSM McClure Watters to conduct research to provide a detailed up-to-date review of current childcare provision and the current demand for childcare places. The projected cost of this research is approximately £90,000 and is being funded from OFMDFM's Research Budget. OFMDFM is also funding a research project on childminding. This research, which is being conducted by the National Children's Bureau, aims to (a) explore issues of practice and quality within childminding and (b) to assess the impact of the grouping of children of different ages within childcare. The projected cost of this research is approximately £100,000 and it is also being funded from OFMDFM's Research Budget.
- (vi) Eleven bids were received from five departments in response to a second call for bids to the Childcare Fund. We have agreed to approve five of these bids.
- (vii) The five successful bids were for up to £4.5 million as follows:

DHSSPS: up to £250,000 for a focused review of the childcare needs of vulnerable families;

DHSSPS: up to £500,000 to enhance childcare provision for children with a disability;

DE/DHSSPS: up to £370,000 for enhanced development opportunities for pre-school children;

DCAL: After school film clubs, up to £362,000; and

DEL: up to £3 million to expand Steps to Work Childcare provision.

Officials are working with the relevant departments to ensure the maximum amount of spend in these projects.

040 Project

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the nature and location of any services for older people delivered through the 040 Project.

(AQW 16827/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The 040 Project is not funded or managed by OFMDFM. It is an EU Northern Periphery Programme project which we understand ran from 2008-10 and was funded under the 2007-2013 programme.

Further information can be obtained from the 040 website – <http://www.o4os.eu/northern-ireland.asp>

Social Investment Fund

Mr Copeland asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister which groups from the East Belfast constituency have been consulted regarding the Social Investment Fund.

(AQW 16869/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Steering Group for the Belfast East Social Investment Zone is leading the area planning process in this constituency. In order to fulfil their role, the steering group, supported by their appointed consultant, has undertaken an extensive engagement programme. The purpose of this engagement is to ensure that the views of stakeholders operating within the constituency have an opportunity to inform the development of the area plan.

Since area planning commenced on 17 October, 58 voluntary and community groups have been engaged to date in the process:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ■ Ballybeen Women's Centre | ■ Belfast YMCA |
| ■ Ballymac Youth Club | ■ Bloomfield Community Association |
| ■ Belfast FC | ■ Bloomfield Presbyterian Church |

- Branial Community Association
- Bryson Lagan Sports
- Castlereagh Business Association
- Charter NI
- Christians against Poverty
- Clarawood Community Association
- Clarawood Tenants' Association
- Clarawood Youth Club
- Corrymeela
- Creative Exchange
- Dundonald Credit union
- Dungoyne FC
- East Belfast Alternatives
- East Belfast Community Development Agency
- East Belfast Counselling
- East Belfast Enterprises
- East Belfast Independent Advice Counselling
- East Belfast Partnership
- East Belfast Surestart
- EXIT
- GEMS NI
- Glenburn Methodist Church
- Greenway Women's Centre
- Hanwood Trust
- Helping Hands Autism Support Group
- Inner East Youth Project
- Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church
- Lower Castlereagh Community Group
- Mount Merrion Parish Church
- Oasis
- Orangefield Presbyterian Church
- Orangefield Presbyterian/Clonduff
- Pitt Park Women's Group
- Short Strand Community Forum
- Short Strand Partnership
- Short Strand Traders
- St Mary's Silver Thread
- Stepping Stones
- Sydenham Community Development agency
- Sydenham United FC
- Sydenham Neighbourhood Community Watch
- T13
- Tagit Fishing Club
- Templemore Avenue Schools Trust
- Templemore Users Trust
- The Dock
- The Oak Project
- Titanic People
- Tullycarnet Neighbourhood Collective
- Tullycarnet Regeneration
- Walkway Community Association

Willowfield Parish Community Association In addition, in East Belfast, there has been engagement with other key stakeholders, including some local schools, during the area planning process.

Wider consultation on the Social Investment Fund with councils and other statutory organisations commenced earlier in the development of the SIF programme and remains ongoing.

Historical Institutional Abuse

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what progress has been made on establishing an acknowledgement forum for victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse. **(AQW 16971/11-15)**

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Acknowledgement Forum's registration scheme launched on 1 October 2012. Victims and survivors' appointments to come and speak in confidence to the Forum commenced on Monday 22 October.

Children Services

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister in which areas are Departments duplicating the provision of services to children; and what action they will take to reduce duplication, given their overall responsibility for the children's strategy.

(AQW 16973/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Departments, their Agencies, Arms Length Bodies and organisations they support deliver a very wide range of services to children including aspects of healthcare, education, justice, transport and many others. The Executive is doing all that it can to ensure the most cost effective provision of services not only to children and young people, but to all of our citizens.

We recognise that many of the issues which children and young people face are cross-cutting and require co-operation across all departments.

Delivering Social Change is a comprehensive new framework which seeks to co-ordinate key actions between departments in order to deliver a sustained reduction in poverty and associated issues across all ages; improve children and young people's health, wellbeing and life opportunities and break the long-term cycle of multi-generational problems.

By introducing this framework, all departments will work together to deal with these issues. Such an approach should encourage greater policy integration and will avoid the potential for duplication.

Historical Institutional Abuse

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the discussions with Ministers in the Irish Republic on victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse who travelled as children from one jurisdiction of this island to an institution in the other, including any proposed actions.

(AQW 17067/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We wrote to the Irish Minister for Justice, Alan Shatter TD, on 6 August 2012 raising our concerns in relation to allegations that children suffered abuse in a number of institutions that fall outside the jurisdiction of the Executive. In response, Minister Shatter confirmed that the issue was under his consideration.

On 21 November, Junior Ministers met with the Irish Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald TD, in the NSMC offices in Armagh, to discuss children's issues. At that meeting, Minister Fitzgerald undertook to speak to Minister Shatter about this issue.

Items Disposed of for a Monetary Return

Mr McNarry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 16539/15-15, to provide details of the land which was disposed of for £10,000.

(AQW 17072/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A private home owner asked to purchase a small portion of land adjacent to the Maze Long Kesh site to allow continued access to maintain a sewage system.

A business case for the sale was prepared by OFMDFM and approved by DFP Land and Property Services valued the tract of land (0.12 acres) at £10,000, the price at which it was sold.

The transfer/sale of the land will not impact on or constrain the future development of the site and the land transfer will rationalise the site boundary.

Historical Abuse Inquiry

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the process followed in selecting and appointing counsel to the Historical Abuse Inquiry.

(AQW 17251/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry is independent from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, so we cannot answer questions on its behalf. This is a matter for the Chairman of the Inquiry.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Central Investigation Unit

Mr Swann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they have employed the service of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Central Investigation Unit in the last five years. **(AQW 17253/11-15)**

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department has had a Service Level Agreement in place with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Central Investigation Service since August 2010 for the provision of services as and when required.

Crumlin Road Gaol

Mr Boylan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the regeneration of the Crumlin Road Gaol. **(AQO 2964/11-15)**

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Executive has invested some £10 million in restoration, repair and conservation works at Crumlin Road Gaol to date. Many positive milestones have been achieved and the potential regeneration benefits for the site, not only in North Belfast but on a regional basis, are significant.

A company has been appointed as the Operator to run the visitor attraction and conference centre at the Gaol and they commenced business on 19th November. This new enterprise will create up to 40 jobs and attract an estimated 90,000 visitors per year. A further phase of regeneration is about to commence in A Wing of the Gaol, with the support of considerable private sector investment. The agreed proposal will create up to 60 jobs and potentially attract over 40,000 visitors in the first year, rising to 100,000 by year 3.

Restoration work is also beginning on the Warders' Cottages at the Gaol which will lead to a suitable commercial or other use for the cottages.

Discussion around other parts of the site are also ongoing; a digital/creative industries hub and museum are among some of the ideas being considered for Wings B and D.

Public Appointments

Mr Elliott asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action they are taking to improve adherence to the public appointments processes. **(AQO 2970/11-15)**

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Each Executive Minister is solely responsible for appointments to the public bodies sponsored by their respective Departments.

These appointments should be made in accordance with public appointment policy and, where applicable, the Code of Practice published by the independent Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Both public appointment policy and the Commissioner's Code of Practice are governed by the overarching principle of selection on merit.

The Commissioner has a statutory responsibility to audit departmental public appointment processes to establish whether his Code of Practice is being observed. The Commissioner publishes his findings in the form of audit reports.

A cross departmental working group of officials is looking at the issue of compliance with the Commissioner's Code of Practice.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

DARD Headquarters

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development who were the key people who made the decision on the location for her Department's new headquarters.

(AQW 15730/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): I made the decision on the location of my Department's new Headquarters.

DARD Headquarters

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how the business case for the site in Ballykelly can be an effective way of determining the optimum location for her Department's new headquarters, given that the site in Ballykelly has already been chosen.

(AQW 15732/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Having reached my decision on location, I have now directed my officials to prepare a Business Case that considers only those options that would deliver the Headquarters on the Ballykelly site. The Business Case will have as its starting point those options which address the NI Executive's policy objective.

Department Funding

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the level of funding provided for (i) Agri-Food and Bio-sciences Institute, Hillsborough; (ii) Cafre Colleges at (a) Greenmount; (b) Loughry; and (c) Enniskillen; (iii) Cafre Advisory Service; (iv) Laboratory Services at (a) Stormont; and (b) Omagh; and (v) Veterinary Offices, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 16488/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Within DARD's budgetary and in-year monitoring processes, funds are allocated to categories of expenditure. With the exception of CAFRE Colleges, the information requested is not available as the funding is not allocated by the various locations and services as requested. Table 1 below sets out details of the apportionment for the CAFRE College sites.

TABLE 1. CAFRE COLLEGES. FUNDING ALLOCATED TO COLLEGES

	2009/10 £m	2010/11 £m	2011/12 £m
Greenmount College	15.9	14.0	14.1
Loughry College	5.5	5.6	4.6
Enniskillen College	3.5	2.7	2.9

I can confirm funding allocated to the remaining business areas are as follows:

TABLE 2.

	2009/10 £m	2010/11 £m	2011/12 £m
AFBI	44.1	47.9	42.5
*Veterinary Offices' Service	9.1	8.7	8.5

	2009/10 £m	2010/11 £m	2011/12 £m
*CAFRE Advisory Service	1.4	1.4	1.4

* Staff Salaries only.

Forest Service

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether any facilities in South Down will benefit from the recently announced £4 million investment by Forest Service on upgrading caravan parks.

(AQW 16846/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has secured £4m under the Jobs & Economy Initiative to help with the development of recreation & tourism projects, including caravan sites, in forests over the next two business years. This presents a significant opportunity for strategic partners, including Councils, to take forward proposals they may have to up-grade visitor provision in forests in their area.

A Memorandum of Understanding is already in place between my Department and Down District Council for the development of recreation and leisure products in forests within the Council area. I believe this provides an excellent framework and opportunity for projects such as up-grading and management of our caravan parks to be taken forward within the time frame of this Fund.

As partners will be required to secure any necessary approvals and demonstrate that projects represent good value for public money it is important to begin to work through the necessary processes as early as possible.

Agri-Food Research Fund

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how the Agri-Food Research Fund can be of benefit to applicants and local people in the South Down area.

(AQW 16924/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I recognize the importance of research in helping us achieve our strategic goals and objectives. DARD has a long history of funding and carrying out research within the areas of agriculture, fisheries, forestry and food. Much of our sponsored research has been translated into practical applications on farm, food processing and other rural businesses.

The Research Challenge Fund (RCF) is open to Small to Medium Enterprises, Large Enterprises and levy bodies in the North of Ireland. The RCF gives small and medium sized businesses from the agri-food and other rural sectors an opportunity to obtain financial assistance with research. It aims to encourage industry-led consortia to get involved in research projects, by providing grants of up to 50% towards research funding.

To date we have awarded eleven grants, five of which are led by levy bodies. The levy body led projects benefit all local dairy, beef, sheep and pig farmers including those in South Down. Details of all projects can be found on the DARD website.

The next tranche of the Fund (worth £1,000,000) is currently open for applications until 18th January 2013.

Ash Dieback Disease

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the sites that have been confirmed as containing the ash dieback disease in the South Down area; (ii) what actions her Department is taking in South Down to tackle the disease; and (iii) what local people can do to limit the spread of the disease.

(AQW 16926/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) The current outbreaks at recently planted sites have all been identified as part of a separate trace forward survey associated with an imported consignment of ash saplings. Two of these are in Co Down in the Rathfriland area.
- (ii) Destruction notices were served at both sites and with Forest Service assistance affected ash saplings and associated plant debris have been destroyed. A 3km diameter surveillance zone will be established around each outbreak site and we are considering how surveillance will be taken forward in light of our wider survey work for the disease.

As a priority, the Department is currently conducting specific surveys of ash across the north for any symptoms of the disease. We are adopting a risk based approach with the initial focus of surveillance on ash planted within the last 5 years in public & private woodland. The survey will also include roadside plantings; ash planted in the last 5 years under Agri-environment schemes; established trees & hedgerows and ongoing nursery surveillance. To date 222 sites have been surveyed.

Where suspect symptoms of the disease are observed a Statutory Plant Health Notice is issued preventing movement of plants from the site; imposing biosecurity measures; and prohibiting further planting of ash at the site. On confirmation/suspicion of the disease a further Statutory Plant Health Notice requiring destruction of ash plants and associated plant debris will be issued. I am making Forest Service assistance available to landowners to ensure we implement destruction notices swiftly and minimise risk of spread from these sites.

I introduced emergency legislation on 26 October, in tandem with similar legislation in the south. This legislation introduces controls on the movement of plants for planting. In response to stakeholder concerns and the potential for untreated ash wood being a possible pathway for the disease to enter Ireland, along with the south I introduced further legislation on 6 November introducing controls on the movement of wood and bark.

I want to take this opportunity to remind owners of ash who suspect the presence of the plant disease that you are required under the Plant Health Order to notify the Department. However, I encourage everyone to be vigilant for the signs of this disease and report findings. People can help avoid the introduction and spread of plant diseases by practising good plant hygiene and biosecurity. Further information on the disease and reporting findings is available on the Department's website at the following link <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/information-on-ash-dieback>

- (iii) [//www.dardni.gov.uk/information-on-ash-dieback](http://www.dardni.gov.uk/information-on-ash-dieback)

TB Biosecurity Study

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what is preventing her from publishing the findings of the TB Biosecurity Study; and when it will be published.
(AQW 16933/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: DARD commissioned the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) to carry out the TB Biosecurity Study in 2010.

The TB Biosecurity Study has been a large and complex epidemiological study, which has involved the assessment and analysis of a range of possible cattle and wildlife related factors.

Although the field work element of the Study was completed in July 2011 the analysis and writing-up phases of the study were delayed by a number of AFBI staff changes involving key project staff and lead in time for a replacement Veterinary Epidemiologist to undertake the necessary analysis. This post has since been filled and AFBI hopes to be able to share the salient findings from their draft project report with DARD early in the New Year. The report will require an element of peer review before publication by AFBI, particularly prior to publication in any scientific journals.

DARD officials will wish to consider the content of this report and discuss its findings with AFBI. It is anticipated that the TB Biosecurity Study report will be published in 2013.

Ash Dieback Disease

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to what extent departmental officials have expanded the area of surveillance for ash dieback disease in the five locations where it has been detected.

(AQW 16942/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: There are now currently 11 outbreaks at recently planted premises. All have been identified as part of a trace forward survey associated with an imported consignment of ash saplings. A 3km diameter surveillance zone will be established around each outbreak site and we are considering how surveillance will be taken forward in light of our wider survey work for the disease.

As a priority, the Department is currently conducting specific surveys of ash across the north for any symptoms of the disease. We are adopting a risk based approach with the initial focus of surveillance on ash planted within the last 5 years in public & private woodland. The survey will also include roadside plantings; ash planted in the last 5 years under Agri-environment schemes; established trees & hedgerows and ongoing nursery surveillance. Any suspect trees found will be sampled and undergo laboratory testing for the Ash die-back pathogen. To date 222 sites have been surveyed.

Incidences of Chalara Fraxinea

Mr Ó hÓisín asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what is the status of the spread of chalara fraxinea in ash trees; and how many ash trees have been destroyed to date.

(AQW 16958/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As of 27 November 2012 we have 11 outbreaks and to date 5,100 saplings have been destroyed.

Dundonald House, Stormont

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why the Union Flag was not flown from Dundonald House, Stormont, on 20 November 2012.

(AQW 17055/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A minor fault arose with the mechanism supporting the flag on that day and steps are being taken to rectify this to ensure the flag is flown appropriately on the dates stipulated in the legislation. Animal Cruelty

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 16214/11-15, how dog breeding establishments and dog charities can be kept informed of any register of people convicted of animal cruelty, considering the contact the establishments and charities have with the public.

(AQW 17076/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Public access to any database or register of animal welfare offenders raises significant legal issues particularly on the implications for human rights and data protection legislation. Such matters would have to be considered in great detail before any decision could be made.

I recently met with the DOJ Minister and agreed that in the New Year, my officials will be engaging with the Department of Justice, the PSNI and the Councils to discuss issues including access to information relating to animal welfare court cases and the sharing of such information amongst enforcement bodies.

Rural Development Programme

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) how many strategic projects are being assessed through the Rural Development Programme, including the location and application details, broken down by arm's-length body; and (ii) the rationale for each project being defined as strategic.

(AQW 17077/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In relation to (i) I have attached a list of the 37 applications (annex A) that have been assessed through Local Action Group assessment panels and have scored the pass mark of 65 or more with the details you requested.

At (ii) for each project to be defined as strategic, it must meet a set of defined criteria, and these were published in the press advertisements for calls for applications. I attach at Annex b, a sample of the press advertisement which outlines the eligibility criteria. Additionally each project must have a full green book economic appraisal completed, which assesses amongst other issues, the need for the project, additionality, and displacement.

ANNEX A

Group	Measure	Applicant	Project	Amount
ARC	3.4	Tyrone GAA Committee (CLG Thir Eoghin)	Garvaghey 3G Multi-activity Pitch	£594,656
ARC	3.4	Loughmacrory Community Development Association (LCDA)	Loughmacrory Regional Outdoor Activity Centre (jetty, boats, running track, indoor gym, coffee shop)	£839,173
ARC	3.4	Greencastle St. Patricks GFC	Greencastle CORE (Community Outdoor Recreational Enterprise) Project MUGA and outdoor gym	£380,871
ARC	3.4	Bready Multisports Club	Recreational 3G surface with floodlighting and renewable energy source	£647,337
ARC	3.4	Greysteel Community Enterprises	Soccer 3G Pitch	£537,540
ARC	3.4	Derry County Committee	4 G Multi-use Recreational and Community Surface	£765,595
ARC	3.4	Leckpatrick Development Association	New Community Hall including meeting room, gym	£752,662
ARC	3.4	St Mary's GAC Banagher	Building a multi-use hall / Community facility in Feeny and gym, equipment	£987,497
ARC	3.6	Sion Mills Building Preservation Trust	Sion Mills Stables Heritage education facility; meeting rooms & computer suite	£274,531
DRAP	3.4	Banbridge District Council	Rathfriland 3G Sports Pitch	£583,963

Group	Measure	Applicant	Project	Amount
DRAP	3.3	Ards Borough Council (Tourism Section)	Ards BC Mourne and Coastal Route. Implementation of capital works to brand a series of car parks in Ards Borough which fall along the NI Tourist Boards Mourne Coastal Route Scenic drive.	£454,652
DRAP	3.3	Down District Council	Mourne Coastal Route - Amenity Sites Enhancement Programme - Phase III (Down District). Project focuses on the development and enhancement of 8 Down District based strategic amenity sites (phase 3) which are located along the Mourne Coastal Route will like Newry to Belfast and then onto the Casueway Coastal Route completing a comprehensive route around the coast of NI	£430,972
DRAP	3.3	North Down Borough Council - D Howard	Upgrade and improvements to the North Down Coastal Path at Seahill, and between Seapark to Cultra	£350,579
DRAP	3.3	Down District Council	Downpatrick & Co. Down Railway extension and associated road transport services	£995,000
GROW	3.6	Railway Preservation Society of Ireland	Carriage Workshop, Locomotive Workshop, Interpretation panels, Site Works (Buker, concrete surfaces, ash pit, landscaping, seating and play area)	£798,000
GROW	3.4	Toomebridge Initiative Group - TIG	Building of Toome Community and Sports Centre	£999,999
LRP	3.3	Castlereagh Borough Council	Lock Keepers cottage and barge. Provide additional toilets and signage plus purchase and restoration of an original barge to be used as a museum on-site	£606,308

Group	Measure	Applicant	Project	Amount
LRP	3.4	Lisburn City Council	Strategic adventure play programme to provide state-of-the-art modern play equipment to 14 rural playparks	£821,667
LRP	3.6	Lisburn City Council	Moira Demesne Cultural heritage project. Creating a 3G MUGA, pavillion, upgrade to walks/paths, upgrade to entrance, sinage	£999,999
NER	3.3	Ballymoney Council	Provide camping pods and wet room facilities at the Drumaheglis Marina	£471,750
NER	3.3	Larne Council	Stainless Steel staircase linking The Gobbins Cliff Path to The Gobbins Sea path	£500,000
NER	3.3	Moyle Council	Facilities including pontoons/toilets/camping pods at locations along the coast. Stop off points for kayak along the coast	£352,000
NER	3.4	Ballymena Council	To provide 3 MUGA pitches in three rural villages	£680,000
NER	3.3	Coleraine Council	Upgrade to coastal paths, provision of boardwalks/interpretative sinage at P'Ballintrae, C'Rock and White Rocks	£999,999
SOAR	3.4	Culloville Development Association	Culloville Community Resource Centre	£934,442
SOAR	3.5	Newry & Mourne District Council	Extension to Crossmaglen Community Centre	£382,500
SOAR	3.4	Armagh City & District Council	Tandragee Amenity Initiative	£357,000
SOAR	3.4	MIS application (Ballyholland Development Association)	Community facility Ballyholland	£772,718
SWARD	3.4	Irvinestown Trustee Enterprise LTD	ARC ITEC health and care village - new building	£635,800
SWARD	3.4	Cookstown District Council	Physical activity arena - indoor arena for sporting activity	£790,389
SWARD	3.4	Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council	Rural recreation and healthy living hub 4 small sided games areas	£484,787

Group	Measure	Applicant	Project	Amount
SWARD	3.3	Outdoor Recreation NI	Blessingbourne Trailles project	£392,721
SWARD	3.4	Galbally Youth & Community Association	Centre of Rural Excellence - extension to existing hall and internal; renovation	£515,796
SWARD	3.4	Derrytresk Community Organisation	Community resource centre - new build	£728,237
SWARD	3.4	Fermanagh District Council	3G MUGA Pitch	£631,983
SWARD	3.4	Ballinamallard FC	Ballingnamallard community recreation hub - 3G pitch	£283,509
SWARD	3.4	Fermanagh District Council	Building of 3 x 3 MUGAs	£488,169
				£23,222,801

ANNEX B

NORTHERN IRELAND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

_____ is the delivery Agent for Axis 3 of the Northern Ireland Rural development Programme (NIRDP) 2007-2013 – Rural Life. The partnership delivers funding for projects in eligible rural areas within the _____, _____, and _____ council areas.

APPLICATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PROJECTS

We are open for applications for strategic projects which are commensurate with the objectives of xxxx's rural development Strategy. You should note that this is a competitive process with limited funding available. The measures under which applications are being sought are:

- 3.3 Encouragement of Tourism Activities
- 3.4 Basic Services for the Economy and Rural Population
- 3.5 Village Renewal and Development
- 3.6 Conservation and Upgrading of the Rural Heritage.

Applications must be submitted on-line via the EU grants database and any supporting documentation in hard copy to xxxxxxxxxxxx on or before 12.00 noon on _____.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

In addition to the general eligibility rules of the scheme only those applications meeting the following evidence based criteria at the close of the call will be admitted as eligible for consideration:

- 1 Local authorities, NGO's and the community sector including social economy enterprises will be eligible to apply for strategic projects.
- 2 Planning Permission (and other Statutory Requirements) applied for or already in place;
- 3 The proposed start date is no later than 1st April 2013;
- 4 The planned end date is no later than 31st December 2014;
- 5 The project grant requirement is above £250k but less than £1m;
- 6 The Project must be Capital or Infrastructure;
- 7 The Project Promoter/s matched funding must be at least 15%;

- 8 Robust project delivery costings must be in place at application stage;
- 9 A full business case or a recent (within last 12 months) independent Economic Appraisal to 'Green Book' standard must be in place*; and
- 10 All applications must have consulted the appropriate Local Council as a key informant.

* If only submitting a business case and project deemed eligible the applicant must submit a full independent economic appraisal to 'Green Book' standard before the 31st July 2012.

To find out more about the call or to discuss your strategic proposal in more detail, contact _____ at tel: _____ or email: _____.

The NIRDP 2007-2013 is part funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural development (EAFRD) and is managed by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Less Favoured Areas

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the impact that the reclassification of Less Favoured Areas will have on future dual use claims.

(AQW 17143/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: There is no direct link between the EU Commission's proposed designation of Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) and the future of dual use claims. Indirectly, if the area of ANC were to be larger or smaller than the current LFA, then the number of dual use claims could similarly be larger or smaller. However, the designation of ANCs forms part of the much broader CAP reform proposals. There are aspects of these proposals which could have a significant bearing on the existence or extent of future dual use claims. For example, if future Pillar I CAP support was to be confined to active farmers (a term that has yet to be defined), this could potentially reduce significantly the number of dual use claims. These issues will become clearer only when the CAP reform agreement is agreed and implementation options decided.

Ash Dieback Disease

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many forests have been affected by Ash Dieback.

(AQW 17154/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: To date, no Forest Service forests have been affected. Ash die-back was confirmed in 14 recently planted private woodlands, one amenity woodland and there were 2 confirmations in trade.

The position is kept updated daily on the Department's website.

Ash Dieback Disease

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how she plans to tackle Ash Dieback.

(AQW 17155/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Ash is one of the commonest native species on this island so we must do all we can to minimise the risk of Chalara Dieback of Ash (*Chalara fraxinea*) becoming established here. I introduced emergency legislation on 26 October in tandem with similar in the south on the movement of ash plants and further emergency legislation on 6 November, again in tandem with the south around timber importation. My Department is currently carrying out monitoring of ash plants at nursery and retail premises, and recent amenity and woodland planting sites. Where we find signs of this damaging disease we take samples for laboratory testing for the Ash die-back pathogen. Where our inspectors suspect that the disease is present or there is a risk that it may spread they may order destruction of plants and relevant material.

At this stage we believe the greatest risk is that disease may have been introduced on young plants for planting, and so we focus our surveillance on plants for planting and trees planted within the last

5 years. By 10:00 on 30th November, 222 sites had been surveyed and disease was confirmed on 15 recently planted ash sites and 2 Nursery sites in Counties Antrim, Down, Derry and Tyrone, all linked to plants grown on the continent. Further tracing to other sites is in progress.

Forest Service assistance has been offered to private site owners to ensure the disease is dealt with as swiftly as possible.

Dog Licences

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many dog licences are extant in each district council area.

(AQW 17191/11-15)

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

Annual statistics for the 2012 year are not yet available. The table below details the number of dog licences issued in 2011 in each Council area.

	Dogs licences issued in 2011
Antrim	4473
Ards	7717
Armagh	4156
Ballymena	9274
Ballymoney	3367
Banbridge	4238
Belfast	10936
Carrickfergus	2425
Castlereagh	5173
Coleraine	8014
Cookstown	6591
Craigavon	5386
Derry	2871
Down	7047
Dungannon	2650
Fermanagh	5091
Larne	4467
Limavady	2600
Lisburn	9997
Magherafelt	2714
Moyle	1972
Newry	4973

	Dogs licences issued in 2011
Newtownabbey	7194
North Down	6149
Omagh	2344
Strabane	2960
Total	134779

Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what on-going discussions are taking place with the Scottish Office Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department to ensure that our farmers and fishermen have similar opportunities to Scottish farmers and fishermen who have reached a strong position in terms of delivering economic prosperity in their region.

(AQW 17232/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has close and regular contact with its Scottish counterpart on a range of important issues including CAP reform, fisheries, animal health and welfare, plant health and research and development. The contacts made are both formal and informal in nature and include face-to-face meetings and teleconferences.

In relation to CAP reform, teleconferences involving officials from all four administrations take place at approximately fortnightly intervals - although bilateral meetings also occur. Similarly, there are weekly teleconferences involving officials from the four Fisheries Administrations (FAs), including Marine Scotland, to agree positions on Common Fisheries Policy matters such as CFP reform, Cod Recovery Plan amendment, and Fishing opportunities.

Meetings of Fisheries Ministers occur at least four times a year and normally in advance of, and during, the major EU Fisheries Councils in November and December. I would similarly meet my Ministerial colleagues on agricultural issues at the EU Council and at the six monthly Ministerial meetings in London.

There is also frequent communication between DARD officials and their Scottish counterparts on animal health and plant health issues and on research and development.

Agri-Food Industry

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the benefits to the agri-food industry of her recent trip to China.

(AQW 17234/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My recent trip to Beijing and Shanghai has produced a range of benefits to the industry. Whilst in China, I took every opportunity to highlight the quality of our livestock and agri-food industry on this global stage.

I launched a Joint Research Centre for Meat Science between the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute and the largest Agricultural University in China which is based in Beijing. In addition, I also launched a further Joint Agri-food Research Centre between AFBI and the Shanghai Academy of Agriculture Sciences.

One of our key areas for collaboration is food safety, a key priority for the Chinese 5 year plan. Food security was also mentioned recently by the newly appointed leader of China, Mr Xi Jinping who our First and deputy First Ministers met in Dublin last year. Outcomes of scientific collaboration on food quality, food safety and traceability will provide benefits for the agri-food industry in the north of Ireland and provide a positive platform for ongoing trade negotiations. My officials are currently working with their Chinese counterparts on poultry exports. Certificates are already agreed for the export of pork and I urge our industry to meet and maintain the Chinese conditions as soon as possible so that exports of fifth quarter can begin to mainland China.

I met the Director General of the Shanghai Municipal Agriculture Commission, Mr Sun Lei and his Chief of Trade to highlight the specific issues pertaining to pork exports from the north of Ireland when sourced from the South. China's business culture is considerably different from ours and building strategic relationships at Government to Government level is an important aspect of developing trade opportunities. I will build these strategic alliances over the forthcoming years and am looking forward to meeting Chinese veterinary auditors who will visit the north of Ireland in 2013.

I also agreed a skills-sharing programme for the equine sector between CAFRE's Enniskillen Campus and the Chinese Agriculture University. The equine industry in China is in its infancy and presents exciting opportunities for equine graduates from the north of Ireland in the future. Professor Han from CAU has already visited Enniskillen in 2012 and wishes to develop this relationship by working with me over the forthcoming years.

Agri-Food Research

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how the Agri-Food Research Fund will be of benefit to applicants and local people in the North Down area.

(AQW 17236/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I recognise the importance of research in helping us achieve our strategic goals and objectives. DARD has a long history of funding and carrying out research within the areas of agriculture, fisheries, forestry and food. Much of our sponsored research has been translated into practical applications on farm, food processing and other rural businesses.

The Research Challenge Fund (RCF) is open to Small to Medium Enterprises, Large Enterprises and levy bodies in the north of Ireland. The RCF gives small and medium sized businesses from the agri-food and other rural sectors an opportunity to obtain financial assistance with research. It aims to encourage industry-led consortia to get involved in research projects, by providing grants of up to 50% towards research funding.

To date we have awarded eleven grants, five of which are led by levy bodies. The levy body led projects benefit all local dairy, beef, sheep and pig farmers including those in North Down. Details of all projects can be found on the DARD website.

The next tranche of the Fund (worth £1,000,000) is currently open for applications until 18th January 2013.

Rural Development Programme 2007-2013

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she plans to extend the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 or to develop a new programme for 2014.

(AQW 17301/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The current EU legislation for rural development covers the funding period 2007-2013 although spend for some measures can continue to December 2015. The EU proposals for Rural Development funding for the 2014-2020 period were published on the 12 October 2011.

Once the Commission's proposals are agreed, I will bring forward a draft programme of support for rural development for 2014-2020 considering the policy needs for both agriculture and the wider rural community.

My Department is currently considering the needs of the industry and rural areas based on the proposed EU priorities. Lessons learnt from the current and previous programmes along with examples of best practice will also help to inform programme development for the 2014-2020 period. However the shape and size of the 2014-2020 programme will be very dependant on the rural development budget available.

Fishing Units

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she has investigated the possibility of establishing approved finishing units.

(AQW 17330/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has from time to time received approaches from both individual herdkeepers and industry representatives in relation to introducing approved finishing units (AFUs) here. My officials were questioned about AFUs in their evidence presentations to the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee in relation to its recent Review into Bovine Tuberculosis. An AFU is generally understood to be a specially designated herd facility that finishes cattle, including those from TB restricted herds, prior to movement direct to slaughter and, significantly, that must manage their disease risk in a different way to minimise the risk to other herds.

However, the AFU proposals that have been received from stakeholders to date, if implemented, would increase the disease risk to neighbouring herds. In this context, my Department is aware of a range of expert opinion that views the collection of cattle from TB restricted herds as a system that involves a high risk of spreading bovine TB.

We are aware that arrangements for AFUs in other jurisdictions are subject to inspection and review and we shall be interested to consider the outcome of those exercises.

Tullyhogue, Cookstown

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the plans for the land owned by her Department at Tullyhogue, Cookstown

(AQW 17458/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The land referred to at Tullyhogue, Cookstown has been identified as surplus to DARD requirements. Having considered a range of disposal options I have decided this land is best kept in the public sector due to its proximity to the ancient monument know as Tullaghoge Fort. The NI Environment Agency (NIEA) has the statutory authority for the protection of ancient monuments here and has agreed to a transfer of this land from my department to them via the Department of Environment (DOE).

Tullyhogue, Cookstown

Mr Molloy asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline any plans for land owned by her Department at Tullyhogue, County Tyrone.

(AQW 17645/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The land referred to at Tullyhogue, Cookstown has been identified as surplus to DARD requirements. Having considered a range of disposal options I have decided this land is best kept in the public sector due to its proximity to the ancient monument know as Tullaghoge Fort. The NI Environment Agency (NIEA) has the statutory authority for the protection of ancient monuments here and has agreed to a transfer of this land from my department to them via the Department of Environment (DOE).

Poultry Litter

Mr Molloy asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the next stage in finding a sustainable solution to using poultry litter.

(AQO 3021/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The poultry sector is a key part of our agri-food industry and an important contributor to the local economy. The sector has potential to expand but it is being constrained due to lack of progress in securing a long term solution to utilise poultry litter. In response to this, I commissioned a review of poultry litter management options by my Department and the Agri-food & Biosciences Institute (AFBI) which was published in April this year.

The management and utilisation of poultry litter is a cross cutting issue. Therefore, following publication of the review I, along with the DETI and DOE Ministers, agreed that officials should work together to explore alternative solutions for the sustainable utilisation of poultry litter. This is vital to help meet the requirements of the EU Nitrates and Water Framework Directives and support sustainable development of our agri-food industry.

Having met with a range of stakeholders I believe there are potential options that should be tested. The Minister of Enterprise Trade and Investment and I have agreed to explore the potential for these emerging technologies through the use of a Small Business Research Initiative.

The SBRI will stimulate the development of sustainable and innovative solutions for the utilisation of poultry litter. The SBRI competition will open on 10 December 2012.

I believe that the Competition will help secure long-term solutions for poultry litter management in the north of Ireland. This will be of great benefit to the poultry sector and our wider agri-food sector.

Protected Geographical Indications

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what work her Department is doing to pursue further Protected Geographical Indications for local produce.

(AQO 3025/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Thank you for this opportunity to outline what my Department is doing to pursue further Protected Food Names (PFN) status for local produce. Armagh Bramleys, Comber Earlies and Lough Neagh Eels have already been granted a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). Work is ongoing towards a joint application with the South being submitted for 'Irish Salmon'. While this is a great start, there needs to be a better understanding among food companies of the scheme and how it can be used.

My Department therefore recently hosted a Protected Food Name (PFN) seminar in Greenmount. This was well attended by interested producer groups and key industry representatives and outlined the benefits of a PFN and how it could be used.

Other work my officials have been involved with includes:-

- A mail shot to all local councils, industry and retail groups;
- Links with FoodNI to promote PGI products at local food shows and events. For example, at a FoodNI event in Mount Stewart;
- Participation in an Irish speaking BBC TV show, *Luí Na Talún* to explain the PFN Scheme;
- Lough Neagh Eels were showcased at an international food trade event in London at the time of the Olympic Games;
- The DARD website has been updated with PFN information and a PFN Information pack distributed across the agri-food sector;
- A DARD-hosted PFN stand at this year's Balmoral Show.

It was rewarding that my Department was chosen as a finalist in the recent CIPR Awards, in recognition of its successful media strategy and coverage.

My officials are currently having a series of key discussions across a wide range of sectors and I hope that from this ongoing work, building on the three recent PGI awards, we will see further successful applications for local produce.

Countryside Management Scheme

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department is proposing to process and implement the current phase of the Countryside Management Scheme.

(AQO 3028/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department continues to deliver a number of agri-environment schemes, including the Countryside Management Scheme. These are funded to the tune of £180 million under the current Rural Development Programme. There are over 12,000 farmers participating in these schemes who manage some 450,000 ha of land which represents 44% of the agricultural area. These schemes aim to bring environmental benefit to our countryside, however they also make a significant contribution to the rural economy, with approximately £25m being paid to agri-environment farmers each year.

Within the last twelve months, my Department has progressed new applications to the NI Countryside Management Scheme (NICMS), giving priority to those which have the highest environmental value. Some 549 new agreements were signed this year and a further 200 high priority applications which offer the greatest environmental benefit are currently being processed and will be offered agreements with a start date of 1 January 2013. In addition to these new agreements, my Department is focusing on helping existing participants to make the most of their schemes to benefit the countryside. Looking ahead to the next Rural Development Programme, we have started work on the development of a new agri-environment scheme which will aim to sustain and enhance biodiversity and water quality, provide opportunities for woodland creation, and help to mitigate against climate change.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Club Funding

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the funding allocated to clubs affiliated to the (i) Gaelic Athletic Association; (ii) Irish Football Association; and (iii) Irish Rugby Football Union since she came into office.

(AQW 16428/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Sport NI has responsibility for the distribution of funding for sport throughout the north of Ireland. Since I came into office in May 2011, Sport NI has allocated a total of £3,235,409 exchequer funding to the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), Irish Football Association (IFA) and Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) for their affiliated clubs and for the benefit of individual athletes, players and their constituent clubs.

A breakdown of this funding allocated since May 2011 is: -

GAA	IFA	IRFU
£1,487,108	£1,221,141	£527,160

No lottery funding has been provided to the IFA, GAA and IRFU during this time.

Cost of Undertaking Equality Impact Assessments

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the cost to her Department, over the last three financial years, of undertaking equality impact assessments.

(AQW 16857/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: There were no Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) completed by my Department in the last three financial years. The consultation and Equality Impact Assessment on the Strategy for Protecting and Enhancing the Development of the Irish Language and Strategy for Ulster Scots Language, Heritage and Culture are currently underway. However, costs on the EQIA cannot be readily disaggregated.

Boxing Club

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what funding (i) the Big Lottery; (ii) her Department; and (iii) any other government source has allocated to each boxing club, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 17010/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Neither my Department, nor Sport NI, has responsibility for the funds distributed by the Big Lottery Fund as it is an independent Lottery distributor. I am, therefore, unable to provide you with any details of the funding it has allocated to boxing clubs.

Over the past 5 financial years to 31 March 2012, Sport NI, which has responsibility for funding for sport in the north of Ireland, has provided exchequer funding totalling £310,241 to 20 boxing clubs. The details are listed in Table A attached.

Information received from other Government Departments has indicated that a further £12,094 was provided to 5 boxing clubs during the same timeframe. The details are listed in Table B attached.

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

TABLE A – EXCHEQUER FUNDING PAID TO BOXING CLUBS IN EACH OF THE LAST 5 YEARS UP TO 31 MARCH 2012 *

Organisation Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Grand Total
All Saints Amateur Boxing Club		£8,000		£8,000
Banbridge Amateur Boxing Club	£7,394	£1,964		£9,358
Cairn Lodge Amateur Boxing Club	£2,374			£2,374
Canal Amateur Boxing Academy		£21,366	£2,299	£23,665
Castlereagh Amateur Boxing Club		£19,926		£19,926
Derrylin Boxing Club		£8,959	£6,000	£14,959
Eastside ABC			£30,000	£30,000
Gleann Amateur Boxing Club		£16,722		£16,722
Holy Family Boxing Club		£24,344		£24,344
Holy Trinity Youth Club		£24,322		£24,322
Immaculata Amateur Boxing Club		£29,395		£29,395
Ligoniel Amateur Boxing Club	£3,000	£28,826		£31,826
Lurgan Amateur Boxing Club	£7,727	£1,760		£9,487
Monkstown Community Sports Facility and Boxing Gym	£10,000			
Poleglass Amateur Boxing Club		£4,245		£4,245
Saints Amateur Boxing Club			£4,980	£4,980
Silverbridge Boxing Club		£1,700		£1,700
St Brigid's Cross Community Boxing Club			£2,024	£2,024
St John Bosco Amateur Boxing Club			£3,800	£3,800
St Paul's Amateur Boxing Club	£9,540	£29,574		£39,114

Organisation Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Grand Total
Grand Total	£40,035	£221,103	£49,103	£310,241

Please note:

* No exchequer funding was paid to boxing clubs during the financial years 07/08 and 08/09

TABLE B – FUNDING TO BOXING CLUBS FROM OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS IN EACH OF THE LAST 5 YEARS UP TO 31 MARCH 2012

Government Department	Organisation Name	2010/11	2011/12	Grand Total
Department of Education	Golden Gloves Boxing Club, Coleraine		£1,900	£4,134
Total		0	£1,900	£4,134
Department of Justice	East Down		£1,000	£1,000
	Errigal	£400		£400
	Immaculata		£5,060	£5,060
	Skerries		£1,500	£1,500
Total		£400	£7,560	£7,960

Please note:

* No funding from other Government sources was paid to boxing clubs during the financial years 07/08; 08/09 and 09/10.

NI Training Project

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether, under the NI Training Project, the number of qualified sign language interpreters increased from 11 in 2008 to 18 in 2011.

(AQW 17020/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The NI Training Project received funding from my Department through the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (NI). As a consequence of this funding, three additional interpreters have now qualified bringing the total number of registered sign language interpreters in the north of Ireland to 16.

Expenditure

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how her expenditure on the arts compares with other parts of the UK and the Republic of Ireland in each of the last three years.

(AQW 17032/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: There is no universally accepted model for comparing expenditure solely on the arts with other jurisdictions. This is because of the differing definitions for the arts in the various jurisdictions and also differing local needs.

Ulster Orchestra

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many current members of the Ulster Orchestra have come through the ranks of the Youth Orchestra; and how many of them are based locally. **(AQW 17039/11-15)**

Ms Ní Chuilín: Membership of the Ulster Youth Orchestra does not mean graduation to the Ulster Orchestra. As a professional orchestra, it has open recruitment for job vacancies and all recruitment is conducted under the legislative requirement of the employment laws of the North of Ireland.

The Arts Council has advised that as far as they are aware none of the current contracted members of the Ulster Orchestra have come through the ranks of the Youth Orchestra but they cannot be definitive, without contacting all the members.

All of the current members of the Ulster Orchestra are based locally.

Irish Language

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what is being done to promote the Irish language at European or international level. **(AQW 17066/11-15)**

Ms Ní Chuilín: Foras na Gaeilge which is jointly funded by my Department and the Department for Arts Heritage and Gaeltacht is involved in a number of initiatives and projects which promotes the Irish language at European and international level. These include:-

- An Coiste Téarmaíochta (The Terminology Committee) which provides terminology to IATE (InterActive Terminology for Europe).
- Working directly with accredited translators/editors who work in the EU.
- Working with institutions throughout Europe such as the Network for promoting Linguistic Diversity (NPLD); The International European Conference of Lexicography (Euralex) and the European Federation of National Institutions for Language (EFNIL).
- Collaborating with institutions such as the Goethe Institute, Cervantes Institute, Alliance Francaise and with embassies in order to facilitate Irish language poetry readings, lectures, exhibitions.
- Funding organisations and groups such as -
 - Gaelchultúr– courses provided on line/publications /distributed internationally
 - Aistear – online specialised training for translators/editors
 - Drama Companies which have toured internationally include - Branar (Scandinavia), Mouth on Fire (Japan, France), Fíbín (Africa, Europe), Axis (USA, Poland), Aisling Ghéar (USA.)
 - Clar na Leabhar Gaeilge supports publishing in Irish – international market
 - Áis distributes books internationally
 - Translation of Irish literature into many world languages – French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Norwegian, Danish, Arabic, Japanese, Hindi, Hungarian, Estonian.

My Department is also responsible for monitoring the Executive's compliance with the European Charter for Indigenous and Minority Languages. The Charter describes its purpose as cultural and it aims to protect and promote regional or minority languages rather than linguistic minorities.

Illegal Netting

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many people have been (i) prosecuted; and (ii) convicted for illegal netting in Lough Neagh in each of the last five years.

(AQW 17137/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The following table details the number of people (i) prosecuted and (ii) convicted of offences relating to netting in Lough Neagh in each of the last five years for which records are complete

Year	Number of people prosecuted	Number of people convicted
2007	2	2
2008	2	2
2009	6	6
2010	9	9
2011	4	4

Funding for Líofa 2012

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether financial assistance is available through her Department for primary schools to develop Líofa initiatives and encourage the development of the Irish language (i) inside; and (ii) outside the classroom.

(AQW 17144/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department does not provide financial assistance to primary schools to develop Líofa initiatives. The Department's Líofa Officer does liaise with schools to promote the Irish Language by the delivery of Líofa presentations making schools more aware of the Líofa initiative and offering taster Irish Language sessions on request.

50th Anniversary of the Passing of C.S Lewis

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline her plans to mark the 50th anniversary of the passing of C.S Lewis and the erection of a plaque in his honour at Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

(AQW 17271/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: To commemorate the 50th anniversary of C.S Lewis's death on 22 November 2013, Libraries NI is organising a programme of events including exhibitions, talks, readings and workshops. These will be centred around Holywood Arches library and Belfast Central library both of which are close to the areas in which CS Lewis lived and worked. The Linen Hall library will also mark the anniversary with a series of events.

The Arts Council NI, which administers funding for cultural events, is likely to receive applications for funding for a range of events in the next financial year.

Irish Language, Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy Consultation

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many responses were received on the Irish Language, Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy consultation.

(AQO 3032/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I launched separate public consultations on both draft strategies on 11 July 2012. The closing date was 27 November 2012.

My Department received 280 consultation responses to the Strategy for Protecting and Enhancing the Development of the Irish Language and 130 consultation responses to the Strategy for Ulster Scots Language, Heritage and Culture.

Several requests for an extension were received before the consultation closed. These consultation responses will be received by 11 December 2012.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who responded to both consultations. Your responses will help to improve and strengthen both draft strategies.

I am committed to bringing these strategies forward in line with the NI Act 1998 which places duties on the Executive to adopt both strategies.

Boxing Club: Funding

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure when a boxing club, if successful in an application for funding, can expect to receive the funding.

(AQO 3039/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Boxing Investment Programme will be rolled out over the period 2012-2015. It is currently proposed that the first tranche of funding to supply boxing equipment to individual clubs will be made available before the end of this financial year.

Sport NI is currently working with the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) and the Central Procurement Directorate of the Department of Finance and Personnel to ensure this equipment is procured and ready to be released to clubs once the public consultation is completed.

Tranches 2 and 3 of the funding will deal with premises repairs and major building works. It is proposed that final letters of offer for these tranches will be issued to successful clubs during 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 respectively.

Community Relations

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how good community relations are promoted through the arts.

(AQO 3040/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department, through its Arms Length Bodies, supports a number of arts initiatives that promote good community relations by removing barriers between communities and diminishing segregation through education.

Through its Intercultural Arts Strategy the Arts Council uses the arts to encourage people to form positive contacts, across and within culturally diverse communities. The draft Community Arts Strategy will build on this by bringing together people from all backgrounds to work with professional artists in experiencing and taking part in artistic and creative projects.

The "Building Peace through the Arts, Re-Imaging Communities" programme is another excellent example of promoting good community relations, as it will continue the work of the Reimaging Communities Programme in removing signs of sectarianism and intercommunity segregation and replacing them with imagery that reflects the community in a more positive manner.

Furthermore, the suite of community based projects included in the City of Culture Cultural Programme is designed to use the arts as a means to bring step changes in equality, good relations and social cohesion. Projects like Portrait of a City and Spotlight on Communities bring communities together to understand their past and create a new future for Derry as a creative and cultural hub.

Lough Erne

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of the viability of the fisheries on Lough Erne.

(AQO 3041/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: DCAL is the owner of the fishing rights to Lough Erne and the management of fish stocks is informed by scientific analysis of fish stock surveys.

DCAL policy is that Lough Erne is managed primarily as a recreational fishery, with the traditional activities of commercial fishermen respected, but controlled by licences and permits.

The recreational fishery continues to be of importance and attracts significant numbers of coarse and game anglers to the area.

The commercial eel fishery on Lough Erne was closed in 2010 in compliance with the EU Eel Management Plan.

It has been established that bream stocks in Lough Erne are at an all time low and there will be no commercial fishing for bream from 1 December 2012.

Roach and perch in Lough Erne make up 90% of the survey gillnet catches with perch the dominant species in terms of numbers.

Commercial fishermen have proposed the establishment of a commercial perch fishery. My Department will work in undertaking trials in the first instance.

2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she will establish a joint recognition for local athletes who competed for Great Britain or Ireland at the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
(AQO 3042/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I have already jointly recognised local athletes who competed and attained medal success for Team GB and Team Ireland by hosting a reception in their honour in Parliament Buildings on 13 September 2012. Invited guests included all athletes from the north who competed for Team GB and NI or Team Ireland, their coaches, specialist performance managers, governing bodies of sport and past Olympic and Paralympic medallists.

I will also be hosting a public celebratory event early next year in recognition of all our local athletes, who achieved national or international success during 2012. This would include all local athletes who competed at the London 2012 Games whether that be for Team GB or Team Ireland.

Department of Education

Sure Start Programme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how he will ensure that the community in North Down is involved in making the Sure Start programme a success.

(AQW 16470/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Sure Start programmes are specifically designed to reflect and respond to the needs of the local community. The management committee for the new Sure Start programme in North Down is developing proposals to deliver the most appropriate range of services and build on a partnership that is representative of the local community.

Departmental Budget

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education whether any of his Department's budget has been pooled with those of other Departments, or with agencies outside the remit of his Department; and if so, to provide details.

(AQW 16525/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: None of my Department's budget is pooled with other Departments or Agencies. However there are some areas where the overall policy direction may rest with one Department e.g. the policy direction for the Child Care Strategy rests with the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. This policy is being developed on a cross-departmental basis, funding is available from the Child Care Fund and departments bid to the fund as appropriate.

In addition, there are a number of inter-departmental initiatives where there is one lead Department who will be responsible for delivering the initiative but other Departments may contribute funding. One such area would be funding for Special Olympics Ulster where the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure is the lead Department for this project but a total of 5 departments, including Education, contribute to the overall costs.

Schools: Parent Reading Classes

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education how many schools offer reading classes for parents; and how many parents are enrolled in the classes.

(AQW 16634/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is vital that parents take an interest in their child's education. Local and international research has demonstrated that parental involvement from an early age can make a significant difference to a child's life at school and beyond. That is why I launched the advertising campaign 'Education Works' in September which is aimed at raising the value, we, as a society, place on education.

The campaign is focused primarily on the support parents and communities can provide to their children in the home environment and outside of school. Nevertheless, programmes where individual schools invite parents into the school to assist their children and/or other pupils with their reading and which impact positively on pupils' literacy skills, are to be welcomed.

Such programmes are a matter for individual schools and my Department does not hold the information you have requested.

Northern Ireland Numeracy and Literacy Assessments

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to outline his position on the completion of Northern Ireland Numeracy and Literacy Assessments.

(AQW 16659/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I wrote to schools on 12 November to advise them that, following extensive work by all parties involved in the process, I am satisfied that solutions are in place to address the main technical difficulties encountered by schools and that any that remain can be managed with the appropriate support.

The effective use of computer based assessments is a key element of my literacy and numeracy strategy and it is therefore important that schools participate and provide feedback to ensure that assessments are refined and evolve to suit the needs of our pupils.

For these reasons I have advised schools that I expect them to continue with the assessments before the end of term and use the outcomes to engage with parents and inform teaching and learning for the coming year.

How schools choose to report to parents over the course of the term and whatever format or form of words that they wish to use will be entirely for them to decide. In the first year of operation, NINA

and NILA will generate qualitative information only in the first term, so how this is presented and contextualised to parents is a matter for principals and teachers.

Where parent meetings have taken place or are about to take place, it is not expected that they are rescheduled or the assessments completed in advance, unless this is convenient for the school. Schools should run the assessments at a suitable point over the course of the rest of the term and communicate the qualitative outcomes. Parents should be advised that if they wish to discuss these outcomes further, the school will endeavour to make arrangements to do so as soon as possible, though this may not be practically possible before the end of the current term. Neither DE nor CCEA will be monitoring these arrangements and it will be for schools themselves to assure that they are compliant.

CCEA has begun to contact schools who have yet to start their assessments to ensure that they are able to make progress and report outcomes to parents as planned. Schools which started the assessments but felt unable to continue earlier in the term have been advised to now put arrangements in place to allow their pupils' assessments to proceed and CCEA is in the process of contacting the schools which registered technical difficulties this term to facilitate this.

I recognise, however, that for a small number of these schools, rescheduling the assessments may present particular difficulties and in such instances, individual schools should contact my Department.

School Governors

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to outline the proposed changes for the (i) recruitment; and (ii) removal of school governors.

(AQW 16763/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

- (i) Clause 39 of the Education Bill, which is presently before the Assembly, provides for the transfer of responsibility for DE and ELB school governor appointments to the new Education and Skills Authority (ESA). This will require the introduction and application of a common set of procedures for the recruitment and reconstitution of school Boards of Governors. These procedures are currently under consideration.
- (ii) Article 23 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 provides for regulations to be introduced to enable whole Board of Governors, or a member of the Board of Governors of a grant-aided school, to be removed from office and replaced in specified circumstances. These regulations have not yet been made but that gap is now being addressed. The purpose of the regulations will be to enable the Department, and bodies that nominate and appoint school governors, to take action to safeguard pupils when there are specific concerns about the quality of a school's governance arrangements. Such situations are expected to be extremely rare. More detailed information will be provided to the Assembly Education Committee before the start of the normal public consultation process and Assembly Committee scrutiny process on the draft regulations.

School Maintenance Budgets

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the adequacy of the maintenance budget for the Schools Estate for each year of the remainder of the budgetary period.

(AQW 16764/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The need for maintenance works across the schools estate is well documented. I have made certain that monies for maintenance have been ring fenced to ensure that the significant backlog is tackled effectively.

In 2012/13 financial year some £39.444m has been allocated for maintenance across the schools estate. The maintenance baseline in both 2013/14 and 2014/15 is £27m and the Executive recently agreed a further allocation of £10m in 2013/14 giving a total of £37m in that year.

Early Years Strategy

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to explain the reason for the delay in publishing the final Early Years Strategy.

(AQW 16765/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In my statement to the Assembly on the 2 July 2012 I said I would bring forward revised proposals by November; since then work has progressed and my officials have been engaging on regular basis with the Early Years Stakeholder Group. I am attending the British Irish Council Meeting in Cardiff on the 26th of November where a key agenda item is Early Years. I will be making a statement regarding my proposals for early years education and learning shortly after that.

Cross Border Education

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the timescale for the proposed actions resulting from the consultation on cross border education.

(AQW 16767/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Actions arising from the cross border survey of pupils will depend upon the outcome of that survey. At present the survey in the North has just concluded while the survey in the South will begin in late November. Minister Quinn (Department for Education and Skills) and I have agreed that officials will make arrangements to analyse the respective survey returns and share anonymised results to ensure presentation to Ministers no later than the first NSMC meeting in 2013.

Dickson Plan

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact that the Catholic Sector moving away from the Dickson Plan will have on the Controlled Sector which has exhibited almost unanimous support for the retention of the presently constituted two-tier system unchanged in its present format.

(AQW 16826/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The focus of the area planning process is on developing a planned network of viable and sustainable schools to provide high quality education to meet the needs of children and young people in an area. Through this process all existing education provision is currently being examined against the Sustainable Schools Policy to determine if it remains fit for purpose, including the provision covered by the Dickson Plan.

In this context, it is the responsibility of the relevant school Managing Authorities to determine the most appropriate structures to meet the needs of the young people and submit these for consideration in the area planning process.

I have made no assessment of the impact on the controlled sector of the Catholic sector moving away from the Dickson plan.

Any significant changes to schools as a result of structures that emerge from the area plans will require the publication of a statutory Development Proposal. It is only when I have firm proposals that I will be in a position to make an assessment of any potential impact on other schools.

In respect of your last point in regards almost unanimous support for the Dickson plan within the controlled sector, perhaps the member could provide me with statistical data to support her assertion.

Until the work on the area plans is complete and the plans are endorsed, I am not in a position to comment further on options for any specific school or on the specifics in the area plans.

Education and Training Inspectorate

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education to detail the Ministerial directives and policy guidelines which govern (i) the issue of press releases and the giving of interviews by individual members and teams from the Education and Training Inspectorate; and (ii) the professional conduct of individual members and teams from the Education and Training Inspectorate.

(AQW 16832/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In relation to (i), there are no policy guidelines or Ministerial directives relating to either the issue of press releases or the giving of interviews by representatives of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). As with all Departmental press releases, those relating to inspection are issued via the Executive Information Service. Furthermore, I am informed prior to any representative of the ETI undertaking an interview with the media.

In relation to (ii), I do not provide any specific Ministerial directives or policies to govern the professional conduct of inspectors. All inspectors are public servants and are committed to upholding "The Seven Principles of Public Life" which are also referred to as "the Nolan Principles".

The Education and Training Inspectorate has its own set of values, which build on the Nolan Principles: Truth, Dignity, Service and Example, which it applies to all its work.

Education and Training Inspectorate

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education to outline the protocols which govern his relationship as Minister with the Education and Training Inspectorate; and to detail the degree of independence from the Minister which the Education and Training Inspectorate has.

(AQW 16864/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) independence relates to the way in which it reports on education and training across the North of Ireland.

It has always been the case that the regulations and legislation under which ETI operates is a matter for the Executive or government at that particular time. ETI works independently from all of the departments for which it provides inspection services. Inspectors inspect without fear or favour and carry out their work without any Ministerial influence.

Dickson Plan

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to detail the year end budgets of post-primary schools in the Dickson Plan catchment area in the last ten years, up to 5 April 2012.

(AQW 16894/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Data for the schools in question is available only from 2005/06 Financial Year onwards, in line with the Southern Education and Library Board's record retention policy. For each post-primary school in the Dickson Plan catchment area, the table below shows the cumulative surplus or (deficit) delegated budget position at year-end (for the Financial Years from 2005/06 to 2011/12) as a financial amount and as a percentage of delegated resources available to each school.

Post-Primary Schools in Dickson Plan Area	2005/06		2006/07		2007/08	
	£	%	£	%	£	%
Clounagh Junior HS	223,637	8.75	176,628	6.60	190,479	7.29
Killicomaine Junior HS	-77,463	-4.67	-26,500	-1.56	22,783	1.31
Lurgan Junior HS	-19,637	-0.90	46,754	2.07	36,073	1.47
Tandragee Junior HS	217,602	19.10	186,967	15.90	137,725	11.76

Post-Primary Schools in Dickson Plan Area	2005/06		2006/07		2007/08	
	£	%	£	%	£	%
St Mary's Girls' HS, Lurgan	-59,934	-2.84	71,139	3.21	116,114	5.02
St Paul's Junior HS, Lurgan	208,129	10.73	194,335	9.88	162,272	8.03
Craigavon Senior HS	246,345	8.50	335,090	11.20	333,156	10.40
Lurgan College	66,680	4.00	92,680	5.19	123,894	6.55
Portadown College	79,773	2.60	109,205	3.44	73,178	2.28

Post-Primary Schools in Dickson Plan Area	2008/09		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12	
	£	%	£	%	£	%	£	%
Clounagh Junior HS	110,611	4.26	65,852	2.62	98,117	3.83	311,279	11.84
Killicomaine Junior HS	2,471	0.14	-4,699	-0.27	35,703	1.98	34,044	1.84
Lurgan Junior HS	-52,227	-2.10	13,205	0.53	-21,832	-0.87	-7,180	-0.29
Tandragee Junior HS	145,191	11.80	171,647	13.00	202,862	14.91	223,371	15.63
St Mary's Girls' HS, Lurgan	1,380	0.06	-18,265	-0.81	51,114	2.29	-49,918	-2.33
St Paul's Junior HS, Lurgan	172,170	8.24	185,611	8.78	123,399	5.74	141,916	6.93
Craigavon Senior HS	145,178	4.54	68,415	2.21	70,171	2.22	-92,477	-3.17
Lurgan College	107,550	5.36	70,468	3.41	112,833	5.50	157,953	7.44
Portadown College	73,407	2.16	107,966	3.02	27,711	0.77	25,401	0.72

There is one Voluntary Grammar (VG) School (St Michael's Grammar School, Lurgan) within the Dickson Plan catchment area and for which the Department is Funding Authority. VG Schools are not reported on in the same way as Controlled/Maintained schools. The same accounting policies are not used by all VG schools and their cumulative surplus/deficit figures reflect differing levels of non-public funds. This means that the cumulative surplus/deficit figure of a VG school cannot be compared on a like-for-like basis with either another VG school or an ELB school. The Department can however confirm that St Michael's GS, Lurgan did not have a deficit of public funds at any of the year-ends specified in the table above.

Sustrans Going for Gold Report

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the Sustrans Going for Gold report on cycling in schools.

(AQW 16910/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education is aware of Sustrans Going for Gold Report which focuses on increasing physical activity levels of pupils by seeking integration of cycling into the school curriculum and calling for a range of actions to be taken to achieve a quarter of children cycling to school regularly.

Our curriculum already supports physical activity amongst children by inclusion of Physical Education (PE) at all key stages of compulsory education. While legislation prevents the Department from prescribing specific amounts of time for any subject within the curriculum, Departmental guidance does recommend that each pupil should be provided with 2 hours of PE per week.

Whilst the Sustrans Going for Gold report seeks to integrate cycling activity within the curriculum, a key focus of the revised curriculum is the flexibility it provides for teachers to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of individual pupils. To complement this flexibility, the Department delegates as much funding and decision-making as possible to schools which are best placed to assess the needs of their pupils. It is very much a matter for schools to reach a judgement on the specifics they teach in the classroom and the resources or programmes that might enhance their teaching and learning. Factors such as the location of the school, the traffic volumes in the local area, the ages of pupils and parents views are all relevant and I would surmise will vary from school to school. Therefore, while I appreciate the recommendations in the Sustrans report, the decision to specifically include walking and cycling to school within their teaching is a matter for each school.

However, I am persuaded of the importance of improving physical activity levels. To this end, the Department of Education facilitated work between the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and DRD to update DRD's Best Foot Forward resource, a Key Stage 2 teaching tool developed to help teachers bring the advantages of using sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling, public transport and car-sharing into the classroom.

This resource is available to all schools via the NI Curriculum website, www.nicurriculum.org.uk which provides advice, guidance and resources to assist teachers in their delivery of the curriculum.

Projected Capital Spend

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 16328/11-15, how much finance has been expended (i) to date; and (ii) in the current financial year, in each of the projects listed.

(AQW 16943/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Finances expended against the 18 capital build projects announced in June 2012 (i) to date and (ii) in the current financial year are shown in the table below.

School Scheme	Type of School	All Expenditure up to 31/03/2012 £000's	2012/13 Expenditure up to 31/10/2012 £000's	Total Spend to Date £000's
Coláiste Feirste, Belfast	Post-Primary	2,645	0	2,645
St Clare's Convent Primary School	Primary	739	40	779
St Colman's Abbey Primary School, Newry				
St Joseph's Convent PS, Newry	Primary	93	29	122

School Scheme	Type of School	All Expenditure up to 31/03/2012 £000's	2012/13 Expenditure up to 31/10/2012 £000's	Total Spend to Date £000's
Dromore Central Primary School	Primary	244	2	246
Eglinton Primary School	Primary	154	1	155
Tannaghmore Primary School, Lurgan	Primary	209	0	209
Ebrington Controlled PS, Derry	Primary	113	0	113
Foyle & Londonderry College	Post-Primary	15,071	0	15,071
St Teresa's Primary School, Lurgan	Primary	144	0	144
Victoria Park Primary School, Belfast	Primary	408	140	548
Enniskillen Model Primary School	Primary	138	3	141
St Mary's Primary School, Banbridge	Primary	69	0	69
Bheann Mhadagain, Belfast	Primary	52	0	52
Belmont House Special School, Derry	Special	10	0	10
Rossmar Special School, Limavady	Special	10	0	10
Castletower Ballymena	Special	0	1	1
Arvalee School & Resource Centre, Omagh	Special	0	0	0
St Gerards Education Resource Centre	Special	0	0	0
		20,099	216	20,315

It should be noted that the figure for Coláiste Feirste, Belfast and Foyle & Londonderry College include site purchases of £2,325k and £14,500k respectively.

Expenditure for the current financial year reflects payments against invoices presented as at 31 October 2012.

Education and Training Strategy for 14-19 Year Olds

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many meetings his Department's Permanent Secretary has chaired since 2009 between his Department and the Department for Employment and Learning to progress the Education and Training Strategy for 14-19 Year Olds.

(AQW 16947/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have no plans to publish a Strategy entitled Education and Training for 14-19 Year Olds. My plans are to continue to put the needs of pupils first and my range of policies are being implemented with that objective to the forefront.

I work closely with my colleague the Minister for Employment and Learning, as the education and training of young people aged 14-19 is relevant to both our departments. At Permanent Secretary level, meetings between the two departments are held regularly. Officials working in the Permanent Secretary's office have access to diary commitments since January 2011. In that time five such meetings have taken place, covering relevant policy developments across the two departments.

My officials also engage directly with their colleagues in the Department for Employment and Learning on areas of joint working to ensure the needs of the young people in education, training or seeking employment are met. This will continue to be the case.

Education and Training Strategy for 14-19 Year Olds

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education when he will publish a draft Education and Training Strategy for 14-19 Year Olds.

(AQW 16948/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have no plans to publish a Strategy entitled Education and Training for 14-19 Year Olds. My plans are to continue to put the needs of pupils first and my range of policies are being implemented with that objective to the forefront.

I work closely with my colleague the Minister for Employment and Learning, as the education and training of young people aged 14-19 is relevant to both our departments. At Permanent Secretary level, meetings between the two departments are held regularly. Officials working in the Permanent Secretary's office have access to diary commitments since January 2011. In that time five such meetings have taken place, covering relevant policy developments across the two departments.

My officials also engage directly with their colleagues in the Department for Employment and Learning on areas of joint working to ensure the needs of the young people in education, training or seeking employment are met. This will continue to be the case.

Further Education Colleges

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact on the provision of vocational courses for school pupils following the cessation of his Department's funding for Further Education colleges.

(AQW 16985/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department funds schools to meet the educational needs of their pupils, not institutes of Further Education.

I am very clear about the benefit of providing access to a wide range of different types of courses to engage and interest pupils and to meet the needs of the economy. That is why I have commenced the legislation to make the Entitlement Framework statutory and why the Entitlement Framework requires schools to offer access to both general and applied courses. All schools will have to ensure that their curricular offer meets the requirements of the Entitlement Framework, which is being phased in from September 2013. Therefore all pupils must be able to access a broad and balanced range of both general and applied courses with clear progression pathways.

Additional funding has been provided as a contribution to support schools in expanding their curricular offer at Key Stage 4 and post-16. This funding will be phased out by April 2014 and schools are aware of this. Schools will subsequently need to ensure that the Entitlement Framework requirements are catered for within their overall delegated budget, in the same way as all other elements of the statutory curriculum.

The Entitlement Framework is about putting pupils first and that must be the cornerstone of schools' curricular planning.

STEM Subjects

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail the percentage increase in the uptake of STEM subjects at (i) GCSE; and (ii) A Level in each of the last five years, broken down by the awarding body. **(AQW 16986/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The answer is contained in the tables below.

GCSE ENTRIES IN STEM SUBJECTS IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS, 2006/07 - 2010/11

	EDXCEL	WJEC	CCEA	OCR	AQA
2006/07	336	200	49,087	1,831	13,105
2007/08	53	249	48,630	1,898	14,359
Percentage Change 2006/07-2007/08	-84.2	24.5	-0.9	3.7	9.6
2008/09	330	217	46,338	1,937	14,220
Percentage Change 2007/08-2008/09	522.6	-12.9	-4.7	2.1	-1.0
2009/10	403	279	45,899	1,826	14,319
Percentage Change 2008/09-2009/10	22.1	28.6	-0.9	-5.7	0.7
2010/11	855	133	46,396	1,551	13,521
Percentage Change 2009/10-2010/11	112.2	-52.3	1.1	-15.1	-5.6
Percentage Change 2006/07-2010/11	154.5	-33.5	-5.5	-15.3	3.2

A LEVEL ENTRIES IN STEM SUBJECTS IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS, 2006/07 - 2010/11

	EDXCEL	WJEC	CCEA	OCR	AQA
2006/07	1,273	21	7,121	486	2,109
2007/08	1,373	17	7,361	472	1,741
Percentage Change 2006/07-2007/08	7.9	-19.0	3.4	-2.9	-17.4
2008/09	1,461	45	7,691	434	1,819
Percentage Change 2007/08-2008/09	6.4	164.7	4.5	-8.1	4.5
2009/10	1,309	84	8,811	424	1,619
Percentage Change 2008/09-2009/10	-10.4	86.7	14.6	-2.3	-11.0
2010/11	1,461	72	9,153	383	1,590
Percentage Change 2009/10-2010/11	11.6	-14.3	3.9	-9.7	-1.8
Percentage Change 2006/07-2010/11	14.8	242.9	28.5	-21.2	-24.6

Northern Ireland Substitute Teachers Register

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education when the Northern Ireland Substitute Teachers Register was last tendered through a public procurement process.

(AQW 16988/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The contract for the Substitute Teacher Register was awarded in 2003 without a public procurement process on the basis that no other supplier offered a suitable product. The contract has since been extended for operational reasons.

It is intended that procurement of a substitute teachers' register will be addressed within the Strategy that has been developed to modernise the ICT Infrastructure in Education.

Schools: Discipline and Sanction

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education what advice his Department issues to schools in relation to developing and implementing policies on school discipline and sanctions.

(AQW 16989/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department's publication "Promoting and Sustaining Good Behaviour: A Discipline Strategy for Schools" (1998) was issued to schools to support them to develop and maintain a coherent and consistent approach to promoting good behaviour. This guidance is based on a support model of progressively more intensive interventions for pupils whose behaviour is challenging. A further publication issued "Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour" (2001) offers best practice guidelines on successful discipline strategies and practices in schools.

Schools can also access additional advice and support from Behaviour Support Teams within the Education and Library Boards. These Teams can offer advice on developing whole school approaches to good behaviour, classroom management skills and immediate advice on action in response to serious incidents.

Free School Meals

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education to detail the (i) number; and (ii) percentage of children in year 8 in receipt of free school meals, in each grammar school, for each of the last ten years.

(AQW 17012/11-15)

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

Capital Projects

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education when he will announce his autumn list of capital projects, to which he referred in his statement to the Assembly on 25 June 2012.

(AQW 17030/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Work is on-going on the assessment of potential major capital build projects to be advanced in planning, as well as the procedures for a new Schools Enhancement programme aimed at refurbishing or extending existing schools.

While I had intended to make an announcement before the Christmas recess it will now be the New Year before I will be in a position to do so.

Northern Ireland Numeracy and Literacy Assessments

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education whether the Northern Ireland Numeracy and Literacy Assessments are being provided to schools via the C2K network.

(AQW 17031/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I can confirm that the NINA and NILA assessments are delivered to schools via the C2k network. I am assured by CCEA that an important part of the procurement process was to specify that assessments should be delivered via the C2K managed service.

Nursery School: Attendance

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what measures or plans are in place to ensure that children from Irish Traveller, Sinti and Roma backgrounds attend nursery schools.

(AQW 17068/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In line with Programme for Government commitment I am keen to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family who wish to avail of it.

In relation to children from the Traveller community my Department provides support to a regional programme –Toybox - which aims to reduce social and educational inequalities of Traveller children aged 0-4 years old and works with Traveller parents to encourage engagement in the education process and assist with form filling and transition arrangements between pre-school and primary sectors.

My Department also supports a dedicated Education Welfare Officer (EWO) in Belfast Education and Library Board to work with Roma families to encourage them to access and engage in all phases of education.

School: Irish Language

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education what grant assistance is available for primary schools to encourage the development of the Irish language (i) inside; and (ii) outside school.

(AQW 17119/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Modern languages are not currently a compulsory part of the statutory curriculum at primary level. However schools are encouraged to offer a wider range of modern languages, including Irish and the revised curriculum provides them with greater flexibility to do so.

To support primary schools wishing to deliver language learning the Primary Languages Programme was introduced in 2007 to give pupils at Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1 the opportunity to learn an additional language in school. Primary schools across the north of Ireland were invited to participate in the programme which provides the opportunity to work with peripatetic language tutors to deliver Irish, Spanish and Polish. The programme has been very successful and as at September 2012, 415 schools are participating in the programme, including 93 primary schools learning Irish.

I have also recently announced a funding scheme, as part of the Extended Schools programme. The scheme is open to all existing Extended School cluster groups to apply for additional funding to provide programmes that will encourage children to develop their skills in the use of Irish and to also provide support for parents who wish to develop their own key literacy and numeracy skills.

I have made available £230k in the 2012/13 financial year with the intention of continuing the funding for the next two years. As the funding will be allocated to cluster groups, which may include schools from all school sectors, it is not possible to provide a breakdown of the total grant assistance available to primary schools.

Common Exam System

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the importance of a common exams system within the United Kingdom.

(AQW 17138/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is not essential that there is a common exams system across Scotland, England, Wales and here. What is essential is the continued comparability and portability of qualifications taken by our young people here.

Our system does not mirror that in Scotland, nor in England or Wales. Indeed, I have allowed exams to be taken in both modular and linear format at GCSE, which is not the case in England.

The review of GCSEs and GCE A Levels that I commissioned in October will ensure that, whatever qualifications I decide are appropriate here, will have parity with other jurisdictions. I will continue to ensure that a learner can take his / her qualification and use it anywhere across these islands to apply for a university place or job as is currently the case.

Area Planning

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education given that he affirmed in the Irish News on 11 October 2012 that the end of academic selection remains his Department's goal, and that he has stated that Area Planning is taking us to 'a different place', how he anticipates that Area Planning will aid the attainment of the goal of ending academic selection.

(AQW 17164/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department is taking forward a range of reforms which together will ensure that our education system is fit for purpose in a rapidly changing modern world. Reform is needed to address the changing school population; to work within tight budget constraints; to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of our economy; and to ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The range of reforms I have set in motion, including area planning, the entitlement framework, the review of the common funding formula and the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority, will all make a contribution to moving our education system forward and make it a truly world class system. It is not the stated purpose of area planning, or indeed of any of these reforms individually, to bring academic selection to an end – but in this changing educational landscape academic selection will become increasingly irrelevant.

Health, Safety and Workshop Competency Qualification

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Education why his Department does not accept the Health, Safety and Workshop competency qualification, which can be obtained in England, as an equivalent to the City and Guilds 6131 Workshop Competency qualification obtained at the University of Ulster at Jordanstown.

(AQW 17170/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The health and safety of young people and those who teach them in our schools is of paramount importance. It is therefore vital to ensure that teachers of subjects such as Technology & Design are competent in handling the range of tools used when working with resistant materials (wood, metal and plastics). These skills are central to delivering the practical aspects of the curriculum in the north of Ireland.

Students undertaking Technology & Design teacher training courses in Higher Education Institutions here must meet the City & Guilds 6131 Certificate for Workshop Competence standard (C&G 6131). It is an integral part of the BEd courses offered by Stranmillis and St Mary's University Colleges and the PGCE programmes at the University of Ulster and the Open University.

However, teacher education courses for Technology & Design provided in Britain and elsewhere are wider ranging in nature and scope. Generally, the courses do not require students to reach the

necessary standards of practical workshop skills or to cover the course content needed to meet the requirements of the curriculum here. In particular, the specifications for hand skills have been assessed as falling short of what is regarded as acceptable here.

The Department therefore takes the view that in order to ensure the safety of the young people in our classrooms, Technology & Design teachers who have qualified outside the north of Ireland are not trained to an appropriate level. They are therefore required to enhance their workshop competence by obtaining the C&G 6131 standard before they can teach here.

Split-Site Post-Primary Schools

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education what changes have been made to the funding of split-site post-primary schools in the last five years; and what was the rationale behind these changes.

(AQW 17193/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Funding for a dual site school is determined by the relevant funding authority using the criteria set out in paragraphs 4.22-4.23 of the "Common Funding Scheme for the Local Management of Schools" guidance (April 2012).

There has been no change to this guidance within the last five years.

STEM Subjects

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what steps are being taken to increase the number of pupils who are studying STEM subjects at GCSE and A-Level.

(AQW 17196/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The revised curriculum which is in place across all year groups in all grant aided schools provides greater freedom for teachers to explore STEM-related learning with pupils. The Entitlement Framework, which will be fully implemented in September 2015, will guarantee all post-primary pupils at Key Stage 4 and Sixth Form greater choice and flexibility to pursue STEM subjects. In addition, this increased choice is being supported with improved careers education, information, advice and guidance, with a particular focus on STEM-related career opportunities.

However, it is acknowledged that delivery of STEM subjects through discrete timetabled lessons needs to be supplemented with whole-school programmes and special events.

Since publication of the 'Report of the STEM Review' my Department has been undertaking a wide range of interventions to increase the number of pupils studying STEM subjects at GCSE and A-Level. I would refer the member to my answer to his earlier question AQW 6066/11-15 published in the official report on 6 January 2012 highlighting examples of STEM actions. Recent STEM developments to promote STEM subjects at GCSE and A-Level include: STEM curricular assessment tasks for the three cross curricular skills to support the existing STEM Futures enquiry based resources; 6 assessment tasks for using ICT have been developed as exemplar support materials; two video case studies to share good practice using the STEM Futures resources and using Innovation to embed STEM in learning and teaching; and an ICT sector profile has been developed for inclusion on the STEMWorks website. In addition, funding to deliver STEM related events and programmes during 2012/13 include, portfolio of STEM enhancement and enrichment programmes delivered by Sentinus; the BT Young Scientist & Technology Competition, the Stock Market Challenge, Maths Week and the Smart Gear programme.

Redburn Primary School, Holywood

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education what was the cost to the South Eastern Education and Library Board of razing the old Redburn Primary School in Holywood.

(AQW 17206/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The total cost of the demolition of the former Redburn Primary School is forecast to be in the region of £66,000, which includes approximately £24,000 for removing asbestos.

Site clearance is still ongoing so these figures are approximate and will not be confirmed until the final account is settled.

Boards of Governors

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education when the current Boards of Governors are due to be reconstituted.

(AQW 17240/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In normal circumstances school boards of governors are reconstituted every four years. The term of office for most Boards of Governors is due to expire in the 2013/14 school year.

However, the Education Bill proposes that the processes for the reconstitution of school Boards of Governors will transfer to the Education Skills Authority (ESA). Consequently, the timetable for the next reconstitution may be affected by that transfer of function.

Pre-School Places

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many additional pre-school places will be needed in the 2013/14 school year.

(AQW 17241/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Each Education and Library Board's Pre-School Education Advisory Group has estimated the demand for pre-school places in 2013/14 based on live birth data which is available on an academic year basis, adjusted to take account of parental application rates over recent years and a tendency in some areas for parents to seek places in ELB areas other than where they live.

On this basis the Department has notified ELBs that they may proceed to secure an additional 668 funded places compared to 2012/13.

The pre-school admissions process is preference based, and until parents express their preferences for pre-school settings it is impossible to predict with certainty where pressures will arise.

My officials will continue to work closely with the ELBs to respond to the demand for funded places in each area.

Pre-School Education Advisory Group

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to outline the advice that each Pre-School Education Advisory Group has given him on pre-school provision for the 2013/2014 school year.

(AQW 17242/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Each Education and Library Board's Pre-School Education Advisory Group has estimated the demand for pre-school places in 2013/14 based on live birth data which is available on an academic year basis, adjusted to take account of parental application rates over recent years and a tendency in some areas for parents to seek places in ELB areas other than where they live.

On this basis the Department has notified ELBs that they may proceed to secure an additional 668 funded places compared to 2012/13.

The pre-school admissions process is preference based, and until parents express their preferences for pre-school settings it is impossible to predict with certainty where pressures will arise.

My officials will continue to work closely with the ELBs to respond to the demand for funded places in each area.

Schools: Meals

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many pupils in each constituency received free school meals in each of the last five years.

(AQW 17263/11-15)

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

PUPILS ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS BY CONSTITUENCY OF SCHOOL LOCATION, 2007/08 – 2011/12

Constituency	2007/ 08	2008/ 09	2009/ 10	2010/ 11	2011/ 12
Belfast East	1,987	1,866	2,071	2,504	2,911
Belfast North	5,336	5,156	6,116	6,804	7,749
Belfast South	2,409	2,316	2,865	2,998	3,445
Belfast West	7,331	6,965	7,072	7,635	8,672
East Antrim	1,805	1,715	1,944	2,133	2,542
East Derry	2,539	2,465	3,193	3,409	3,929
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	2,843	2,717	3,137	3,398	3,937
Foyle	7,338	7,059	6,935	7,332	7,752
Lagan Valley	1,965	1,830	1,715	2,013	2,473
Mid Ulster	2,950	2,860	3,179	3,533	4,008
Newry and Armagh	4,291	4,147	4,299	4,736	5,291
North Antrim	2,670	2,612	2,830	3,089	3,577
North Down	1,261	1,179	1,224	1,539	1,970
South Antrim	1,922	1,858	1,542	1,674	2,100
South Down	3,114	3,042	3,022	3,476	4,089
Strangford	1,805	1,703	1,703	2,037	2,466
Upper Bann	3,370	3,336	3,642	4,277	4,570
West Tyrone	3,780	3,741	3,994	4,388	4,825
Total	58,716	56,567	60,483	66,975	76,306

Source: school census

Note:

- 1 Figures include pupils in funded places in voluntary and private preschool centres, nursery schools, primary schools (including nursery units and reception), post primary schools and special schools.
- 2 Figures for nursery children and those in funded places in voluntary and private preschool centres include those who had a parent in receipt of Job Seeker's Allowance or Income Support at the time of each school census exercise.
- 3 Constituency has been assigned using location of schools/preschool centres attended.

'A' Level Pass Rates

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 13960/11-15, why in the table of A Level results Northern Ireland is referred to as the North of Ireland.

(AQW 17281/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The language and terminology used in answers to members' questions reflects my personal preference.

Special Educational Needs

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Education what assistance his Department plans to give to teachers in mainstream schools in managing children who have a statement of Special Educational Needs.

(AQW 17282/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In all mainstream schools a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school's special educational needs (SEN) policy and co-ordination of SEN provision. Senior management should ensure that structures within the school allow the SENCO's functions to be carried out effectively.

My priority is to ensure that every child, including those with a statement of special educational needs (SEN), receives a high quality education. To that end I am continuing to put in place a range of policies aimed at raising standards, including the school improvement policy and the Review of SEN and Inclusion.

One of the main contributors to the Department of Education's key aim to raise standards in all our schools is the development of the education workforce to meet the needs of all our pupils. To this end education and library boards must ensure that arrangements for necessary training of teachers and classroom assistants, who are supporting children with SEN, are in place.

I attach great importance to building the capacity of all schools to manage the needs of children with SEN. During 2011 a comprehensive SEN resource file was made available to primary and post-primary schools and teachers can also access materials on Learning NI and the DE website.

Electricity Costs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education what his Department's electricity costs have been over the last three financial years.

(AQW 17287/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department has incurred expenditure on electricity in each of the last three financial years as shown in the following table:

2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
£'000	£'000	£'000
4	4	18

Glencraig Curative School

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Education how many children attend Glencraig Curative School; and what is the school's maximum capacity.

(AQW 17308/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The 2012/13 school enrolments census records that 21 pupils attend Glencraig Curative School. With regard to the school's maximum capacity (taken to mean the school's approved enrolment number), Glencraig Curative School is an independent school. The Department of Education does not set approved enrolment numbers for independent schools because these schools are entitled to make their own arrangements for the admission of pupils.

Education: Costs

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the average cost of educating a child in (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school broken down by sector; and how this compares with the cost in 2007/08

(AQW 17309/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The tables below provide the average delegated and non-delegated Resource expenditure per primary and post-primary school pupil, broken down by sector, for both the 2007-08 and 2011-12 Financial Years.

Primary	Average Expenditure per Pupil 2007/08 £	Average Expenditure per Pupil 2011/12 £
Controlled	3,325	3,705
Controlled Integrated	3,574	3,761
Maintained	3,271	3,706
Irish Medium	3,579	4,339
Grant-Maintained Integrated	3,406	3,685

Post-Primary	Average Expenditure per Pupil 2007/08 £	Average Expenditure per Pupil 2011/12 £
Controlled	5,083	5,753
Controlled Integrated	4,725	5,557
Controlled Grammar	4,217	4,888
Maintained	4,899	5,787
Irish Medium	4,345	5,164
Voluntary Grammar	4,331	4,669
Grant-Maintained Integrated	5,042	5,393

Notes

- (i) Data for Primary Schools includes Nursery Classes within Primary Schools. It is not possible to disaggregate the costs of pupils in nursery classes from those of primary pupils in Primary schools which have the Nursery Units attached;
- (ii) Data for Irish Medium (IM) Primary includes Controlled IM and Other Maintained IM Schools;
- (iii) It is not possible to disaggregate the costs of pupils attending Primary and Post-Primary Irish Medium Units which are attached to English Medium host schools.
- (iv) Data for Post-Primary schools includes Preparatory Departments attached to Controlled Grammar and Voluntary Grammar Schools as it is not possible to disaggregate this data from the host school expenditure;
- (v) Data included for 2011-12 in respect of Voluntary Grammar and Grant-Maintained Integrated Schools is provisional pending validation by the Department; and
- (vi) Data excludes capital expenditure which is not available in the format requested.

Age Weighted Pupil Unit

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to explain the rationale behind the changes to the age weighted pupil unit.

(AQW 17312/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The criteria for funding of pupils based on the age weighted pupil unit is set out in paragraphs 3.4 - 3.7 and Annex G of the "Common Funding Scheme for the Local Management of Schools" guidance (April 2012).

There has been no change to this guidance in recent years.

Consultation with Parents and Teachers

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the level of consultation which his Department has with (i) parents; and (ii) teachers.

(AQW 17313/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education routinely consults with all interested parties including parents and teachers in line with guidance provided by the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Northern Ireland Literacy and Numeracy Assessments

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education whether he raised any reservations with the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment following the pilot scheme for the online Northern Ireland Literacy and Numeracy Assessments, prior to the roll out to all primary schools.

(AQW 17314/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have been assured by CCEA that the outcomes of the trial were evaluated, changes made to address concerns and there were no significant technical issues evident prior to specifying the assessments. Over 30% of all primary schools took part in the trialling during the period January to May 2012. The purpose of these trials was to ensure that the assessments were fit for purpose; that they were compatible with the C2K network and schools' systems; and that any issues could be identified and addressed and lessons learnt. I have requested a full report from CCEA on the operation of the new assessments. This will include an analysis of why the difficulties experienced by schools were not apparent to the same extent during the extensive trial period.

Northern Ireland Literacy and Numeracy Assessments

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education what guidance he is providing to schools on the distribution of late outcomes of the Northern Ireland Literacy and Numeracy online assessments.

(AQW 17315/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I wrote to primary schools on 12 November, advising that I expect all schools to continue with the assessments before the end of term and use the outcomes to engage with parents and inform teaching and learning over the coming year.

In terms of the requirement to report to parents by the end of the Autumn term, the legislation allows no room for flexibility, however, I advised schools that where parent meetings have taken place or are about to take place, it is not expected that they are rescheduled or the assessments completed in advance, unless this is convenient for the school. Schools were advised to run the assessments at a suitable point over the course of the rest of the term and communicate the qualitative outcomes in whatever format or wording that they see fit. Parents should be advised that if they wish to discuss these outcomes further, the school will endeavour to make arrangements to do so as soon as possible, though this may not be practically possible before the end of the current term.

CCEA has been contacting schools who had yet to start their assessments to ensure that they are able to make progress and report outcomes to parents as planned. Schools which started the assessments but felt unable to continue earlier in the term have been advised to now put arrangements in places to

allow their pupils' assessments to proceed and CCEA is in the process of contacting the schools which registered technical difficulties this term to facilitate this.

I recognise, however, that for a small number of these schools, rescheduling the assessments may present particular difficulties and in such instances, I have indicated that individual schools should contact the Department.

Primary School: Numeracy and Literacy Online Assessments

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education whether he is aware of a view amongst primary school leaders that they have difficulty in standing over the accuracy of the results of the numeracy and literacy online assessments; and what plans he has to review these tests in light of the recent technical and other related issues.

(AQW 17316/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have requested a full report from CCEA on the operation of the new assessments. This will include an analysis of why the difficulties experienced by some schools were not apparent to the same extent during the extensive trial period. In addition, the Education and Training Inspectorate will conduct a survey to determine how effectively schools make use of this assessment information and what their experiences have been to date. I will review its findings later in this school year.

As I have stated elsewhere, the effective use of computer-based assessment data is a key aspect of my drive to raise standards of literacy and numeracy for our pupils. If technical issues or procurement rules risk interfering with this focus on the pupil, then we need to look at ways of removing that risk. I will be outlining how I plan to use the experiences of computer-based assessment in the current and previous terms to inform policy in the future. I can assure you that consultation and engagement with schools will be at the heart of this.

Primary School: Numeracy and Literacy Online Assessments

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to explain the rationale behind online computer based assessments being a statutory requirement for primary schools.

(AQW 17317/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The statutory requirement to conduct computer based assessment in schools in the Autumn term using an approved tool was established in 2007 with the first assessments specified in 2009. This has ensured that all schools have conducted a common assessment, standardised against our population, free of charge to schools.

An Equal Opportunities Policy for Teachers in Schools (TNC 2009/2)

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education whether political parties, churches and education interests were consulted before the publication of the document 'An Equal Opportunities Policy for Teachers in Schools (TNC 2009/2)'; and what was his Department's assessment of the responses.

(AQW 17343/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Equal Opportunities Policy for Teachers in Schools was agreed by the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC), which comprises representatives of the Employing Authorities, the recognised teacher unions and the Department of Education. The document was developed in consultation with the Equality Commission, having regard to the Commission's Code of Practice for Fair Employment and Model Equality Opportunities Policy. There was no consultation with political parties or churches.

An Equal Opportunities Policy for Teachers in Schools (TNC 2009/2)

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education whether Education and Library Boards have ever instituted any disciplinary action against Boards of Governors for misconduct in relation to breaches of An Equal Opportunities Policy for Teachers in Schools (TNC 2009/2) regarding the appointment of teachers.

(AQW 17345/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that they have never instituted any disciplinary action against Boards of Governors for misconduct in relation to breaches of An Equal Opportunity Policy for Teachers in Schools (TNC 2009/2) regarding the appointment of teachers.

An Equal Opportunities Policy for Teachers in Schools (TNC 2009/2)

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education whether the composition of teachers, applicants for employment and appointments in controlled schools has been monitored annually on the basis of religious belief and political opinion, as required in An Equal Opportunities Policy for Teachers in Schools (TNC 2009/2); and where these results are published.

(AQW 17348/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that they have not monitored the composition of teachers, applicants for employment and appointments in controlled schools on the basis of religious belief and political opinion as there is no statutory obligation to do so.

The Boards are aware of the requirement detailed in TNC Circular 2009/2. However, on the basis of resource limitations and imminent reorganisation, non-statutory monitoring has not been introduced. It is expected this will be addressed when a centralised monitoring system is introduced on the establishment of the Education Skills Authority.

Education and Training Inspectorate

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 16865/11-15, how many of the associate assessors used in the last five years were serving as a Principal or Vice Principal; and how many were from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services.

(AQW 17354/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: For the purpose of this answer, the data relating to 'years' is given in academic years, beginning with the September 2007 to June 2008 academic year.

In the last five years, there were 120 individual Associate Assessors used who were serving as a Principal or Vice-Principal. It should be noted that some of these individuals will have been deployed on more than one inspection during this 5-year period.

The number of Associate Assessors used in the last five years, who were from the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services, cannot be disclosed as the figure is 5 or less. Statistical data of 5 or less cannot be released in order to ensure the personal identity of individuals is protected, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Education and Training Inspectorate

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education whether he will follow the practice used in the Health Service and involve lay people in the appointment of members of the Education and Training Inspectorate.

(AQW 17355/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All interview selection panels that are established by HR Connect, are in line with the NICS Recruitment Procedures. Panels for the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) recruitment competitions, consist of two senior members of ETI and one senior civil servant.

Education and Training Inspectorate

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education whether the press briefing given by the Chief Inspector of the Education and Training Inspectorate on 17 October 2012, in which she identified the management of 22 percent of primary schools and 39 percent of secondary schools as not good enough, was in breach of the confidentiality normally observed by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

(AQW 17356/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I can confirm that the press briefing given by the Chief Inspector of the Education and Training Inspectorate on 17 October 2012, in which she identified the management of 22 percent of primary schools and 39 percent of secondary schools as not good enough, was not in breach of the confidentiality normally observed by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

Education and Training Inspectorate

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 16584/11-15, whether any of the information requested can be provided within the cost limit or can be provided in a different format. **(AQW 17357/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: Unfortunately, pursuant to AQW 16584/11-15, it is not possible to provide any of the information requested within the cost limit or in a different format. The costs involved in obtaining such information would be disproportionate.

Day Payment Performance Targets

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education how each of his Department's arm's-length bodies has performed on the 30 Day Payment Performance Targets; and whether any sector has been paid more quickly than others.

(AQW 17362/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Details of how each of my Department's Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) has performed against the 30 Day Prompt Payment Performance Target in the full 2011-12 financial year and 2012-13 financial year to the end of October 2012 are listed in the following table.

NDPB	Financial Year 2011/12 %	Year to date 2012/13 %
Belfast Education & Library Board (ELB)	81	89
North Eastern ELB	83	84
South Eastern ELB	90	87
Southern ELB	89	88
Western ELB	85	87
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	100	100
Council for Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment	85	91
Staff Commission for ELBs	100	100
Youth Council for Northern Ireland	100	100
Comhairle na Gaelscoilaíochta	88	99
Council for Integrated Education	100	100
General Teaching Council	100	100
Middletown Centre for Autism	96	100

My Department publishes the prompt payment performance of its NDPBs on the Department's web-site and a further breakdown of the information can be viewed by following the links below:

http://www.deni.gov.uk/prompt_payment_tables_2011-2012.pdf

http://www.deni.gov.uk/microsoft_word_-_ndpbs_prompt_payment_table__for_2012-_2013.pdf

Payment performance information by sector is not currently recorded and reported on by either the Department nor its NDPBs.

Modern Languages

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to encourage pupils to study modern languages at GCSE and A Level.

(AQW 17369/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I very much recognise the importance of language learning both socially and economically. Learning a second language can help our young people to become creative, confident and articulate individuals, able to play their full part in our increasingly diverse society and to achieve to their full potential.

Modern languages are a statutory requirement at KS3 and a qualification choice at KS4 and Sixth form. Schools are encouraged to offer a wider range of modern languages and the recently introduced revised curriculum offers schools more flexibility in the choices of subjects they can offer to meet the needs of their pupils. Schools are now able to choose from any of the languages of the 27 EU member states to meet the requirements of the statutory curriculum, and can also add any other additional languages as they wish.

At Key Stage 4 the Entitlement Framework legislation will require schools to ensure that they offer pupils access to at least one course in a modern language, which will provide more pupils with the opportunity to choose to continue with languages at this key stage and post-16.

In addition, I have recently received a copy of the report 'Languages for the Future – NI Languages Strategy', which has been prepared by the joint University of Ulster-Queen's University Belfast, Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, and which considers language learning at all levels and across a broad spectrum of activity. I will study the report and will be looking carefully, within the resources available to me, at how best to move forward on those recommendations that are focused on the teaching and learning of modern languages in schools.

Pupils

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many (i) GCSE; and (ii) A Level pupils studied (a) French; (b) German; (c) Spanish; and (d) Chinese in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 17370/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Answer is contained in the tables below:

GCSE EXAMINATION ENTRIES 2001/02 - 2010/11

	French	German	Spanish	Chinese
2001/02	13,173	1,390	2,716	10
2002/03	12,524	1,244	3,077	15
2003/04	12,436	1,266	2,945	19
2004/05	11,239	1,315	3,132	19
2005/06	10,658	1,264	2,848	14
2006/07	10,415	1,203	3,046	15
2007/08	9,008	1,204	3,232	21
2008/09	7,605	1,208	3,060	30

	French	German	Spanish	Chinese
2009/10	7,100	1,251	3,113	12
2010/11	6,510	1,044	3,342	13

A LEVEL EXAMINATION ENTRIES 2001/02 - 2010/11

	French	German	Spanish	Chinese
2001/02	959	244	397	11
2002/03	794	201	405	18
2003/04	792	184	432	12
2004/05	725	133	402	21
2005/06	701	143	406	28
2006/07	662	145	458	16
2007/08	694	159	415	30
2008/09	657	137	407	37
2009/10	707	153	443	26
2010/11	562	113	461	30

Source: RM data solutions

Modern languages are a statutory requirement at KS3 and a qualification choice at KS4 and Post 16. Schools are encouraged to offer a wider range of modern languages, and the recently introduced revised curriculum offers schools more flexibility in the choices of subjects they can offer to meet the needs of their pupils. Schools are now able to choose from any of the languages of the 27 EU member states to meet the requirements of the statutory curriculum, and can also offer additional languages if they wish.

In addition, at Key Stage 4 the Entitlement Framework legislation will require schools to ensure that they offer pupils access to at least one course in a modern language, which may mean that more pupils choose to continue with languages at this key stage and post-16.

Education and Library Board

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education (i) how much each Education and Library Board has spent on pre-school education in each of the last five years; (ii) how much each Board will be spending on pre-school education in each of the next three years; (iii) how many children have accessed pre-school provision in each Board area, in each of the last five years; and (iv) how many children are expected to receive pre-school provision in each of the next three years, in each Board area.

(AQW 17398/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

- (i) The following table shows the sums allocated to pre-school education providers, either by DE or through Education and Library Boards (ELBs), to support the delivery of the pre-school curriculum over the last 5 years. Pre-school education providers may also attract funding from sources other than ELBs, for a variety of reasons, both structural and operational.

Type of Pre-School Setting	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Nursery Schools (1)	£17,067,684	£17,614,204	£17,940,033	£18,287,744	£18,268,286
Nursery Units (2) (3)	£17,789,915	£18,654,300	£19,155,504	£19,799,042	£20,226,771
Voluntary and Private Settings	£10,311,000	£10,591,000	£13,625,000	£14,130,000	£15,699,000

Notes:

- (1) These figures represent the totality of funding allocated under the Common Funding Formula.
- (2) These figures represent the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) component of funding allocated to Nursery Units located at primary schools. It is not possible to disaggregate funding distributed to primary schools for Nursery Unit pupils and show a total funding figure allocated under the Common Funding Formula.
- (3) Includes Nursery Unit pupils at Grant Maintained Integrated primary schools (funded through DE).
- (ii) Levels of expenditure across the next three years will reflect the Programme for Government commitment to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it, and will depend upon the number of applications for pre-school places in each ELB area.
- (iii) Enrolments at nursery schools and nursery classes within primary schools, and voluntary and private pre-school providers, during the last five years were as follows:

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	TOTAL
2008/09	3394	3809	4797	4387	4938	21,325
2009/10	3422	3861	4823	4388	4977	21,471
2010/11	3555	3995	5037	4707	5205	22,499
2011/12	3583	4020	5314	4864	5392	23,173
2012/13	3528	3834	4978	4865	5332	22,537*

* This is the number of children placed at the end of the pre-school admissions process in May 2012. Children continued to be placed between May and the beginning of the new school term in September 2012. The final number of children placed in the current school year will not be known until the results of the 2012 school census are published early in 2013.

- (iv) An area by area analysis of predicted demand is not available three years in advance, but an indication of predicted demand can be obtained from live births data on NINIS (NI Neighbourhood Information Service) which indicates that the target age of the pre-school cohort will be 25,403 for the 2014/15 academic year compared to 24,963 for the 2013/14 academic year. This data source does not allow for predictions of demand beyond the 2014/15 cohort of target age children.

An Equal Opportunities Policy for Teachers in Schools (TNC 2009/2)

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education whether the policy of Education and Library Boards, as laid out in An Equal Opportunities Policy for Teachers in Schools (TNC 2009/2), that requires equality of opportunity in all controlled school teacher appointments, irrespective of religious belief, negates Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment Order (NI) 1998 (as amended), which makes it lawful for teachers' employers to take account of an applicant's religious belief and to discriminate accordingly. **(AQW 17409/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The Equal Opportunities Policy for Teachers in Schools (TNC 2009/2) makes specific reference to Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 and notes that it is not unlawful for the employers of school teachers to discriminate on the grounds of religious belief or political opinion in relation to the recruitment of persons as teachers in schools.

Paragraph 2.1 of the policy notes that "Eligibility criteria for all teaching posts will reflect the ethos of the school sector". Those selecting persons for appointment as teachers are therefore required to take this matter into account.

Paragraph 3.1 of the policy records the Board's commitment to "the prevention of unlawful discrimination", the opposition of the Board and the Board of Governors to "all forms of unlawful discrimination" and requires teachers to "be aware of the forms which unlawful discrimination can take, guard against them and avoid any action which might influence others to discriminate unlawfully".

The document must be taken as a whole. It is designed to facilitate the consideration of a school's ethos in the appointment process and does not require persons to avoid actions which are lawful by virtue of Article 71 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998.

The policy in question therefore does not negate Article 71.

School Inspection Reports

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 16828/11-15, how his Department uses school inspection reports to change practice in schools.

(AQW 17415/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) promotes individual school improvement by identifying the most significant strengths and areas for improvement, providing detailed recommendations and through close engagement with senior leaders. The publication of inspection reports enables good practice to be shared. Furthermore, ETI's monitoring of all schools through the work of District Inspectors and Follow-Up Inspections contributes strongly to improvement.

Information from inspection is used to inform the development of policy and to inform the department on the outworkings of its policy. In addition, the ETI promotes school improvement by highlighting areas for improvement in the school system through the Chief Inspectors' Report and in specific survey reports, including those specifically charged to identify good and outstanding practice.

Also, the ETI, in collaboration with the Regional Training Unit organises conferences for principals to showcase good practice from primary and post-primary schools which have recently been inspected. Increasingly the ETI is working with ESaGS TV to record and share good practice.

Curriculum Advisory and Support Service Staff

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education how recent is the classroom and school management experience of the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service staff who were used as associates by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

(AQW 17416/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The classroom and school management experience of the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service staff, who were used as Associate Assessors by the Education Training Inspectorate is individual and personal to each Associate Assessor and therefore it would not be appropriate to disclose it in this forum.

Education and Training Inspectorate

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 16861/11-15 which states that all inspection evidence is treated confidentially, why the Chief Inspector of the Education and Training Inspectorate briefed the press on 17 October 2012 advising that two years ago 33 percent of the managements of secondary schools inspected were not up to standard but now the figure is 39

percent and that the quality of leadership and management in many schools was found by inspection to be not good enough.

(AQW 17417/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chief Inspector of the Education and Training Inspectorate did not release confidential inspection evidence during the press briefing on 17 October 2012. The statistical data which was released as part of the press briefing would not enable the identity of a school or individual to be discovered.

As stated in AQW 16861/11-15, all inspection evidence is treated confidentially and evidence unique to each individual is handled under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Education and Skills Authority Board

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education, given that there is no Youth Service representation on the Education and Skills Authority Board, how he intends the voice of young people to be heard in priorities of youth policy and future policies in this area.

(AQW 17425/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In developing its strategic education policies, the Department recognises the importance of ensuring that the voices of young people are heard.

Before drafting the Priorities for Youth policy, the Department undertook a comprehensive pre-consultation exercise to establish views from within the youth sector and wider educational service. This was done through a variety of means including questionnaires, focus group meetings, street-based consultations, seminars and workshops. Around 4,000 young people directly contributed their views to the pre-consultation.

The current consultation on the Priorities for Youth which is due to close on 10 December 2012 has similarly encouraged the participation of young people through a variety of means. Organisations across the youth sector have engaged widely with young people and I expect a high response rate, both from youth organisations and from young people themselves.

Supporting and promoting participation is at the heart of the Priorities for Youth policy proposals and the Department will continue to engage with young people with regard to the development of future education policies. It is anticipated that the establishment of new participative structures such as the Network for Youth and the proposed Youth Assembly will provide additional means through which the Department can engage with young people on matters that are important to them.

Nursey School Places: Derry City

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education how many children in the Derry City Council area have not received a nursery school place for the 2012/13 academic year; and how many places are still available in that area, broken down by electoral ward.

(AQW 17452/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The pre-school admissions process for the 2012/13 academic year comprised two stages, with the first stage limited to applications from target age children in their immediate pre-school year.

Within the Derry City Council area there were 111 target age children unplaced at the end of the first stage of the process. Applicants were invited to submit further preferences at Stage 2 of the process, and 57 chose to do so, all of whom were placed at the conclusion of the process.

In the period that has elapsed since the process concluded Western Education and Library Board records indicate that 16 target age children remain unplaced. These are children of parents who either did not engage fully with both stages of the process or whose applications were submitted after the deadlines which apply to the process.

Education and Training Inspectorate: Cambridge House Grammar School

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education when the latest Education and Training Inspectorate report on Cambridge House Grammar School will be published; and what has caused the delay in publication.
(AQW 17465/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The latest Education and Training Inspectorate report on Cambridge House Grammar School was published on Tuesday 4 December 2012.

The main findings of the inspection were shared with the school's management and Board of Governors at the end of the inspection. There is no definitive publication deadline for follow-up inspection reports. However, publication of this report was in line with the time allowed for standard inspection reports.

Education and Skills Authority Board

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to detail the processes which will be used to make the final decisions on appointing the Chairperson and four board members of the Education and Skills Authority Board.
(AQW 17485/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The arrangements for appointing the ESA Chair and four members representative of the community are currently being taken forward in compliance with the Commissioner for Public Appointment's Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments.

The posts have been advertised and applicants are asked to demonstrate that they possess the essential knowledge, experience and skills required. Following the application and interview stages, the selection panel will provide me with a list of those candidates recommended as suitable for appointment. Together with a summary providing an objective analysis of each candidate's skills and experience based on the information provided by each candidate during the appointment round. I will decide who should be appointed with the purpose of achieving the best mix of skills and experience for the board.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the total level of resources returned by his Department to the Department of Finance and Personnel since May 2011.
(AQW 17502/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The only amount my Department has returned to Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) since May 2011 was £10.5 million of budget cover in the January 2012 monitoring round relating to the drawdown of schools surplus funds.

Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the total costs of the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment over each of the last 5 years.
(AQW 17512/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The detail of the total costs of the Council for Curriculum Examination and Assessment over each of the last 5 years are set out in the table below:

CCEA ANNUAL RECURRENT EXPENDITURE

Financial Year	Gross Expenditure	Earned Income	Net Expenditure
	£000s	£000s	£000s
2007/08	30,242	8,565	21,677
2008/09	30,384	9,133	21,251

Financial Year	Gross Expenditure	Earned Income	Net Expenditure
	£000s	£000s	£000s
2009/10	31,272	9,402	21,870
2010/11	27,822	9,569	18,253
2011/12	31,493	10,045	21,448

Note 1: The gross expenditure figures exclude capital expenditure.

Note 2: The above figures are from the CCEA audited annual report and accounts, available on their website.

Enrolment Process for Pre-school Places

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW16662/11-15, how many additional places have been secured by each Education and Library Board in advance of this year's enrolment process. **(AQW 17513/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The table below shows the number of pre-school places secured at statutory and non-statutory pre-school settings in advance of the admissions process commencing for 2012/13 and 2013/14.

Increases at statutory settings arise through the approval of development proposals brought forward by Education and Library Boards, whilst increases at non-statutory settings arise from decisions made by Pre-School Education Advisory Groups within Education and Library Boards.

	BELB	WELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	Total
2012/13	3,559	3,995	5,296	4,970	5,466	23,286
2013/14	3,586	4,044	5,375	5,045	5,827	23,877
Increase	27	49	79	75	361	591

Once the process commences the number of places secured may vary through either of these two decision making processes.

Review of GCSEs and A levels

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to outline the timetable for the review of GCSEs and A levels; and when it is anticipated that the first set of pupils will commence any revised examination syllabus. **(AQW 17514/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: As I announced in the Assembly on 1 October 2012, CCEA has been tasked to undertake the review of A Levels and GCSEs and to set-up a Steering Group consisting of key stakeholders from schools, Further Education and Higher Education sectors and employers. CCEA will produce 2 interim reports in January 2013 and March 2013 respectively, with a final report due in June 2013.

I will consider the findings in the final report and make decisions in the best interests of our young people. Until then I will not speculate on what, if any, changes may be made to our examinations system.

Irish Medium Team in CCEA

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW16939/11-15, why the costs associated with the Direct Support team have increased in the last three years. **(AQW 17515/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: In 2009, the Department initiated a programme by which CCEA was tasked with significantly increasing the availability of curriculum support materials for the Irish Medium sector and specifically to address recommendations 15 and 16 of the Review of Irish-Medium Education Report.

This has enhanced the availability of curriculum support materials for the Irish-Medium sector, thereby significantly increasing expenditure.

Irish Medium Team in CCEA

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW16939/11-15, for a breakdown of the costs associated with the Direct Support team in each of the last three years.

(AQW 17516/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10
IM Team Cost - Breakdown:	Cost £	Cost £	Cost £
Staff Salaries inc Employer Costs	398,671.05	370,247.72	250,232.96
Staff Mileage and Other Travel Expenses	7,067.18	8,428.06	7,977.33
Temporary Staff inc Employer Costs	39,293.29	1,556.23	0.00
Stationery & Misc Office Expenses	2,499.40	4,193.14	501.62
Total Team Cost	447,530.92	384,425.15	258,711.91

Note 1: Average Salaried Staff in Post for Year: 2011/12 - 9.8, 2010/11 - 8.9, 2009/10 - 5.8

Note 2: As with response to original AQW 16939/11-15 costs are for the direct team costs and do not include the cost of any materials that were produced e.g. the production/print cost of support materials.

Children: Religious Backgrounds

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Education for a breakdown of the number of children from each religious background in (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools in each council area.

(AQW 17537/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is provided in the tables below.

RELIGION OF CHILDREN IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS BY DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA, 2011/12

Council Area	Protestant	Catholic	Other Christian	non-Christian	no religion/ religion not stated	Total
Antrim	1,845	2,474	166	32	688	5,205
Ards	3,959	764	234	50	1,216	6,223
Armagh	2,315	3,079	101	9	310	5,814
Ballymena	3,411	1,420	155	20	594	5,600
Ballymoney	1,399	1,051	#	*	213	2,730
Banbridge	2,824	1,556	90	15	322	4,807
Belfast	7,381	12,959	798	485	2,790	24,413
Carrickfergus	2,225	243	238	9	755	3,470

Council Area	Protestant	Catholic	Other Christian	non-Christian	no religion/ religion not stated	Total
Castlereagh	2,722	1,660	230	56	1,053	5,721
Coleraine	2,548	1,374	175	23	753	4,873
Cookstown	1,059	2,343	55	6	200	3,663
Craigavon	3,107	4,743	264	76	957	9,147
Derry	1,747	9,075	137	84	331	11,374
Down	1,412	4,400	119	11	501	6,443
Dungannon	1,440	4,051	105	13	178	5,787
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	1,805	3,547	100	14	212	5,678
Larne	1,306	646	#	*	392	2,441
Limavady	883	1,887	#	*	111	2,913
Lisburn	4,365	4,191	392	56	1,390	10,394
Magherafelt	919	3,251	#	*	101	4,340
Moyle	401	1,006	#	*	91	1,522
Newry And Mourne	1,102	8,773	74	30	198	10,177
Newtownabbey	3,930	1,508	310	57	1,080	6,885
North Down	3,150	834	416	56	1,728	6,184
Omagh	1,049	3,861	43	11	180	5,144
Strabane	854	2,813	#	*	168	3,864
Total	59,158	83,509	4,202	1,113	16,512	164,812

RELIGION OF CHILDREN IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS BY DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA, 2011/12

Council Area	Protestant	Catholic	Other Christian	non-Christian	no religion/ religion not stated	Total
Antrim	1,189	609	69	9	232	2,108
Ards	2,475	378	186	20	646	3,705
Armagh	1,552	3,249	44	13	105	4,963
Ballymena	3,563	1,798	126	18	540	6,045
Ballymoney	1,201	271	#	*	174	1,736
Banbridge	2,851	815	114	15	266	4,061
Belfast	9,646	16,173	801	235	2,729	29,584

Council Area	Protestant	Catholic	Other Christian	non-Christian	no religion/ religion not stated	Total
Carrickfergus	1,873	208	190	9	555	2,835
Castlereagh	1,537	1,712	105	28	532	3,914
Coleraine	1,971	1,795	161	22	406	4,355
Cookstown	727	856	8	5	157	1,753
Craigavon	3,179	3,124	217	45	253	6,818
Derry	1,583	8,626	61	48	152	10,470
Down	1,652	4,566	68	10	350	6,646
Dungannon	1,558	4,102	114	11	145	5,930
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	1,588	3,291	91	20	159	5,149
Larne	1,084	876	#	*	79	2,076
Limavady	1,160	1,397	28	8	102	2,695
Lisburn	3,509	1,393	182	22	513	5,619
Magherafelt	1,179	4,494	116	5	68	5,862
Moyle	709	796	#	*	87	1,624
Newry And Mourne	1,127	8,443	48	23	64	9,705
Newtownabbey	4,039	695	320	26	534	5,614
North Down	3,697	550	448	34	839	5,568
Omagh	1,205	3,771	70	8	83	5,137
Strabane	823	1,903	11	9	29	2,775
Total	56,677	75,891	3,578	643	9,799	146,747

Source: school census.

Note:

- 1 Based on school location.
 - 2 Figures for primary schools include children in nursery, reception and Year 1 – 7 classes.
- '*' relates to fewer than 5 cases.
- '#' means a figure ≥ 5 has been treated to prevent disclosure of a small number elsewhere.

Special Educational Needs Provision

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education how many blind and partially sighted pupils are based in special educational needs provision.

(AQW 17551/11-15)

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

Special schools and learning support centres - Pupils who are recorded as being blind or partially sighted in special schools and learning support centres, 2011/12

Need type	Total pupils
Blind	25
Partially sighted	147
Total	172

Source: school census

Note:

- 1 Figures above include pupils enrolled attending special schools and learning support centres in primary and post primary schools.
- 2 Figures relate to pupils at Stage 1 – 5 on the Special Education Needs Code of Practice.

Department for Employment and Learning

European Language

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what plans he has to increase the number of night-time classes for learning a European language.

(AQW 17019/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): My Department sets high level targets in respect of the curriculum to be delivered by the further education sector, and agrees broad targets with individual colleges through the annual college development planning process.

Colleges offer a wide range of economically focused provision, tailored to meet both regional and local needs. Decisions on whether specific courses are run are driven by the level of demand locally and it is the responsibility of individual colleges to meet the needs of learners and employers in their areas in a cost effective way that ensures best use of public money.

Further Education Colleges currently offer an extensive range of language courses as part of their curriculum provision. These courses are proactively marketed by Colleges using their websites and prospectuses and by active use of a variety of social media.

Colleges also currently engage in marketing language provision to a variety of external businesses, employers and partners.

Universities are independent autonomous institutions responsible for their own policies and procedures, including course provision. My officials contacted Queen's University and the University of Ulster to request details of current night-time European language classes. Their responses are attached at Annex A.

ANNEX A

THE UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

SCHOOL OF MODERN LANGUAGES

The School of Modern Languages provides the following night provision for European languages:

Semester 1 of AY 2012/13:

- Belfast campus – 2 hours per week – “Preliminary and Intermediate French for the Workplace”. Course duration: 12 weeks. Total credit points - 25

- Out centre teaching (in industry) – 4 hours per week (2 parallel groups) – “Preliminary French for Business”. Course duration: 15 weeks - Total credit points - 15
- Out centre teaching (in industry) – 2 hours per week – “Preliminary Chinese for Business”. Course duration: 10 weeks. Total credit points - 10

Semester 2 of AY 2012/13:

- Belfast campus – 2 hours per week – “Intermediate German for the Workplace”. Course duration: 12 weeks. Total credit points - 30
- Belfast campus – 2 hours per week – “Intermediate and Advanced French for the Workplace”. Course duration: 12 weeks. Total credit points - 35
- Out centre teaching (in industry) – 4 hours per week (2 parallel groups) – “Preliminary French for Business”. Course duration: 15 weeks. Total credit points - 15
- Magee campus – 2 hours per week – “Intermediate English language” (for migrant workers). Course duration: 8 weeks. Total credit points - 20
- Belfast campus – 2 hours per week – “Preliminary Chinese”. Course duration: 12 weeks. Total credit points - 15
- Out centre teaching (in industry) – 2 hours per week – “Preliminary Chinese for Business”. Course duration: 10 weeks. Total credit points - 10

Additional provision (semester 1 of AY 2013/14):

- Belfast campus – 2 hours per week – “Preliminary Spanish for the Workplace”. Course duration: 12 weeks. Total credit points - 25
- Belfast campus – 2 hours per week – “Intermediate English language” (for migrant workers). Course duration: 8 weeks. Total credit points – 20
- Magee campus – 2 hours per week – “Advanced English language” (for migrant workers). Course duration: 8 weeks. Total credit points - 25

Each of these courses are accredited on the University’s Certificate of Personal and Professional Development

SCHOOL OF IRISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The School of Irish Language and Literature provides the following night provision for Irish language:

Diploma in Irish Language (part-time)

This is a two year course in which students take 3 modules (60 Credit Points in total) each year focusing on Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

Classes are held at each campus / outreach centre for 12 weeks in Semester 1 (starting last week in September) and 12 weeks in Semester 2 (starting last week in January).

1 University Campuses

- a University of Ulster, Magee Campus
Year 1 & Year 2 (Monday & Wednesday, 6.00-8.30pm)
- b University of Ulster, Belfast Campus
Year 1 & Year 2 (Monday & Wednesday, 6.00-8.30pm)

2 Outreach Centres

- a Cookstown, Burnavon Arts Centre
Year 1 (Monday & Wednesday, 6.00-8.30pm)

* Inaugural year of this course – Years 1 & 2 will run here next year.

- b Southern Regional College, Newry (validated course)
 Year 1 (Monday & Wednesday, 6.30-9.00pm)
 Year 2 (Tuesday & Thursday, 6.30-9.00pm)

BA (HONS) IRISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (PART-TIME)

This is a five year course in which students take 4 modules (80 Credit Points in total) each year focusing on aspects on language proficiency and literary appreciation.

Classes are held at each campus / outreach centre for 12 weeks in Semester 1 (starting last week in September) and 12 weeks in Semester 2 (starting last week in January).

Successful completion of the Diploma in Irish Language enables students to enter Year 2 of this course.

- 1 University Campus
 - a University of Ulster, Belfast Campus
Years 2-5 (Tuesday, 5.30-9.30pm)
- 2 Outreach Centre
 - a Letterkenny Institute of Technology, Co. Donegal
Years 2-5 (Monday, 5.30-9.30pm)

* The Magee course is delivered at LYIT to accommodate students from Donegal Gaeltacht communities.

Queen's University Belfast

Queen's Open Learning division, within the School of Education, offers an extensive range of part-time evening classes in European language courses, as well as Arabic, Classical Greek, Latin and Mandarin Chinese (some 48 classes in total). Most courses are run over 20 weeks but the University also offers shorter Holiday courses – classes designed to give people the basics or the opportunity to refresh a language.

In addition, Queen's Language Centre runs subsidised evening classes for students through the 'Languages for Non Specialists' programme. Members of the public may enroll on these courses (paying the full cost) but they are designed for students. We currently hold 63 classes per week in 17 different languages. While seven of these classes are held on Wednesday afternoons, the remaining 56 classes are held between 5.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. Monday – Thursday.

Languages currently being taught through the Language Centre for the 2012-13 academic year are: Arabic, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Portuguese (Brazilian), Russian, Sign Language, Spanish and Swedish.

Training for Success

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many young people have taken part in Training for Success schemes since its inception.

(AQW 17073/11-15)

Dr Farry: Records show the following starts across academic years since the inception of the Training for Success (TfS) programme in September 2007:

2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
8,287	5,316	5,931	6,014	6,038	4,823

The 2007/2008 figure includes 4,243 employed apprentices but this provision was subsequently re-branded as the ApprenticeshipsNI programme in September 2008. Therefore, subsequent years exclude employed apprentices.

Programme-Led Apprenticeships (PLAs) were introduced under TfS in September 2009 in light of the difficulties being experienced by many young people in securing an apprenticeship through employment. Recruitment to pre-apprenticeships offered under TfS ceased following the introduction of PLAs.

The 2012/2013 figure shows starts up to the 26 November 2012.

Unemployment

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many 16-18 year olds are currently unemployed and not taking part in training schemes.

(AQW 17074/11-15)

Dr Farry: Provision for 16-18 year olds includes school; further education, work-based training, an apprenticeship programme, and higher education. Some young people will also be in employment. Young people participating on training programmes and most other provision are ineligible to claim Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) which is an unemployment-related benefit, and those young people who are aged under 18 and not on a training programme are only able to claim JSA in exceptional circumstances, such as where they are involuntarily living independently. There are therefore very few young people aged 16-17 claiming JSA and thus classified as unemployed.

The numbers of 16, 17, and 18 year olds claiming JSA in Northern Ireland in October 2012, and thus not availing of training or other provision, is shown in the table below.

Information is also available from NISRA from the Labour Force Survey for those 16-19 year olds not in education, full-time education, or training (NEET). The most recent estimate of the number in this category for Northern Ireland is 14,000. This relates to Quarter 3 2012, and is subject to sampling error.

NUMBER OF 16-18 YEAR OLDS IN NORTHERN IRELAND CLAIMING JOBSEEKER'S ALLOWANCE, OCTOBER 2012

	Age			
	16	17	18	16-18
Number*	5	45	1,950	2,000

* all figures rounded to the nearest 5

Source: NOMIS, Office for National Statistics

Invest_NI

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, in addition to the event in conjunction with Invest NI, which was requested by the MP for East Londonderry, scheduled to be held in the Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre on Thursday 29 November 2012, what other measures are in place to assist young unemployed people in the Limavady area.

(AQW 17104/11-15)

Dr Farry: Addressing youth unemployment, in all areas of Northern Ireland including the Limavady area, is a priority.

Steps to Work is the Department's main return to work provision and in the Limavady area 276 young people are currently availing of this programme. This is a flexible programme which tailors provision to the individual's need with the aim of assisting participants to find and sustain employment.

The Department's Pathways to Work programme assists people with health conditions and disabilities move into employment and presently 44 young people in the Limavady area are involved in this programme.

In the period April to October 2012 my Department helped 190 young people move from welfare to work in Limavady (the area served by Limavady Jobs and Benefits Office). This is 12% above target for the area during this period. (The target for Limavady was 169).

My Department is also implementing the Youth Employment Scheme (YES) which was agreed by the Executive in March. The Scheme aims to help young people gain experience, acquire new skills and find employment and the Department is actively working with employers to secure as many opportunities, as quickly as possible across Northern Ireland. Some opportunities under YES are already available in Limavady and I expect more to be available in the coming months.

As part of the Jobs and Economy Initiative announced by the Executive, my Department has also recently implemented a new youth employment initiative within the Steps to Work programme called 'First Start'. Between October 2012 and March 2014, First Start will support 1,700 waged employment opportunities, each lasting a minimum of six months, for young people aged 18 to 24 who have been in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance for at least six months. First Start opportunities will be available in Limavady area in the coming months.

Agency Workers Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he has any plans to review the Agency Workers Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 to ensure that companies which provide agency staff cannot demand that employees waive their rights under section 5 to prevent that company applying parity of rights with the hiring company.

(AQW 17121/11-15)

Dr Farry: I can confirm that my Department will be carrying out a review of the operation of the 2011 Agency Workers Regulations commencing early in 2013. My officials are currently finalising terms of reference for a research project which will provide the evidence base for that review. It is intended that the research will cover the following issues: regulatory impact of the regulations; levels of awareness; the extent of compliance by agencies and hirers in providing access to the rights available under the regulations; and an assessment of whether there has been any under/over provision of rights.

Further Education Colleges

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the change of status of further education colleges to non-departmental public bodies; and whether this change will impact on his Department's policies.

(AQW 17126/11-15)

Dr Farry: Further education colleges became Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) with effect from April 2012. A formal project has been established to oversee this programme of change, and a Project Initiation Document (PID) has been produced and signed off by the Project Board, which includes representatives from the Department and the FE sector. The PID, which phases the implementation to minimise delivery risks to colleges and the Department, has been shared with the Department of Finance and Personnel.

There are five main project strands. These are budgeting and financial monitoring, colleges' statutory accounts, governance issues, FE operational policies, and legal issues. Of these, the only strand that had to be operational from April 2012 was the budgeting and financial monitoring strand.

The Department has worked closely with FE colleges' finance teams to establish processes through which colleges can comply with financial and budget monitoring procedures that are in line with Northern Ireland Civil Service requirements and timescales. The other strands of work are also progressing, but within slightly less challenging timescales.

While the move to NDPB status is a very complex and detailed programme of work, the change is, largely, technical in nature. However, as NDPBs, FE colleges will continue to be responsible for delivering further education provision in Northern Ireland in a way that meets the strategic direction that I and my Department set for the FE sector. This includes the services that colleges provide to individual

learners and to employers. Therefore, I do not envisage the change to NDPB status having an impact on my Department's policies for the sector.

Finally, the Department does have the option of reviewing the situation, although any future decision to have our colleges classified as private organisations would require changes to the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, and a public consultation. However, I am minded to consult on this matter.

Further Education Colleges

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what checks and balances for further education colleges exist within his Department; and what steps he is taking to reduce the regulatory burden on these colleges.

(AQW 17127/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, which is the legislation under which further education colleges operate, provides for checks and balances between the college governing bodies and the Department.

There are a number of documents that determine the Department's oversight of further education colleges. In addition to the FE Order, these include Instruments and Articles of Government, the Financial Memorandum, the Code of Guidance on Audit, the Guide for Governors and the Code of Governance. Compliance monitoring is carried out by several bodies including the college internal auditors, external audit by the Northern Ireland Audit Office, and the Financial Audit and Support Team which is internal to the Department. In addition, the colleges are required to send various returns to the Department throughout the year including quarterly financial monitoring returns, quarterly consultancy returns, monthly budget monitoring returns, the annual report and financial statements, and internal and external audit reports.

Each college is also required, by legislation, to submit a College Development Plan to the Department which should contain details of the college's operations for the coming year including the courses to be provided and an estimate of expenditure. The Department will then meet formally with each college to agree the level of provision and the associated funding that will be provided.

All of the above is supplemented by departmental attendance at college governing body audit committee meetings and the review of minutes from all college governing body meetings by departmental officials.

Finally, the principal of each college is designated by the Department's Permanent Secretary as college Accounting Officer, with the responsibility for the effective stewardship of public funds, and an annual Accountability Review is held with each principal by the Permanent Secretary in his capacity as Accounting Officer to review their discharge of these responsibilities.

Many of the above arrangements reflect Public Accounts Committee recommendations contained within the report entitled 'Report on the Review of Financial Management in the Further Education Sector in Northern Ireland and Governance Examination of Fermanagh FE College', published in June 2009, in which the Department was required to strengthen its oversight and scrutiny role of colleges. Therefore, currently I have no plans to reduce the level of scrutiny that the Department exercises over further education colleges, which has been developed to comply with best practice in governance and risk management. Furthermore, based upon a later decision by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) that the colleges of further education in Northern Ireland constituted public sector bodies, DFP determined that the colleges should be administered as Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) from April 2012. There is, therefore, no scope to reduce the present level of regulation on the colleges. The oversight detailed above is the minimum which would be considered appropriate in respect on an NDPB.

Further Education Colleges

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he will arrange for a formal acknowledgement of the level of skills being demonstrated at Further Education Colleges, and

particularly the achievement of William Falconer of the North West Regional College, Limavady who recently won Gold in the Worldskills UK Final.

(AQW 17218/11-15)

Dr Farry: Northern Ireland's superb performance of achieving 16 medals at the Worldskills UK final in Birmingham, and 10 at the Skillbuild competition in Preston, is a true mark of excellence in our further education colleges and training organisations. This represented an outstanding achievement, not only for the young people themselves, but also for their families, employers and tutors who supported them throughout their training and the competitions. I had the pleasure of supporting our competitors at the Worldskills UK final, and have duly formally congratulated all our winners, from both events, in my recent press release of 27 November. I also intend to take part in a future celebration event for all our trainees, their families and tutors.

Wordskills Competition

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how he plans to build on the success of Northern Ireland as the region of the UK with the highest representation at the recent Wordskills competition in Birmingham.

(AQW 17219/11-15)

Dr Farry: This is a very significant and very highly commendable achievement for Northern Ireland and for all those involved. I am fully committed to building on this and previous significant Northern Ireland successes by continuing to support and develop high quality skills provision for our trainees, encouraging and supporting enhanced participation and achievement in skills competitions in Northern Ireland, supporting higher skilling and development for prospective WorldSkills competitors, and supporting competitors travelling to UK finals. Northern Ireland trainees should be given the best opportunity to compete at college and regional level, and exceptionally talented trainees should continue to progress to UK, European and World level both now and in future years.

Electricity Costs

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail his Department's electricity costs in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 17293/11-15)

Dr Farry: The electricity costs for the Department for Employment and Learning in each of the last three financial years is detailed below:

2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
£146,777	£124,292	£160,526

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Credit Unions

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans her Department has to increase the lending powers of Credit Unions.

(AQW 16868/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): My Department is currently in the process of scoping out new legislative provisions in relation to Northern Ireland Credit Unions with the aim of aligning Northern Ireland Credit Union legislation with that of GB. It is intended that these proposed legislative provisions will provide new opportunities and greater clarity for the Northern Ireland Credit Union sector and may include provisions to extend the lending powers of credit unions by permitting the admission of corporate bodies to membership.

The new Bill is scheduled for passage through the Assembly in the 2013/2014 legislative session. The draft policy proposals will be subject to the full statutory consultation process in Spring 2013 with the aim of introducing the Bill in the Assembly in late 2013.

Tourism: South Armagh

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) what action her Department has taken to promote the tourism potential of the South Armagh area; and (ii) how much money has been put into the development of the area since May 2007, given its tourism potential and prime location as a tourist destination.

(AQW 16949/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

(i)

Northern Ireland Tourist Board:

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

Tourism Ireland:

Tourism Ireland features South Armagh as part of its extensive global destination marketing programme. The aim is to raise awareness of, and interest in, this region as a holiday destination, focusing on a variety of things to see and do in the area.

For example, Tourism Ireland, working closely with NITB, invites overseas tour operators and journalists to visit Northern Ireland and experience for themselves the tourism product on offer with the aim that on their return, the tour operators will include Northern Ireland in their programmes and itineraries and journalists will generate positive publicity for Northern Ireland through the articles they write. For example, in July, an Italian journalist travelled to South Armagh at Tourism Ireland's invitation.

Christian Heritage was identified as one of the five NITB signature projects and in this context, Tourism Ireland promotes the St Patricks Trail and the rich Christian heritage of Co. Armagh in key markets overseas.

Tourism Ireland includes information on South Armagh and St Patrick's Trail across its suite of 42 international websites in 14 different languages and this region is also featured in Tourism Ireland's e-zines and newsletters which are sent out regularly to top travel trade, media contacts and to consumers overseas. In March, ten Italian tour operators specialising in religious tourism visited Armagh to discover its rich Christian heritage.

(ii)

Tourism Development Scheme:

Through the Tourism Development Scheme (TDS) 2008 – 2011, NITB received 1 application from the South Armagh area. This application was unsuccessful. Through the 2011 – 2013 TDS scheme, 1 application has been received from the South Armagh area which is currently on the Reserve List.

Tourism Events Fund:

1 application was received since 2007 from the South Armagh area through the Events Fund. This application was successful although the applicant declined the offer.

Tourism Innovation Fund:

Over the same period NITB received no applications from the South Armagh area for support through the Tourism Innovation Fund.

Other:

In 2007-2008 through the International Fund for Ireland, NITB provided grant of £108,994 from total project costs of £206,723 to Armagh & Down Regional Tourism Partnership for marketing support for the wider Armagh/Down region which includes South Armagh.

More recently South Armagh has benefited from the St Patrick's Trail which runs through the area from Newry to Armagh. The Ring of Gullion area has also been identified by Newry & Mourne District Council as part of the overall Mournes Destination. The existing Mournes Destination Plan 2011 – 2013 is currently being revised with a view to a spring launch. NITB has also been supportive of the Mourne-Cooley-Gullion Geopark initiative currently underway in the area.

NITB commissioned a ni2012 herd of cows that travelled to towns and cities to showcase different regions. In August 2012 the herd was moved to Slieve Gullion Adventure Park. Updated statistics are currently being produced, but ni2012 Cow Parade activity has generated huge engagement and interaction on social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. This led to the activity being viewed by up to 45,000 people within the first few weeks alone.

Invest NI

Ms Fearon asked Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what actions her Department and InvestNI have taken to encourage (i) investment; and (ii) job creation in the Newry area.

(AQW 16950/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The products, services and support available to both new and existing businesses of all sizes are extensively promoted through a range of channels, including advertising campaigns such as Boosting Business and Go For It, direct marketing, social media, events, workshops and seminars which cover the Newry area and all regions of Northern Ireland.

During the last 5 years, 1,003 offers of support were made to Invest NI Clients in the Newry & Mourne District Council area. This comprised of almost £40million of assistance, which contributed towards a total planned investment of £317million creating 2,803 new jobs.

In the last year 166 potential entrepreneurs from the Newry and Mourne District Council Area received advice from Invest NI's Newry Office. This culminated in 61 business start up plans being completed during the period. The new Regional Start Initiative has recently commenced in the area. This is focussed on encouraging potential entrepreneurs to produce a business plan as a key early step to starting a business.

In the last year, 231 people contacted Invest NI's Boosting Business helpline from the Newry and Mourne District Council area. From these, 70 referrals were made to other Invest NI teams for further action.

In addition, there are currently 10 Jobs Fund business investment projects which should lead to the creation of 64 new jobs, 31 of which have already been created.

Invest NI is keen to build on previous Foreign Direct Investment success and facilitated 13 potential investor visits to the Newry area in the last 4 years. During which these potential investors chose to visit the likes of Drumalane Mill, the Southern Regional College and existing investors within the same sector.

Invest NI has also been working with Newry and Mourne District Council and the South East Economic Development group of Councils (SEED) on a range of new business development initiatives under the LED Measure. ERDF and Invest NI support for these programmes totals over £1.3million, contributing towards a total cost of £1.9million.

Executive's Economy and Jobs Initiative

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) how the £5.7 million for tourism announced in the Executive's Economy and Jobs initiative will be allocated; and (ii) whether any of the funding will be spent on tourism in the Glens.

(AQW 16959/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) The £5.7 million capital secured through the Executive's Economy and Jobs Initiative will be allocated to shortlisted and reserve projects listed through the last Tourism Development Scheme open call. These projects will now proceed to the next stage of assessment. If successful in demonstrating economic viability and sustainability, value for money and ability to support the delivery of key tourism priorities, these projects will proceed subject to confirmation of the availability of sufficient match funding and relevant statutory approvals etc.
- (ii) I can confirm that 1 shortlisted project and 1 project on the reserve list from the East Antrim Constituency will proceed to Stage 2 assessment.

Off-Shore Energy

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how she plans to ensure that supply chain opportunities associated with the proposed development of off-shore energy can be utilised by local communities and businesses in South Down.

(AQW 16991/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The supply chain opportunities associated with the development of offshore energy projects in Northern Ireland coastal waters will evolve through the various stages of consenting, design, manufacture, installation and deployment over the next 8 years.

Invest NI has met with all developers in the Irish Sea region, including First Flight Wind, to present the capability of Northern Ireland companies to be part of their supply chains. Local companies are gaining success with, for example, Anglo North Irish Offshore Energy Services in Kilkeel, having recently secured new business with DONG Energy.

Invest NI is encouraging companies to engage with the developers as early as possible to understand the opportunities and how they can access the various contracts that will be available. First Flight Wind, for example, has already held public consultations with local communities through information seminars in Newcastle, Kilkeel, Ardglass, Portavogie and Downpatrick.

Invest NI is working pro-actively with local businesses to develop collaborations to access potential opportunities and is currently supporting a number of businesses in South Down to scope out the supply chain opportunities in the Offshore Energy Market. In addition Newry and Mourne Council have taken the lead on behalf of the South Eastern Economic Development council area to develop a programme, with assistance from Invest NI, to promote opportunities in renewable energy sector to local businesses in the area over the next three years.

Natural Gas Distribution Licence

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 15974/11-15, for her Department's assessment of the pace of expansion of the gas distribution network, particularly for private housing estates in urban areas; and (ii) whether her Department has considered initiating measures which would bring more competition into the development of the gas distribution network.

(AQW 16996/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) There are two companies operating gas distribution networks within Northern Ireland, namely Phoenix Natural Gas Ltd in the Greater Belfast licensed area, and firmus energy in the "10 towns" licensed area outside Greater Belfast. The Utility Regulator has confirmed that the development

of the gas distribution networks in each area is in accordance with the respective licences for each company, and the growth of the networks is as contained within the company's annual development plans which are agreed with the Regulator. The Utility Regulator advises that it will work closely with all licence holders and will consider carefully all options presented to expand or develop the existing areas, where it is economic to do so.

- (ii) firmus energy and Phoenix Natural Gas Ltd's gas distribution licenses are still in a period referred to as 'exclusivity' which for firmus will last until 2025 and Phoenix until 2016. This means that further development of the gas distribution networks by other interested parties is not feasible at this stage.

Regional Start Initiative

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) how the Regional Start Initiative can help encourage economic recovery in South Down; and (ii) what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that the initiative will be successful.

(AQW 17033/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest Northern Ireland continues to offer a wide range of support to encourage the growth and development of the small business sector both in South Down and across Northern Ireland.

Regional Start (RS) is designed to support locally focused entrepreneurs into self employment. RS is set in the context of Invest NI's work with local Councils and the widest possible business base.

Following a successful tender competition, Enterprise Northern Ireland (ENI) has been awarded the contracts for the RS which commenced in October 2012. RS is focussed on encouraging potential entrepreneurs to produce a business plan as one of the key early steps to starting a business and moving into self employment. Invest NI's intention is that this business plan will provide a template for the new entrepreneur to plan and access sources of funds for the business.

The ENI target for business plan approvals for the Southern Region is 1,280 over the 2 year period of the contract. The performance of ENI in the delivery of RS against the agreed targets is subject to a monthly review with Invest NI.

In addition business start grants are available for people who are resident in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRA) and for disadvantaged young people who are not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETS) who complete a business plan through RS and then go on to start a business. Both of these grants are administered by Invest NI.

Angling Tourism

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) what funding is available for investment in angling tourism; and (ii) whether her Department has given any consideration to the potential of enhancing angling tourism in South Down.

(AQW 17035/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

(i)

My Department, through the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), offers capital investment through the Tourism Development Scheme (TDS) and promotional & marketing support through the Tourism Events Fund. Both schemes are currently closed to applications.

(ii)

Tourism Ireland:

Tourism Ireland promotes angling tourism in key markets overseas, particularly in markets such as GB, Germany and the Netherlands, through major angling fairs such as VISMA, Rotterdam, Jagen & Fischen,

Augsburg, Utrecht Angling Fair, "The Big One" in GB and Angeln in Duisberg. Should angling providers be interested in participating in overseas promotions with Tourism Ireland, we would suggest that they visit and register on <http://www.tourismireland.com/industryopportunities.html>

Northern Ireland Tourist Board:

NITB is responsible for promoting Northern Ireland to the domestic and Republic of Ireland markets. Within these markets angling has not been designated as a priority. The majority of domestic anglers are members of angling clubs and do not require information from NITB.

Although demand has decreased, angling remains an important product and NITB is working closely with destinations in developing plans to optimise their tourism potential and many of these (e.g. Fermanagh) have identified that angling is a key component of their tourism offering.

NITB works closely with Tourism Ireland to host press trips for angling journalists and liaises with the many government agencies that have responsibility for angling, to ensure that the key links are available on www.discovernorthernireland.com/angling to provide the prospective angler with relevant accurate information. NITB can offer support in promoting events and activities that are 'tourism focused' on www.discovernorthernireland.com.

My Department is also working with the World Police and Fire Games Company to promote Northern Ireland tourism to the competitors and spectators of the Games, which include freshwater and sea angling.

NITB liaises with Department of Culture and Leisure (DCAL) and The Loughs Agency who have direct responsibility for Northern Ireland's angling product.

Tourism Development Scheme

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) how local people can benefit from the Tourism Development Scheme; (ii) whether additional funding will be made available in 2012/13 and 2013/14; and (iii) whether the scheme is still open to new applicants.

(AQW 17036/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) The visitor economy directly supports 5.6% of Northern Ireland's total workforce or 1 in 18 jobs and sustains 40,000 jobs. These people are employed in every constituency and at every skill level. The Northern Ireland Executive has announced an extra £5.7million of funding will go to the Tourism Development Scheme which could deliver total investment of over £27.5million. It is estimated that this additional investment will support over 450 jobs in the construction phase and create or sustain 50 tourism jobs once complete. Local people can also benefit from improvements made to visitor attractions in Northern Ireland through the Tourism Development Scheme.
- (ii) Additional budget has now been made available from the Northern Ireland Executive through the Economy and Jobs Initiative. This availability of additional financial assistance for both the 2013-14 and 2014-15 financial years will enable shortlisted projects and those on the reserve list to proceed to the next stage of assessment. If successful in demonstrating economic viability and sustainability, value for money and ability to support the delivery of key tourism priorities, these projects will proceed subject to confirmation of the availability of sufficient match funding and relevant statutory approvals etc.

Those affected projects on both the shortlist and reserve lists have been issued with letters requesting an urgent project update in 2 respects (i) confirmation of whether they wish to proceed with their application; and (ii) request for completion of a business plan for their proposed project. Those project promoters who submit relevant information as requested will be progressed as soon as possible to full economic appraisal.

- (iii) The most recent call for Tourism Development Scheme applications closed for new applicants on 6 January 2012. There are no current plans to open the scheme for new applicants.

G8 Summit

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how she intends to meet the potential demands on the hospitality sector, and other sectors, arising from the G8 Summit being held in Enniskillen.

(AQW 17057/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The G8 Summit will give the tourism industry here another immense opportunity to shine. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Tourism Ireland Limited will work to support the industry in the area and to ensure we maximise the opportunity to promote Fermanagh and Northern Ireland as a world class destination, not only to world leaders but also to the international media.

Invest NI will continue to engage with and support businesses to ensure they remain competitive and can handle the expected demand for the services of the sector before and during the G8 meeting. Informal discussions have already been held with a number of accommodation businesses in the area in order to assess the state of preparation of businesses in advance of the visit.

My Department has already engaged with telecoms providers to explore the available options for improving services at the Lough Erne Resort.

It is important to ensure that Northern Ireland's economy benefits from the G8 Summit. We will work closely with the G8 organisers so that we rise to the challenge.

Small-to-Medium Sized Local Businesses

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans she has to work with the Minister of Finance and Personnel to secure more procurement contracts for small and medium-sized businesses.

(AQW 17058/11-15)

Mrs Foster: DETI carries out its procurement activities through a Service Level Agreement with Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), which is a Centre of Procurement Expertise. CPD is a Directorate within the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Local small and medium sized businesses win a significant portion of public sector contracts. In 2010-2011 67% of contracts awarded by Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) and Centres of Procurement Expertise went to local SMEs. For construction contracts this figure was higher at 91%.

The Procurement Board has made substantial progress in simplifying procurement processes for contracts below the EU thresholds. This will make it easier for SMEs to tender for business.

CPD regularly attends Meet the Buyer events to explain to SMEs how to tender for public contracts. In the past 5 years CPD has attended 63 events attended by over 4,000 representatives from local firms.

Arrangements have also been put in place for Invest NI to follow up with successful contractors where there is potential for export opportunities.

Energy Costs: Reduction

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps she is taking to encourage a reduction in energy costs, particularly small and medium-sized businesses that are struggling with overheads in the current economic climate.

(AQW 17059/11-15)

Mrs Foster: While my Department has no direct role in the setting of energy prices, it works with the Utility Regulator given its important role in regulation of the electricity and natural gas industries, to develop market conditions which can put downward pressure on energy prices.

From October 2012, Power NI reduced electricity prices across Northern Ireland by 14.1% for the domestic and smaller business sector with competitors adjusting their prices accordingly, and following

an 8.5% reduction in natural gas prices in Greater Belfast in April 2012, both Airtricity Gas Supply and firmus energy maintained their existing prices following a tariff review last Autumn.

The retail electricity market is fully open to competition across Northern Ireland as is the natural gas market in Greater Belfast. The gas market in the “10 towns” licensed area outside Greater Belfast opened in October 2012 for larger energy users and will be open to supply competition for small and medium size business users and domestic consumers from April 2015. A number of electricity and natural gas suppliers serve the business sector in Northern Ireland and businesses are encouraged to seek the best deals available from competing energy supply companies.

On 1 November 2012, I launched the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) which provides financial assistance for businesses, and other organisations that wish to install renewable heating technologies. Those installing renewable heat technologies could expect to receive incentive payments for up to twenty years which will offset ongoing energy costs.

In addition, Invest NI provides advice and financial assistance to companies wishing to replace existing equipment with more energy efficient or renewable alternatives.

Photovoltaic Panels

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department intends to introduce a new grant scheme for photovoltaic panels.

(AQW 17162/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There are no plans for my Department to introduce a grant scheme for solar photovoltaic (PV) panels. Instead, solar PV panels are incentivised by the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation which provides a revenue stream for the renewable electricity generated in the form of Renewables Obligation Certificates (ROCs) which can be sold to electricity suppliers.

Enforcing Authorities

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment at what level of risk would the enforcing authorities perceive the farming sector to be and how is this assessed.

(AQW 17214/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Using a five year average (2007-2012) of the Fatal Accident Incidence Rate (number of deaths per 100,000 at risk) it can be seen from the table below that farming is currently the highest risk sector in Northern Ireland.

Sector	Fatal Accident Incidence Rate (Per 100,000 at risk)
Agriculture	11.7
Manufacturing & Quarrying	4
Construction	2.5
All Northern Ireland Employment	0.8

However it should be noted that the overall trend is upward, with the rate for the farming sector in 2011/12 reaching 17.1.

Internationally, Northern Ireland performs similarly or better than some other countries. The equivalent five-year average rates (2007-2012) were 11.1 in Great Britain and 31 in the Republic of Ireland, while the pan European rate was approximately 12 and that in the USA was around 30.

Health and Safety: Farming Community

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what research has been carried out on barriers to the uptake of health and safety messages for the farming community.

(AQW 17254/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As part of a considerable body of general research into farm safety that has been carried out in Northern Ireland, Great Britain, Republic of Ireland and Europe, some analysis of the barriers to the uptake of safety messages has already been undertaken.

In addition, HSENI has recently commissioned research, using focus groups representing farmers and the wider farming community, which is currently being conducted. This research is designed to discover the most effective routes to influence the farming community and identify any perceived barriers to this communication.

Power NI

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the process used by Power NI to allocate spare transmission capacity to providers of renewable energy.

(AQW 17400/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Power NI is an electricity supply company and has no role in the allocation of transmission capacity. The process for the allocation of firm access to the transmission system is presently being developed by NIE and System Operators Northern Ireland and will be the subject of a forthcoming consultation and subsequent approval by the Utility Regulator. My Department is not involved in this process.

Transmission Capacity

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assessment has been made of the impact that a lack of transmission capacity has on (i) meeting renewable energy targets; and (ii) business viability.

(AQW 17401/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Transmission capacity is a matter for industry, not my Department. Provision is made under the Price Control process between NIE Transmission & Distribution and the Utility Regulator for agreement of funding requirements to upgrade the network to support integration of electricity generated through renewable sources in support of Northern Ireland Executive targets.

Power NI

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail any discussions she has had with Power NI in the last twelve months about having a more open, equitable and transparent system of allocating spare transmission capacity.

(AQW 17402/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Power NI, as a supply company, has no role in allocation of transmission capacity. I have had no discussions with Power NI or any other party about the process of allocating spare transmission capacity. This is a matter for discussion between the Utility Regulator in association with NIE Transmission & Distribution and System Operators Northern Ireland.

Department of the Environment

Small-to-Medium Sized Local Businesses

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of (i) his Department's elements criteria used to determine public contract tenders for construction; and (ii) whether the criteria, such as turnover thresholds, might prohibit small-to-medium sized local businesses from making applications,

(AQW 13164/11-15)

Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment): The Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) in the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) is responsible for developing and establishing the policy framework and best practice public procurement within which the wider public sector operates.

Construction contracts for my Department are awarded through CPD and therefore comply with public procurement policy thereby ensuring that the appropriate criteria and financial thresholds are adopted and small and medium size businesses are not disadvantaged.

I believe that small and medium size businesses could benefit from the untapped potential of those currently unemployed through the provision of social clauses in public procurement contracts. Therefore, I have introduced new arrangements in the Department which require provision of social clauses for all proposed construction contracts with a labour value over £500k. The Department is also exploring opportunities to maximise the use of social clauses below this threshold across all Departmental procurement.

In July I introduced the Local Government Best Value (Exclusion of Non-commercial Considerations) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012, removing certain restrictions which have previously prevented district councils from including social clauses in their public supply and works contracts. In bringing this amended legislation to the Assembly, I encouraged all councils to embed the use of social clauses in their contracts to enhance the number of work opportunities. In addition, to embed wider local economic, social and environmental benefits into procurement strategies the Department recently delivered a procurement workshop for council staff.

Also, recognising the barriers faced by those currently unemployed, I have increased the scope for training opportunities within DOE on a number of fronts, including provision of 180 Steps to Work placements. To date, 106 people have taken up the Steps to Work opportunity and I continue to press for the full roll out of the initiative.

The Department is currently working with the Gerry Rogan Initiative Trust and Opportunity Youth to open up opportunities for young people who are not in education, employment or training. As a further measure the Department has agreed to facilitate 9 Programme-Led Apprenticeships placements and has made provision for 14 placements in the Graduate Acceleration Programme, facilitated six undergraduate placements and three specialist skills bursary placements.

It is my ambition to work on green procurement, borrowing from models in other jurisdictions which will also create opportunities for small and medium sized businesses.

Planning Service: Cavanacaw near Omagh

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of the Environment whether there will be any disciplinary action taken in light of the failings of the Planning Service in regards to the gold mining at Cavanacaw near Omagh.
(AQW 14477/11-15)

Mr Attwood: As I have already indicated I have instructed senior officials to focus on ensuring that lessons are learnt from the mistakes made in the processing of the enforcement case and the subsequent planning applications where the permissions have been set aside by the Court.

In my previous answer (AQW 14476/11-5) I outlined the necessary actions I consider to be essential to deal with internal processing issues and the proper interpretation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations. I asked that this be taken forward as a matter of urgency.

10 Year Rule under PPS21

Mr Frew asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the 10 year rule under PPS21 for additional applications; and what impact this has had on rural areas and communities.

(AQW 16520/11-15)

Mr Attwood: PPS 21 offers considerable development opportunities for people wishing to live in the countryside by providing for a dwelling on a farm; replacement dwellings; the conversion and re-use of non-residential buildings as dwellings; new buildings within an existing cluster or ribbon of buildings; social and affordable housing schemes; development within designated Dispersed Rural Communities; and a dwelling to meet compelling personal or domestic circumstances.

Evidence to date demonstrates that the current rural policy is operating generally effectively and there has been considerable take up on the opportunity to obtain a dwelling on a farm. Since the adoption of PPS21 in June 2010 there have been 5,173 applications received for new single rural dwellings (excluding replacement dwellings) under PPS21 over the 2 year period to June 2012 with 4,806 applications approved.

I am carrying out a review of the operation of PPS21 and intend to make a statement to the Assembly shortly on the outcome of this review.

Permitted Development Rights

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what is the timeframe for changes to permitted development rights.

(AQW 16600/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I am working on a number of fronts to reform and remodel the planning system so that it supports the future economic and social development needs of all users in Northern Ireland. An important part of that work involves the introduction of new and revised permitted development rights.

This will include the introduction of new permitted development rights for non-domestic micro-renewable technologies such as solar panels and biomass boiler housing as well as changes to telecomms PD, utilities (Railway undertakings, Dock, Pier, Harbour or Water Transport undertakings, Electricity Undertakings, Post Office, Water and Sewerage Undertakings) and street market trading. The timeframe is to proceed with the necessary work to amend subordinate legislation through the Assembly process and introduce the new PD rights in early 2013. Following that there will be a rolling programme of new and revised permitted development rights introduced throughout 2013 and beyond for a range of further land uses including agricultural buildings and Anaerobic Digestion plant (consultation issued), development ancillary to mines and quarries and electric car charging points.

These measures are in addition to new and extended PD rights introduced earlier this year for industry and warehouse development, shops, financial and professional services, office premises, schools, colleges, universities and hospitals and for the demolition of buildings.

During 2011 the scope of PD rights were extended for householder extensions which made it easier for people to undertake minor works to extend their homes. New PD rights were also brought into operation for use of land as a caravan site and for domestic microgeneration equipment including solar panels, ground and water source heat pumps and solid biomass fuel storage.

New PD rights are a further attempt to simplify the planning process and assist economic development. At the same time, research is being undertaken to identify where other opportunities for PD reform may exist.

Revised Planning Fees

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what is the timescale for the introduction of the revised planning fees.

(AQW 16602/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The review of planning fees and funding is a two phase project, the first phase of which was completed in April 2011. This phase introduced a number of measures to address areas of under recovery and cross subsidisation in the existing fees structure. The second phase is currently being progressed and a consultation on the 1st stage of proposals emerging from this work will issue for an 8 week consultation period later this month. Proposals include:

- Cutting substantially the fee to renew a planning permission;
- Removing the entire fee for non-profit making organisations (such organisations at present pay a concessionary fee);
- Fixing the anomaly for applications for two or more dwellings whereby the fee is increased but capped
- Revising the fee for mixed use applications to more accurately reflect the work in assessing them;
- Removing the exemption for planning applications which are submitted after a Certificate of Lawful Use/Development application; and
- Introducing a new method of calculating fees for Minerals, Gas and Waste developments to help more accurately reflect the site area.

It is intended that these proposed changes will help to provide further clarity, ensure fee levels are more proportionate to the work involved in processing applications and help in part to alleviate the financial burden on developers affected by the economic downturn.

The second phase of the review will also look at more fundamental long term changes to how the planning system is funded, with the aim of developing a robust and fit for purpose system, to secure sustainability of the planning system in preparation of the transfer of the function to local government.

It is hoped that, following the consultation on the aforementioned proposals, changes to the legislation can be introduced in spring 2013. It is expected that the review in its entirety will be completed by late 2013.

Planning Applications

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what action he is taking to ensure that there is consistency in the time taken to process planning applications in each division.

(AQW 16673/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department is committed to providing an effective and efficient planning system. The evidence is that, following a range of interventions, the planning process is improving but there is more work to do to make the planning system fully fit for its purpose of managing applications for sustainable development.

The Department has experienced very considerable change over the last 2 years. Staffing levels have reduced substantially in order to operate within available budgets and this redeployment exercise impacted on performance and an imbalance in staffing across the Area office network and within Headquarter teams. As a result further redeployment of remaining staff has taken place to redress any imbalances and improve consistency in the time taken to process applications.

Performance within each area office is carefully monitored and Area Planning Managers report monthly on how each area office is performing against the ambitious targets that I have set for 2012-13 for processing of planning applications.

A Performance Action Plan has also been put in place in order to improve and manage performance. This Action Plan identifies a number of initiatives and allows for the monitoring and active management of cases within agreed timescales.

I will continue to work with key stakeholders to ensure that planning delivers in an efficient and timely manner and continue to monitor performance to ensure consistency across the area office network.

Ministerial Event: Dublin

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment when his Department was first informed of his invitation to attend a Ministerial event in Dublin on the evening of 14 November 2012.

(AQW 16795/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Ulster Farmers Union (UFU) was aware that ministerial diaries can change - and need to change – depending on changed circumstances and events. Indeed, the UFU were advised of this in relation to the proposed North Antrim meeting.

At the time of that event, I was meeting with people in Belfast, including officials from the Irish Government. The UFU were informed the week before the North Antrim event of the change in my diary.

I make no apology that I did not attend the UFU event. A meeting in Belfast that discussed the security situation, given recent events, was clearly a greater priority. I would be surprised if anyone could think otherwise and that includes the UFU.

Transfer of Functions Programme

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the timetable for the Transfer of Functions Programme, including the powers which are to transfer, the date of transfer and whether the transfer of functions to Local Government will be cost neutral.

(AQW 16821/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Executive has committed to the transfer of functions and their associated powers from central government to local government on 1st April 2015. The Executive has further committed that the functions which will transfer from government departments to local government should be fit for purpose, sufficiently resourced and be cost neutral to the ratepayer at the point of transfer. That has not changed.

I will shortly put a paper to the Executive seeking final agreement on the overall package of functions to be transferred. This follows my engagement with Ministerial colleagues on the content of the package, which the Executive agreed should be refreshed.

Lisburn and Castlereagh Council: Staff Transfer

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of the Environment whether the assets, including directly and indirectly employed staff, transferring to Belfast from the existing Lisburn and Castlereagh Council areas, will transfer in full, as well as any liabilities attached.

(AQW 16876/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The dissolution of the 26 councils, and the creation of the 11 new councils in 2015, including Lisburn / Castlereagh, will require the transfer of legal title of the assets, along with legal responsibilities for liabilities, from the current to successor councils.

The Department will make provision in the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill for the creation of schemes to transfer the designated assets and liabilities. Subject to the Executive's agreement, I intend to introduce the Bill to the Assembly in the New Year.

In parallel with this, a group of senior local and central government officers has been established to develop the detail of these transfer schemes and related arrangements for managing the transfer of assets and liabilities from existing councils (and, where appropriate, Government Departments) to the new councils. The group is due to present its findings and recommendations to the Regional Transition Committee, which I chair, by the end of March 2013.

The Committee will carefully consider the group's recommendations and related guidance.

Turning to the issue of council staff, those employed by the existing councils will ultimately be transferring to one of the new 11 councils. They will do so in line with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) legislation (TUPE) and the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill will include a Scheme of Transfer.

Human resource issues particular to local government reform are consulted on and negotiated through the Local Government Reform Joint Forum set up for this purpose. The Forum in turn must take cognisance of the Guiding Principles adopted by the Executive and which apply to staff affected by RPA reorganisation. The fundamental aims of the Principles are to ensure the smooth transfer of affected staff to their new employers, fair treatment and to minimise the risk of compulsory redundancy.

Vacancy Controls negotiated through the Forum are already in place to help protect staff and to prepare the way for transfer. The Forum will continue to work with the partnership based implementation arrangements I have put in place. Issues such as the new council structures and staffing needs form part of the detailed work programme underway.

I expect that in most cases, the transfer of the assets, liabilities and staff may not be problematic, particularly where the transfers are within council clusters. I do, however, appreciate that in others, including transfers between Lisburn, Castlereagh and Belfast, there may be specific issues to address.

I believe that these will be best addressed through discussions and negotiations between the councils involved.

Review of Public Administration

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the current position in relation to the Review of Public Administration funding bid to the Executive and the extent of the overall funding programmes. **(AQW 16878/11-15)**

Mr Attwood: As you are aware, my bid in the June Monitoring Round for £2.3 million to support local government reform in the current financial year was unsuccessful, as was the further bid I made in October Monitoring, and I have made my disappointment at the outcome.

Since then, I have returned to this issue and have expanded my bid for funding up to April 2015 when the new Councils will take on their full responsibilities. I have been actively pursuing this issue in discussions and correspondence with Minister Wilson and other Executive colleagues and in so doing have made it clear that I:-

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

I have prepared a draft Executive paper and issued it to Ministers. This paper has also been considered by Ministers at the Budget Review Group meeting, on 27 September 2012, chaired by the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

At that meeting, there was general acceptance that the Executive should consider how it could support local government in financing the overall reform programme. Indeed, the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) was tasked with exploring all possible options, including the direct funding proposals set out in my draft Executive paper, along with borrowing mechanisms including soft loans, costing these and outlining the consequences. DFP has developed a paper setting out these options for the Executive.

My draft paper, seeking the Executive's agreement to fund the transition work streams, has been revised to take account of Ministerial discussions and has been submitted to the First Minister and deputy First Minister with a request that it be considered quickly by the Executive. I strongly believe there is a need for certainty on RPA funding. This includes upfront monies and other means of helping the funding of RPA. The councils, however, have a responsibility, including through the ICE programme, which needs accelerated.

Review of Public Administration

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the overall programme of the Review of Public Administration and the necessity to consider staffing terms and conditions, whether the application of TUPE will apply; and whether his Department has taken legal advice on this matter.
(AQW 16879/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The overall Review of Public Administration (RPA) is an Executive Programme launched in 2002 and the Executive agreed the general approach to be taken in terms of the impacts on staff in each of the RPA affected areas. The Executive based its decision on all the available advice, including legal advice, at that time. RPA affected staff have been given TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations)-type protections even though RPA does not strictly fall within that legislation.

In addition, the Executive adopted a set of Guiding Principles recommended by the Public Service Commission and agreed with the Trade Unions. The fundamental aims are to protect staff from compulsory redundancy, in so far as is possible, and to ensure their fair treatment.

In developing the Guiding Principles, the Commission was obliged to take the statutory obligations into account. The Guiding Principles make reference to TUPE and with the Executive commitment underpin the negotiations around the terms and conditions for staff in all sectors affected by RPA. This includes the local government reform element of RPA.

Three Rivers Mixed Use Development Planning

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of the Environment when he will make a decision on the Three Rivers mixed-use development planning application for the Lifford Road, Strabane.
(AQW 16891/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The member will know of how firmly I have been managing Article 31 applications. Between now and Christmas, there will be further evidence of this.

There are a number of planning issues to be considered before a recommendation can be made on the proposals including the principle of development (the site lies outside the Strabane settlement limit), the retail impact from the proposed foodstore on Strabane town centre and the surrounding area, traffic and transport impacts (including potential implications for the future upgrade of the A5), flood risk (the site lies within the floodplains of the Mourne, Finn and Foyle rivers) and the ecological impacts.

An Addendum to the Environmental Statement was received on 29th June 2012 and the re-consultation, re-advertisement and re-neighbour notification procedures were carried out in accordance with the EIA Regulations.

Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council were also re-consulted due to the transboundary nature of the application. Strabane District Council provided a corporate response on 9th October 2012 which indicated qualified support for the proposal subject to a number of planning conditions which included the completion of Phase 1 of the overall development, within clearly defined timescales and in advance of the commercial retail section.

Donegal County Council has yet to provide a corporate response. A meeting was arranged for Friday 23rd November 2012 between the Council and Planning to discuss the proposal.

The Department is therefore not yet in a position to make a determination as the fundamental issues relating to the principle of development and the recently submitted consultation responses still have to be considered fully.

Senior Enforcement Staff Employed in the Planning Office in Downpatrick

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 16166/11-15, what circumstances led to the dismissal of the planning officer who worked in the enforcement section in Rathkeltair House; and whether any criminal charges were brought.

(AQW 16908/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I am aware of the case. However, this is an internal disciplinary matter between the Department and the individual member of staff which has not yet concluded. The Department does not discuss internal disciplinary matters and to do so would be a breach of the individual's rights under the Data Protection Act.

I can assure the member that where an allegation is made against a member of staff, it will be properly investigated and any appropriate action will be taken.

Red Squirrel Population

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of the Environment what measures his Department has put in place to protect and enhance the red squirrel population in South Down.

(AQW 16914/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The red squirrel population is in decline across the UK and Ireland. The main factors causing this decline are habitat loss, competition from non native grey squirrels and squirrel pox disease.

To address these concerns, my Department published a Northern Ireland Species Action Plan for red squirrels in 2000. This was superseded in 2008, when, in conjunction with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, my department published the All Ireland Species Action Plan for Red Squirrels.

The Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum was formed to progress actions contained within these plans and brings together statutory and non-statutory organisations, as well as representatives of country parks and local volunteer organisations dedicated to protecting the red squirrel in Northern Ireland. My Department chair the Forum, and has also helped create, and subsequently supports a number of local squirrel groups.

These groups focus on local squirrel issues, undertake a wide range of actions on the ground and provide regular updates to the Forum. There are currently eight groups active within Northern Ireland, two of which operate in the South Down area; i.e. Tollymore Forest Park and the Ring of Gullion ANOB.

The first record of squirrel pox in Ireland was in Tollymore Forest Park in March 2011. My Department organised an emergency response to this discovery and provided direction and support to both Forest Service and Tollymore squirrel group members in the aftermath of the outbreak. This included the purchase and supply of motion sensor field cameras. We are currently considering a grant application to undertake a full baseline survey of the squirrel population in the area.

In addition, my Department has recently supplied squirrel traps to the Mourne Heritage Trust. The Trust is using volunteers to try and clear grey squirrels from several areas in the eastern Mournes that historically held healthy red squirrel populations.

Peatlands

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what plans he has to work with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to establish a taskforce to draft a comprehensive peatland policy. **(AQW 16916/11-15)**

Mr Attwood: We are working closely with colleagues in DARD on peatland conservation e.g. on the review Common Agricultural Policy and the management of designated nature conservation sites.

The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy is currently under review and will require Government to address the restoration of peatlands for biodiversity, the carbon stores they hold and other ecosystem services. This will include the consideration of the need for a comprehensive peatland policy for Northern Ireland.

Peatlands: Restoration

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what funding he will make available for peatland restoration. **(AQW 16917/11-15)**

Mr Attwood: The funding of peatland restoration is undertaken through a range of actions both within and outside Government.

Within the Department of the Environment, I am funding peatland restoration through designated site management and grant-aid. Through these mechanisms I am providing significant resources which will benefit blanket bogs, lowland raised bogs and other peatland habitats.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has recently committed to funding research on the distribution and condition of peatland. These will help to prioritise further peatland restoration work. In addition, work on landscape-scale peatland restoration will continue to be grant-aided.

Agricultural policies and funding have a major impact on the condition and restoration of peatlands. Officials within my Department will continue work closely with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to ensure that there are funding opportunities for peatland restoration through the implementation CAP reform.

Peatlands: Restoration

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what plans he has to commission research into the value of peatland restoration. **(AQW 16918/11-15)**

Mr Attwood: Two related research projects are being undertaken by NIEA:

- **Economic value of peatlands:** This project aims to value ecosystem services provided by peat habitats throughout Northern Ireland. This proposal is to value ecosystem services arising from conservation of important habitats and should provide a benchmark study on the relative magnitude of the market values, and non-market values including non use values for each element of a list of ecosystem services.
- **Northern Ireland peatland inventory:** pilot study. The first stage of a new peatland inventory for Northern Ireland is currently being commissioned. It is intended that this will help inform peatland conservation and restoration activities across Northern Ireland.

National Park: Causeway Coast

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the opposition from residents, whether he will withdraw any proposals for a national park in the Causeway Coast and the Glens of Antrim.
(AQW 16919/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I am taking stock in relation to national parks, listening to those who are for and against, as well as the undecided. I am holding a series of private meetings with a wide range of people and organisations to hear the full range of views. Indeed, although I was unable to attend their recent meeting in Ballycastle, I met the Ulster Farmers' Union in early December.

At the heart of the issue is simply this: our heritage – built and natural – adds considerably to the quality of our lives and offers employment and tourism opportunities for the future. Unemployment is growing, and after welfare reform there may be 20,000 more people officially out of work. The challenge to all of us is this: what more can we do to help people who are out of work into work and creating jobs? National parks may be one way to do so, but not a park with the restrictions of which some people mistakenly talk.

I will therefore continue to meet with interested parties, and consider all that they have to say, before taking a decision on the most appropriate way forward.

My model is 'designation without new regulation'! This is a threat to no-one, but an opportunity for many. Everyone – including MLAs - have an obligation to work out how, when we will have 85,000 unemployed after welfare change, how we create jobs and hope for people in our rural areas.

Illegal Dumping of Agricultural and Equestrian Animal Carcasses

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 14741/11-15, whether the councils in border areas are affected by the higher incidences of the illegal dumping of animal carcasses.
(AQW 16921/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Figures obtained from District Councils do indicate that Councils with a southern border into the Republic of Ireland, i.e. Armagh, Fermanagh, and Newry and Mourne, have had a considerably higher number of animal carcasses dumped than other areas – 156, 147 and 158 respectively – over the past three years. The Councils with a Donegal-facing border, Derry City, Omagh and Strabane, have been affected to a much lesser extent.

Lisburn: City Status

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of the Environment whether Lisburn City Council will maintain its city status under the introduction of any new proposed legislation.
(AQW 17009/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I am currently developing proposals for legislation which will enable all new councils, which have a city within the boundary of their new local government district, to opt to become a city council should they resolve to do so. I can confirm that the council for the new Lisburn and Castlereagh local government district will have this option available to it, due to Lisburn's city status.

Primary powers in relation to the status of councils will be included in the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill. The Bill will be presented to the Assembly for scrutiny in early 2013.

National Park

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment why he did not attend the public meeting in Ballycastle on 14 November 2012 to discuss the proposal of a National Park for the area, as previously arranged.
(AQW 17022/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Ulster Farmers Union (UFU) was aware that ministerial diaries can change – and need to change – depending on changed circumstances and events. Indeed, the UFU were advised of this in relation to the proposed North Antrim meeting.

At the time of that event, I was meeting with people in Belfast, including officials from the Irish Government. The UFU were informed the week before the North Antrim event of the change in my diary.

I make no apology that I did not attend the UFU event. A meeting in Belfast that discussed the security situation, given recent events, was clearly a greater priority. I would be surprised if anyone could think otherwise and that includes the UFU.

Local Government

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of the Environment how many jobs he anticipates may be lost as a result of the reform of Local Government.
(AQW 17070/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Executive's decision to reduce the number of councils to 11 will almost certainly mean a need for fewer staff than are employed by the existing 26 councils.

I am conscious of and wish to minimise the potential impacts on those likely to be affected, and this is being taken fully on board as preparations progress. Central to this is the Local Government Reform Joint Forum which was set up to ensure that the impacts upon affected staff are thoroughly considered and negotiated between staff representative organisations and employing authorities. The work of the Joint Forum is underpinned by the commitment to act in the best interests of the affected staff, according to guiding principles agreed by the Executive. A fundamental aspect of these principles is to make every effort to avoid compulsory redundancies.

Permitted Development Rights

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that neighbours to properties, whose owners want to make changes, are protected following the revision of Permitted Development Rights.
(AQW 17071/11-15)

Mr Attwood: All of the changes to permitted development rights that I have introduced have been subject to appropriate checks and balances tailored to the scale and nature of the proposed permitted development and are designed to address potential adverse impacts on neighbours and the environment. These include constraints in relation to the proximity of a proposed development to property boundaries together with height and ground area restrictions.

I have also introduced limitations to afford additional protection in sensitive areas such as conservation areas, areas of special scientific interest, world heritage sites and sites of archaeological interest. I will continue to apply such safeguards to any future permitted development changes to protect neighbours and to ensure that development is of an appropriate scale and character.

Chief Executive and Senior Director Posts

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin asked the Minister of the Environment whether he will ensure that future chief executive and senior director posts for the new 11 councils will be open to both people currently working within the local government sector and those in other areas of employment.

(AQO 2919/11-15)

Mr Attwood: No final decision has been taken on the method of appointing the Chief Executives of the new 11 Councils. Discussions regarding the underlying principles and timings for competitions for senior staff are being taken forward within the implementation structures I have established. I expect to receive recommendations shortly and to settle the issue quickly. I am taking legal advice on the matter to ensure that the course I adopt - and I have a clear view on what should be the right course - is legally robust and proper.

Wind Turbines

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the reasons for the delay in processing planning applications for individual wind turbines in the North West area.

(AQO 2924/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Renewables is, arguably, Ireland's greatest economic opportunity. Research and development, innovation, construction service hubs and electricity self-sufficiency are parts of the opportunity.

The vast majority of turbine applications (still under consideration) are awaiting further information from the applicant or agent in relation to amendments; bat surveys; noise reports; roads details; or are awaiting consultee responses.

I have made a priority that the full range of renewable applications are handled with good speed. To do so, training has been rolled out, accountability at a local and senior level is being embedded, close liaison with the renewable industry is deepening, more decisions are being made and the decision rate is improving.

Many applications require further information from the applicant or agent, both of whom need to ensure that the fullest information is provided. That said, in the April 2011- June 2012 period, 377 approvals and 85 refusals were issued for wind turbines, over one a day.

Review of Public Administration

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what subordinate legislation is required to fully implement the Review of Public Administration.

(AQW 17190/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Subordinate legislation will be required on the following:-

- Statutory Transition Committees – to provide for the establishment and operation of these committees, as provided for in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2010;
- Shadow arrangements – to make the necessary arrangements for the operation of the 11 new councils during the shadow period;
- Governance arrangements – to set out the demarcation of those functions that may be the responsibility of the executive and those that may not; the procedures in relation to access to meetings of and information relating to executive decision-making; and the specification of matters which must be included in a council's standing orders;
- The new ethical standards framework;
- Community planning – to specify the bodies which must participate in community planning; and
- Severance - to provide for the award of severance payments to councillors who decide not to seek re-election to the new councils.

The subordinate legislation to commence all the sections of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 to enable the new councils to operate as local planning authorities was set out in my response to AQW 13738/11-15 on 14 September 2012.

Other Ministers may also need to bring forward subordinate legislation in order to transfer functions for which they are responsible to local government.

Planning Fee

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment whether consideration has been given to the introduction of a reduced planning fee for applications that are submitted after the five year expiry date of a previous planning approval, to ensure that the live approval is maintained.

(AQW 17195/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Under the Planning (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, the fee for a renewal of a planning approval or an application submitted after the permission expiry date is the same as for a new application.

However, the Review of Planning Fees and Funding consultation paper which I intend to launch shortly will propose a significant reduction in the fee for a renewal of a planning approval. Following this consultation changes to the legislation could be introduced by mid 2013.

It is intended that the proposed change would help alleviate some of the financial burden on developers affected by the economic downturn.

Taxi Operator Licences

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of the Environment to explain the rationale behind the introduction of Taxi Operator Licences.

(AQW 17224/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The rationale is captured by the fact that the Assembly passed primary legislation for the purpose of taxi operator licences. This will help address illegal operators and enhance customer confidence and experience. The full reform of taxis will see better opportunities for the business, including individual and small operators.

The Taxi Operator Licensing regime came into operation on 1 September 2012. Since 31 October 2012 all those providing taxi services are required to hold an operator licence, be listed as an affiliated driver on an operator licence, or to have submitted a complete and valid application for a licence to DVA.

Taxi operator licensing is designed to ensure that fare paying passengers are guaranteed that, when they use a licensed operator, they will be getting a safe car and safe driver. It places responsibility on operators to ensure that all drivers and vehicles are licensed and this will make it easier for my Department to identify and tackle those providing illegal taxis.

The new Regulations give fare paying passengers, for the first time, the assurance that when they use a licensed taxi operator they are dealing with a professional service provider who only uses properly licensed drivers and vehicles. This has brought taxi operators in Northern Ireland into line with a number of their counterparts in the rest of Britain and Ireland and has implemented a key element of the Taxis Act passed by the Assembly in 2008.

Effective operator licensing will contribute to improving standards in the industry generally, to the benefit of consumers.

Taxi Operator Licences

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of the Environment how many applications for Taxi Operator Licences have been received by his Department; and how many have been granted.

(AQW 17225/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Up to and including 26 November 2012, 1848 taxi operator licence applications had been received and 1328 temporary licences issued.

Elected Members Severance Scheme

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of the Environment whether his proposals for an Elected Members Severance Scheme will be included in the Local Government Reorganisation Bill; and if not, what legislation does he intend to use for this purpose.

(AQW 17284/11-15)

Mr Attwood: It will not be necessary that proposals for a severance scheme for councillors will not be included in the Local Government Reorganisation Bill.

This is because Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2010 already makes the necessary provision for councillors' severance arrangements. This includes an enabling power for the Department to make regulations for severance payments to councillors.

A public consultation on draft regulations for the severance scheme will take place shortly.

L/2011/0079/0

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment when a decision will be made on planning application L/2011/0079/0.

(AQW 17304/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department has agreed a design concept that complies with planning policy and guidance for this new housing development. However, three issues have been raised through the consultation process; namely flood risk, pressure on the existing road network and possible land contamination from the previous uses on the site.

The agent was advised in April and May 2012 of additional information required in relation to roads and flood risk respectively. To date this information has not been submitted. Planning Officials met with the agent on 15 November 2012, where these issues were discussed and the agent requested to provide the necessary information.

The Department's NIEA Land and Resource Management) has also committed to respond on a contamination report supplied by the agent by 10 December 2012. It is also anticipated that Environmental Health officials in Fermanagh District Council will follow with their comments after NIEA has commented.

Planning Enforcement Cases

Mr Craig asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning enforcement cases are open in each divisional planning area.

(AQW 17337/11-15)

Mr Attwood: As of the 3 December 2012 there were 3,261 'live' enforcement cases under consideration by Planning across the area office network. The attached table provides details of the number of cases by local government district and grouped by Area Planning Office. It includes cases which are at various stages of consideration from initial investigation of an alleged breach to court action following failure to comply with an enforcement notice or breach of condition notice.

Please note: This information has come from a live database and as such has not been validated. Therefore these figures may not equate to finalised Official Statistics.

Area Office	LGD	No. of cases as of 3 Dec 2012
Belfast	Ards	208
	Belfast	230
	Castlereagh	49
	Lisburn	320
	North Down	132
	Total	939
Northern	Ballymoney	18
	Coleraine	68
	Derry	204
	Limavady	41
	Moyle	37
	Strabane	46
	Total	414
South Antrim	Antim	74
	Ballymena	58
	Carrickfergus	17
	Larne	27
	Newtownabbey	68
	Total	244
Southern	Armagh	108
	Banbridge	84
	Craigavon	65
	Down	416
	Newry and Mourne	217
	Total	890
Strategic Planning	All Districts	421
	Total	421
Western	Cookstown	54
	Dungannon	86
	Fermanagh	90
	Magherafelt	47
	Omagh	76
	Total	353
Overall Total		3,261

MOT

Mr Craig asked the Minister of the Environment what impact the new MOT directives have had on vehicle pass rates.

(AQW 17338/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The latest available vehicle test pass rate figures, which were published in accordance with the guidelines on Official Statistics, are for the period from April to June 2012, and the table below compares these figures with those for the equivalent period in 2011, before the implementation of European Directive 2010/48/EU.

Breakdown of Vehicle Test Pass Rates - Full Tests Only			
Test Category	Apr-Jun 2011	Apr-Jun 2012	% Change
Private Car	79.0%	79.4%	0.5%
Motorcycles*	93.4%	93.4%	0.0%
Light Goods	73.8%	73.3%	-0.5%
Heavy Goods	68.1%	69.3%	1.2%
Trailer	77.1%	78.1%	1.0%
Omnibus	78.6%	74.9%	-3.7%
Taxi	73.4%	72.3%	-1.1%
LPCV	80.6%	82.7%	2.1%
Single Vehicle Approval*	73.3%	63.6%	-9.7%
Carriage of Dangerous Goods*	96.9%	98.7%	1.8%
Overall	78.8%	79.2%	0.4%

Source: DVA Booking Services System, Report V4

*Directive 2010/48/EU does not apply

The figures show that implementation of 2010/48/EU had a negligible effect on overall pass rates. However, it should be noted that pass rates can be affected by a variety of factors in addition to changes in the legislative requirements.

Vehicle pass rates for the next quarter are due to be published by the Driver & Vehicle Agency during December 2012, and will be available on the NI Direct website.

Vintage or Old Vehicles: MOT Certificates

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 16072/11-15, what measures are in place to prevent old vehicles of a certain age being driven on the road without the need for an MOT certificate.

(AQW 17353/11-15)

Mr Attwood: As stated in response to the related AQW 16072/11-15, all cars over four years old, including vintage vehicles, are required to be tested annually under the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The Driver & Vehicle Agency promotes a range of compliance measures, which were also referred to in that response, including the requirement for MOT certificates to be displayed on car windscreens, reminder letters, roadside checks by DVA staff and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, and the use of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras to identify non-compliant vehicles.

Motor vehicles, including those not subject to MOT certification, must be constructed and maintained in a roadworthy condition. It is an offence under the Order to use a vehicle on a road in a dangerous condition, and DVA staff and the PSNI may prohibit the use of a motor vehicle identified to be in an unroadworthy condition.

Westminster: Late Payment

Mr Frew asked the Minister of the Environment how the late payment directive currently passing through Westminster will affect his Department.

(AQW 17366/11-15)

Mr Attwood: In the current economic climate, I recognise the importance of cashflow for many suppliers. My Department is committed to the prompt payment of valid invoices striving to pay as many suppliers as possible within 10 days. Indeed, for the first six months of the current financial year, my Department has paid 92.1% of suppliers within the 10 day target.

Consequently, the proposed implementation of the late payment directive and setting of a 30 day payment target is expected to have minimal impact, on my Department, since we strive to pay all valid invoices in a much shorter timescale.

MOT

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the recent decision by the British Government to exempt pre-1960 cars from an MOT, what implications this decision has for vehicles being driven in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 17367/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I have answered questions very similar to this on a number of occasions over recent months, most recently in October 2012 (AQW 15195/11-15), and the response remains the same, as detailed below.

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

The Committee was content with the Department's proposed way forward, which was to develop policy on the basis of the consultation responses that would make use of the exemption in Roadworthiness Directive 2009/40/EC concerning the periodic testing of pre-1960 vehicles. This would align with the British Government's exemption, from 18 November 2012, of pre-1960 vehicles from MOT testing.

There have been significant European Commission (EC) policy developments since our consultation. On 13 July 2012, the EC published a 'Roadworthiness Package' that, amongst other things, addresses periodic roadworthiness tests for motor vehicles, therein making changes to the rules that apply to historic vehicles. The proposals are expected to be introduced no earlier than August 2014.

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

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

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

Taxis in Operation

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment how many taxis are currently operating.
(AQW 17373/11-15)

Mr Attwood: There are currently 9,615 taxis licensed to operate in Northern Ireland, this does not mean that this full number is actually operating.

Department of Finance and Personnel

INTERREG IV Programmes

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is the total spend to date by cross border groups under INTERREG IV Programmes on (i) travel; (ii) accommodation; and (iii) subsistence outside the UK in each year of the Programme.

(AQW 16418/11-15)

Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The table below shows spend in each year of the INTERREG IVA Programme to date for the Cross Border Groups.

Year	Travel ¹	Accommodation	Subsistence
2007/08	NIL	NIL	NIL
2008/09	NIL	NIL	NIL
2009/10	£3,702.45	£6,970.72	£2,923.33
2010/11	£3,479.86	£6,166.79	£2,402.07
2011/12	£13,472.01	£15,269.76	£6,092.38
2012/13	£7,138.22	£10,806.65	£5,845.89

1 ICBAN (Irish Central Border Area Network) does not break down as separate travel costs between Northern Ireland and the Republic Of Ireland. EBR (East Border Region) input is based on travel outside the UK and Ireland.

Small Business Rate Relief Scheme

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 15526/11-15, given that the number of vacant properties with an Net Annual Value (NAV) of £2,000 or less has grown by 23 percent since March 2010, and that the total number of properties with an NAV of £2,000 or less has continued to increase regardless of demand, (i) what engagement he has had with the Department of the Environment on this issue; and (ii) what steps are being taken to stem the rise in the total number of properties and to address the imbalance between need and demand.

(AQW 16799/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I can understand your interest in these statistics and why you have queried them. However, the significant increase in the number of low value entries in the Valuation List does not mean that there is a corresponding rise in the total number of such properties “on the ground”.

Although LPS do not assemble data on the reasons for new entries appearing in the Valuation List, they can occur for a variety of reasons. In this case LPS believe that many of these are due to individual ratepayers requesting the valuation entry to be subdivided or split, in order to avail of a relief or exclusion.

For example the higher rate of small business rate relief or the general non-domestic vacant rating exclusion, both of which have a £2,000 NAV limit. LPS have come to this conclusion because of the increase in the number of individual car parking spaces, which seem to account for a high proportion of the new entries

It is becoming more commonplace for business ratepayers to review their property assets during the continuing downturn and request a revision to minimise their rate liability.

This is not evidence of any imbalance in supply or demand in the property development market. Therefore there has been no engagement with DOE on the matter and I see no reason to take any other action.

Young People not in Education or Training in West Belfast

Mr F McCann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many young people in West Belfast are not in employment, education or training.

(AQW 16805/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Estimates of young people not in employment, education or training are sourced to the Labour Force Survey (LFS). However, these estimates are not available at Parliamentary Constituency level, as the LFS sample size and design does not support the production of sufficiently reliable estimates of this type at constituency level.

For information, during the period July – September 2012, the LFS estimated that there were 8,000 (25.2%) 16-24 year olds in Belfast District Council Area who were not in employment, Government supported training or full-time education.

Peace III Priority 1 Sub Priority 1.1 Regional Projects

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail, for Peace III Priority 1 Sub Priority 1.1 Regional Projects, the (i) amount of grant awarded; (ii) date of the award; (iii) end date of the project as per the letter of offer; and (iv) amount of claimed but disallowed expenditure, for each group that received grants under the (a) Conflict Transformation from the bottom up; and (b) From Prison to peace project titles.

(AQW 16835/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Table 1 attached details the grant awarded, date of award, project end date, and the amounts claimed, disallowed and paid, in respect of each group that received grants under Phase I of the Conflict Transformation from the Bottom Up PEACE III project. Table 2 details the same information in respect of the From Prison to Peace project. The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland is the lead partner for both projects.

Second phases of funding for both projects has been approved by the PEACE III Steering Committee, however, Letters of Offer have not yet issued.

An exchange rate of £1 = €1.25 has been used where required.

TABLE 1 – CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION FROM THE BOTTOM UP

Project Partner	Grant Awarded	Award Date	End Date of Project	Claimed	Disallowed Expenditure	Paid
Committee - (Coiste)	£1,420,734	01/09/2008	30/04/2012	£1,420,410	-	£1,420,410
Come In - (Tar Isteach)	£871,479	01/09/2008	30/04/2012	£871,479	-	£871,479
Come Over - (Tar Anall)	£399,121	01/09/2008	30/04/2012	£402,902	£3,781	£399,121
Come Home - (Tar Abhaile)	£341,845	01/09/2008	30/04/2012	£341,844	-	£341,844
South Armagh Ex-Prisoners (Iar Chimi Ard Mhaca Theas)	£293,236	01/09/2008	30/04/2012	£293,236	£1,656	£291,580
South Derry Ex-Prisoners (Iar Chimi Doire Theas)	£145,591	01/09/2008	30/04/2012	£145,102	-	£145,102
The Rising of the Sun (Éiri na Gréine)	£3,628	01/09/2008	30/04/2012	£3,628	-	£3,628
Friends - (Cairde)	£162,519	01/09/2008	30/04/2012	£162,519	-	£162,519
A New Beginning (Tús Nua)	£325,870	£39,692	31/07/2012	£325,858	-	£325,858
Welcome Home (Fáilte Abhaile)	£837,243	£39,692	31/07/2012	£838,122	£1,703	£836,419
Home Again - (Abhaile Arís)	£768,671	£39,692	31/07/2012	£768,500	-	£768,500
Welcome Clones (Fáilte Cluain Eois)	£527,459	£39,692	31/07/2012	£524,538	-	£524,538
A New Day - (La Nua)	£454,843	£39,692	31/07/2012	£454,543	-	£454,543

TABLE 2 – FROM PRISON TO PEACE

Lead Partner	Grant Awarded	Award Date	End Date of Project	Claimed	Disallowed Expenditure	Paid
Community Foundation NI	£3,073,458	22/12/2008	31/07/2012	£3,033,209	£22,046	£3,011,163

BACKGROUND NOTE

- 1 The information presented is based on a download from the Systems 2007 database on 31 October 2012. The database is live and dynamic and is reliant on funding bodies to provide and update information.
- 2 Second phases of funding for both projects have been approved by the PEACE III Steering Committee. Letters of Offer have not yet issued. Breakdowns of the Phase 2 funding are provided in Tables 3 and 4 below.

TABLE 3 – CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION FROM THE BOTTOM UP

Project Partner	Grant Approved
Committee (Coiste)	£894,437
Come In (Tar Isteach)	£732,847
Come Over (Tar Anall)	£800,075
Come Home (Tar Abhaile)	£341,624
South Armagh Ex-Prisoners (Iar Chimi Ard Mhaca Theas)	£230,651
South Derry Ex-Prisoners (Iar Chimi Doire Theas)	£176,240
The Rising of the Sun (Éiri na Gréine)	£170,621
Friends (Cairde)	£160,079
A New Beginning (Tús Nua)	£310,466
Welcome Home (Fáilte Abhaile)	£685,748
Home Again (Abhaile Arís)	£691,286
Welcome Clones (Fáilte Cluain Eois)	£541,653
A New Day (La Nua)	£359,818
CFNI Management Costs	£723,026
Total	£6,818,571

TABLE 4 – FROM PRISON TO PEACE (INCLUSIVE OF OFMDFM INTERIM FUNDING OF £856,000

Project Partner	Grant Approved
The Key Charter (An Eochair)	£201,949
CHARTER	£404,815
The Ex-Prisoners Committee (Coiste na nIarchimi)	£167,399
EPIC (Central)	£309,283
EPIC (North Ulster)	£205,366
Lisburn PSP (incl South Belfast)	£361,181
North Belfast CD & Transition Group	£309,102
North Down CA	£259,171
The Welcome House (Teach na Failte)	£453,755
The Hubb	£211,124
West Belfast PIP	£378,673
CFNI	£694,382
Total	£3,956,200

Drafted by - Steve Clements, 29 November 2012

Cleared by Head of Division – Maura Young, 29 November 2012

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- Stephen Peover
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Rates Convergence

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consideration he has given to the rates convergence issue in April 2015; (ii) what transitional relief financed by Central Government for ratepayers he will propose; and (iii) for his assessment of the impact of rates convergence.

(AQW 16874/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The issue of rates convergence is a consequence of the local government reform and whilst it is important to note that the Department of the Environment (DOE) has overall policy responsibility for the reform programme, my Department has also been working closely with them on the specific issue of rates convergence, for which I have policy responsibility.

This is a complex and important issue and as such it does not lend itself to a convenient or straightforward solution. Work is progressing on identifying a range of options and this will continue over the coming months, before recommendations are presented to the Executive for decision. My Department will play its part and assist DOE throughout the process.

At this stage I am not in a position to indicate what proposals I would support. What I can say, however, is that this Executive will not preside over a reform programme that is all about effective and efficient delivery of local government, if the immediate consequence is a significant increase in rate bills for some ratepayers. Where the Executive has the ability it will aim to tailor transitional arrangements to meet local needs.

It is too early to say exactly what the impact of rates convergence will be because there are a number of unknown factors to be taken into account, including budget levels for the new councils and the effect of the non domestic rates revaluation scheduled for April 2015. It is also worth noting that any large changes in district rates would be tempered by the regional rate element of rates bills and therefore are not of the scale reported in parts of the local press.

The Executive's wider position on the funding of local government reform has consistently been that:

- (i) local government will be the beneficiaries of the savings which reform will deliver and therefore the up-front costs of implementing the reform should be met by local government; and
- (ii) the functions which are to transfer from central government to local government should be fit for purpose, sufficiently resourced and rates neutral at the point of transfer.

As you will appreciate, these are evolving issues. My Ministerial colleague, Alex Attwood, will report back to the Assembly as matters progress. Rest assured I, along with my Department, will be closely involved in developing balanced and workable policies that facilitate both the reform process and the rating system.

Pre-Qualification Quotation

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, within the public procurement process, what follow-up checks are carried out to ensure that the sub-contractors named for use in the Pre-Qualification Quotation of the successful bidder are in fact engaged, given that the reputation of such sub-contractors contributes to the quality mark awarded.

(AQW 16882/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Procurement Guidance stipulates that Departments should only consent to the replacement of a subcontractor where there are compelling reasons to do so. Where a subcontractor has been assessed as part of the contractor's team, that subcontractor should only be replaced by one of equal standing.

As part of its contract conditions for construction works, Central Procurement Directorate requires contractors to seek acceptance from the Project Manager before appointing subcontractors. To manage this process, the contractor is required to submit a report to the Project Manager setting out details of proposed subcontracts.

Before accepting any subcontract, checks are undertaken to verify that the proposed subcontractor is the firm named by the contractor in its Pre-Qualification Questionnaire.

Pre-Qualification Quotation

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, within the public procurement process in civil engineering projects, whether the Pre-Qualification Quotation documentation, submitted by the successful applicant, is sent to the departmental engineer so that its content and promise can be checked against the work and provisions made.

(AQW 16883/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The process used to select contractors for invitation to tender is set down in Procurement Guidance Note 04/10 – Selection and Pre-Qualification of Contractors.

For civil engineering projects in Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) the Civil Engineer has an integral role in the assessment of the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) during the selection process.

The only information in the PQQ that has a direct read across to the service delivery relates to subcontractors. On occasions tenderers are required to provide details of key subcontractors that the Civil Engineer wishes to consider as part of the selection process.

A tenderer must retain the same named and assessed subcontractors throughout the process. A change is only permitted in exceptional circumstances and would otherwise result in the exclusion of the tender.

Payments from Main Contractors to Sub-Contractors

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, within the public procurement process, what checks are carried out to ensure that after the main contractor is paid, the sub-contractors are paid expeditiously, given the disincentive under which they operate when it comes to making a complaint, because of their dependence on the main contractor.

(AQW 16884/11-15)

Mr Wilson: CPD guidance for public sector contracts includes a number of measures aimed at ensuring prompt payment to subcontractors. These include:

- Payments by main contractors to be made within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice.
- Monthly reporting by main contractors on subcontractor payment progress (where the subcontract value exceeds 1% of the total contract or £10k).
- 'Payment Issues' to be a standing agenda item for project meetings.
- Validation by project managers that subcontractors have received payments due by conducting random checks.
- Exclusion of main contractors from future government tender opportunities for a year if they fail to comply with contract conditions relating to prompt payment of subcontractors.

The Construction Contracts (Amendment) Act (NI), which came into effect on 14 November 2012, will help to improve the legal position of subcontractors in all construction contracts.

While recognising the difficulties faced by subcontractors and their position in the supply chain, they must be cautious when agreeing contracts that they do not agree to overly onerous terms, and must be prepared to seek redress through the remedies available to them.

Rate Rebate Scheme

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the plans for a replacement to the rate rebate scheme that currently operates under the housing benefit system.

(AQW 16907/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Welfare Reform and its implications for the rating system, is something that has been, and is being, actively considered by the Executive Subgroup on Welfare Reform. It is a massive and wide reaching issue and one that I think will have to be tackled by the Executive in 3 distinct phases:

- a holding operation;
- an interim modified scheme; and then
- a long term solution.

In respect of the holding operation the Executive agreed in May of this year to preserve entitlement to the current level of rates support for up to two years, following the change in funding arrangements which will occur in April 2013. The Press Release can be accessed at the link below:

<http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/news-departments/news-dfp/news-releases-dfp-june-2012/news-dfp-010612-finance-minister-sammy.htm>

This holding operation will soon become impracticable and unaffordable and therefore the Executive will have to consider alternatives. Officials in the Department for Social Development are looking at long term solutions that look at a range of non social security benefits that will sit outside Universal Credit and over which Northern Ireland has discretion in spending. This may present an opportunity to better target vulnerable households and make better use of limited resources.

In the meantime, however, I believe we will need to have an interim modified scheme ready when Universal Credit is established. Accordingly, I will be asking the Executive to agree to a preliminary consultation in the New Year.

This will not only present some challenging issues and high level choices to be made, it will also afford stakeholders the opportunity to come forward with evidence. The process will help inform policy direction for a scheme that effectively supports households least able to pay domestic rates. A further public consultation will occur when detailed options are sufficiently developed and impacts assessed.

A helpful consequence of the Social Development Minister's achievement in securing the postponement of the introduction of Universal Credit in NI, to April 2014, is that we may be in a position to allow the current Housing Benefit rebate scheme to roll on as part of social security until April 2014, meaning no change in practical and monetary terms to claimants. This will, however, still require the Executive to make up the 10% funding shortfall as previously agreed, the costs estimates of which are £13 million in 2013-14 and possibly up to £20 million in 2014-15.

Sub-contracting

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether there any provisions in place within the public procurement process to inhibit a contractor, who avoids his full obligations to his sub-contractors by securing a voluntary creditors agreement, from subsequently applying for and securing further Government contracts.

(AQW 16912/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Procurement Board has agreed that any tender for government contracts from a business in administration will not be considered. Central Procurement Directorate is developing guidance to ensure a business is excluded from the tender process immediately it enters administration.

If a contractor on a government contract fails to meet its contractual obligations in relation to payment of subcontractors, due to entering into a voluntary creditors agreement, it may be excluded from

tendering for government contracts for a year in line with the protocol for managing poor contractor performance.

However, if creditors agree to a financial arrangement in relation to non government contracts that enables a contractor to carry on trading, it must be given fair and equal consideration as with any other applicant.

PEACE III and INTERREG IVA Funding

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the (i) PEACE III; and (ii) INTERREG IV funding that has been allocated; and spent in (a) each council district area; and (b) the South Armagh area, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 16937/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Table 1 and Table 2 below present funding awarded to projects based in each Local Government District, and funding spent, under the PEACE III and INTERREG IVA Programmes, in each of the last three years. An exchange rate of £1 = €1.25 has been used.

The information presented was produced by using project address information to allocate a project to a particular postcode and subsequently a Local Government District. Where the project address was insufficient to allocate the project, organisation address details were used.

Due to the strategic nature of PEACE III projects the organisation address is often regional headquarters, but it is unlikely that all elements of the project will be based in these headquarters. This is particularly relevant when organisation address is used in lieu of project address in this geographical analysis.

INTERREG IVA promotes integrated regional development between neighbouring regions on different sides of the border. As a result, all approved projects are cross-border in nature. Whilst funding for a particular project may be focused on one or the other side of the border, it must be shown that the operation has a significant impact on the other. Therefore, due to the cross-border nature of the funding, the scope or impacts of all projects will extend beyond the geographical location of the project itself and cannot be readily assigned to a particular County, Parliamentary Constituency or Local Government District. For example, while a project may have a project address in Armagh, it will also have an impact in the Border Region.

The information recorded on the EU funding database does not enable allocation to the South Armagh area to be detailed.

TABLE 1 – PEACE III

		2009/10 (£)	2010/11 (£)	2011/12 (£)
Armagh	Award	1,774,520.58	6,240,272.24	1,783,910.84
	Spend	1,821,909.04	316,058.99	132,181.45
Antrim	Award	49,097.64	213,483.24	301,548.40
	Spend	25,476.71	122,497.88	8,284.56
Ards	Award	79,983.88	254,525.47	415,242.00
	Spend	65,338.82	162,154.37	-
Ballymena	Award	531,927.94	-	113,160.00
	Spend	510,263.08	-	14,012.12
Ballymoney	Award	-	91,043.20	113,160.00
	Spend	-	96,168.48	1,023.57

		2009/10 (£)	2010/11 (£)	2011/12 (£)
Banbridge	Award	479,136.00	-	733,570.28
	Spend	518,944.84	-	164,280.85
Belfast	Award	15,618,143.70	7,399,943.51	14,827,653.19
	Spend	13,731,361.22	3,184,438.90	1,861,925.82
Carrickfergus	Award	186,230.82	227,598.80	-
	Spend	191,246.11	240,413.64	-
Castlereagh	Award	27,593.56	4,475,382.32	-
	Spend	8,546.60	466,186.74	-
Coleraine	Award	273,934.73	1,154,806.71	2,085,722.80
	Spend	288,627.93	741,402.92	424,858.53
Cookstown	Award	1,996,188.61	260,294.90	508,081.10
	Spend	705,344.74	259,152.96	8,825.62
Craigavon	Award	1,022,433.26	6,148,272.24	681,580.16
	Spend	1,099,533.38	216,357.87	51,688.36
Derry	Award	3,726,742.63	178,157.08	6,790,865.26
	Spend	3,733,998.89	140,744.01	636,856.44
Down	Award	410,355.13	197,550.02	651,185.16
	Spend	361,601.77	181,522.91	122,220.28
Dungannon	Award	763,149.74	210,215.40	293,601.44
	Spend	781,955.18	171,061.46	173,492.25
Fermanagh	Award	1,422,095.23	148,569.42	464,353.34
	Spend	1,441,574.18	107,779.01	9,825.31
Larne	Award	-	-	113,155.22
	Spend	-	-	4,909.18
Limavady	Award	-	54,004.00	113,160.00
	Spend	-	47,309.90	6,683.32
Lisburn	Award	537,148.48	617,866.86	17,493,504.68
	Spend	486,121.45	586,084.91	102,708.38
Magherafelt	Award	472,290.17	223,341.29	611,506.99
	Spend	486,639.51	213,890.32	251,001.17
Moyle	Award	-	-	113,160.00
	Spend	-	-	13,501.02
Newry and Mourne	Award	1,632,247.56	164,544.00	1,804,318.28
	Spend	1,746,880.61	167,263.46	618,808.26

		2009/10 (£)	2010/11 (£)	2011/12 (£)
Newtownabbey	Award	412,052.37	202,981.68	893,107.48
	Spend	413,509.41	142,558.58	164,730.98
North Down	Award	619,851.35	861,114.58	1,064,720.06
	Spend	588,978.15	734,306.77	193,112.39
Omagh	Award	1,302,450.35	-	2,041,684.56
	Spend	1,275,432.78	-	114,536.75
Strabane	Award	1,078,584.50	-	282,433.79
	Spend	1,100,314.30	-	59,758.11

TABLE 2 – INTERREG IVA

INTERREG IVA		2009/10 (£)	2010/11 (£)	2011/12 (£)
Armagh	Award	1,381,654.15	3,843,696.52	-
	Spend	1,177,720.41	585,724.70	-
Antrim	Award	383,442.69	-	205,061.56
	Spend	131,270.50	-	-
Ards	Award	4,113.32	-	-
	Spend	-	-	-
Ballymena	Award	3,779,476.58	5,345,611.24	2,168,735.32
	Spend	2,557,567.58	30,357.80	302,485.08
Ballymoney	Award	-	-	-
	Spend	-	-	-
Banbridge	Award	-	-	-
	Spend	-	-	-
Belfast	Award	7,239,919.12	20,608,523.11	1,618,271.88
	Spend	3,342,948.01	11,487,626.11	5,923.33
Carrickfergus	Award	-	-	-
	Spend	-	-	-
Castlereagh	Award	-	2,084,393.11	-
	Spend	-	804,870.69	-
Coleraine	Award	118,437.60	-	-
	Spend	129,568.62	-	-
Cookstown	Award	59,726.40	-	-
	Spend	50,921.92	-	-

INTERREG IVA		2009/10 (£)	2010/11 (£)	2011/12 (£)
Craigavon	Award	-	-	-
	Spend	-	-	-
Derry	Award	9,644,381.58	2,006,428.80	1,257,999.48
	Spend	4,503,703.73	297,903.45	-
Down	Award	-	-	-
	Spend	-	-	-
Dungannon	Award	-	437,909.08	-
	Spend	-	-	-
Fermanagh	Award	2,188,307.40	8,829,527.68	639,904.00
	Spend	1,450,228.65	1,806,513.48	-
Larne	Award	26,337.57	3,226,862.28	-
	Spend	-	-	-
Limavady	Award	2,739,713.08	-	-
	Spend	2,799,756.78	-	-
Lisburn	Award	221,779.17	-	-
	Spend	96,834.31	-	-
Magherafelt	Award	-	-	-
	Spend	-	-	-
Moyle	Award	491,390.40	-	-
	Spend	556,780.00	-	-
Newry and Mourne	Award	831,888.84	5,239,063.38	12,692,687.64
	Spend	654,504.09	1,593,288.35	4,231.02
Newtownabbey	Award	-	-	785,968.88
	Spend	-	-	7,151.37
North Down	Award	-	-	-
	Spend	-	-	-
Omagh	Award	-	-	-
	Spend	-	-	-
Strabane	Award	-	283,360.00	-
	Spend	-	-	-

Rates Exemption

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail all the types of groups, organisations or individuals who qualify for rates exemptions.

(AQW 16993/11-15)

Mr Wilson: There is a wide range of rating exemptions, reliefs and exclusions available to qualifying ratepayers under the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977. In many cases, these go beyond what is available in Great Britain. Of course, every relief granted while assisting groups or individuals means less money for public services in Northern Ireland.

Any group, organisation or individual may qualify for rate reliefs and/or exemptions. Qualification in some instances is automatic, for example, the domestic maximum 'cap' or small business rate relief, whereas others are by application and circumstance, for example, Housing Benefit or empty shops rate concession. The following table lists the main reliefs and exemptions currently available.

DOMESTIC RELIEFS AND EXEMPTIONS

- **4% (early payment) discount:** Reduction for those that pay their rate bill by the date requested by Land & Property Services (around one month after the bill is due).
- **Maximum Cap:** Provision that caps the rates liability for properties with a Capital Value above £400,000.
- **Disabled person's allowance:** 25% reduction in rates liability for properties adapted, or with additional facilities, to meet the needs of a resident disabled person.
- **Housing Benefit:** Help with rates for those on low incomes.
- **Church Houses:** A 50% partial exemption from rates for houses used by religious ministers of any denomination.
- **Landlord allowance:**
- Article 20 (7.5% allowance): Article 21 (12.5% allowance):

An allowance is awarded to landlords liable to pay rates on their property (Article 20 is obligatory; for properties of certain values and with certain rent frequency). Article 21 is a voluntary arrangement.

The allowance acts as mechanism to increase and strengthen revenue collection for rental properties, through the landlord paying rates, where these are often of a temporary or transient nature and would otherwise give rise to major revenue collection difficulties.

- **Low Income Rate Relief Scheme:** A local supplement to Housing Benefit, for those on low income who are in receipt of either partial Housing Benefit or just outside the Housing Benefit thresholds.
- **Lone Pensioner Allowance:** Ratepayers aged 70 or over and living alone (with some exceptions) may be entitled to a 20% reduction in their rates. Entitlement is not affected by income or savings.
- **Developer Exclusion:** Developers will get 100% relief for 12 months from the date of completing a domestic property (or until sold)

NON-DOMESTIC RELIEFS AND EXEMPTIONS

- **Charities:** Rates are generally not payable if a property is occupied by a charity and used for public benefit or for charitable purposes. The rates exemption applies only to the portion of the property occupied and used for such purposes and is subject to certain restrictions.
- **Community halls:** An exemption from rates is provided where premises are occupied by certain bodies where the premises are used, or are available for use by other organisations for charitable/public benefit purposes. There are certain exclusions.
- **Farmhouses:** A valuation allowance awarded where a house is situated on a farm and used and occupied by someone whose primary occupation is farming on that land.
- **Freight Transport relief:** Occupiers of freight transport properties are entitled to 75% rate relief.
- **Hardship Relief:** A measure that gives DFP the discretion to reduce rates in exceptional circumstances where hardship would otherwise result.
- **Industrial derating:** Manufacturing firms occupying qualifying industrial properties pay 30% of the normal occupied rates, providing support to the manufacturing sector.
- **Quarries and mines:** A 50% reduction is applied to the Net Annual Value of mines and quarries, followed by the application industrial derating.
- **Rural ATMs:** Exemption from rates for ATMs in designated rural areas.
- **Sport and recreational relief:** Rate relief is available for premises which are occupied for the purposes of physical recreation at an amateur level
- **Vacant rating (initial 3 month exemption):** Generally commercial properties subject to vacant rating are exempt from the charge for the first three months.
- **Vacant rating (50% relief):** Properties subject to commercial vacant rating are chargeable to rates at 50% of the occupied rate.
- **Vacant rating exclusions** can be awarded, by application, if the property meets any of the prescribed, qualifying criterion.
- **Window displays:** Vacant shops can have a display (non-commercial and non-political) no more than 1.5 metres in depth without attracting a rate liability.
- **Empty shops rate concession:** Where a property becomes occupied and was previously vacant (used for retail purposes) for a period of 12 months, rates will be charged at 50% for the first 12 months.
- **Small Business Rate Relief:** relief for certain properties with an NAV less than £10,000.

Small Business Rate Relief Scheme

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the impact that the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme can have in rejuvenating town centres; and whether he has considered extending the conditions of eligibility or the duration of the one year concession.
(AQW 16994/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Small Business Rate Relief scheme is not specifically targeted at town centres as the Executive decided not to target specific areas in order to provide support to the wider business community.

At present, it is too early to judge the scheme's full impact on our town centres. However, this is one of the areas that my Department will look at in the context of the scheme's evaluation which is due to take place in 2014.

In relation to your second question, to help build on the success of the empty shops rates concession during the past year, I announced to the Assembly on Monday 26 November that I intend to extend the scheme to allow applications for the one year concession through to 31 March 2015, subject to Assembly approval. There are no plans to alter the conditions of eligibility or the duration of the award.

I trust I can rely on your support and that of your party when I present the required subordinate legislation for the empty shops rates concession to the Assembly in a few weeks time.

NI Direct: Website

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many (i) hits; (ii) visits; and (iii) unique users have been recorded by the NI Direct website, in each year since its launch in April 2009.

(AQW 17041/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The number of (i) hits (Page Impressions); (ii) visits; and (iii) unique users (visitors) recorded by the nidirect website, in each year since its launch in April 2009 are outlined overleaf.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13 (up to 21 Nov)
Page Impressions	4,191,250	9,231,199	14,728,008	12,031,214
Visits	1,526,708	3,118,686	4,832,779	4,611,371
Unique Visitors	1,353,048	2,628,709	3,963,840	3,889,308

Footnote

- 1 Page impression: The viewing by a visitor of any page on the site. Each page viewed counts as one page impression.
- 2 Visits: The number of times each visitor has visited the site over the specified period. A visit is a series of actions that begins when a visitor views their first page from the server, and ends when the visitor leaves the site or remains idle beyond the idle-time limit. Therefore a visit can be comprised of several page impressions
- 3 Unique visitor: A computer from which a person/persons are browsing. Each visitor is identified using a combination of IP address, domain name or cookie. Each unique visitor for a period may make multiple visits to the site.

NI Direct: Website

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many information items are available on the NI Direct website.

(AQW 17042/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The nidirect website currently has 6,044 interactive pages of content providing information across 16 themes and a further 1500 information documents in pdf format. It provides access to more than 100 interactive tools and applications, for example, benefits adviser, order a birth certificate, book your MOT, driving theory test and driving test, cold weather payments checker and claim your state pension.

NI Direct: Budget

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the budget allocated to the NI Direct website in (i) 2012-13; (ii) 2013-14; and (iii) 2014-15.

(AQW 17043/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The budget allocated to the nidirect website for 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 is provided below.

Financial Year	Amount
2012/13	£749,000
2013/14	£876,000
2014/15	£876,000

NI Direct

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many staff support the NI Direct website broken down by (i) content; (ii) editorial; (iii) management; and (iv) marketing and other functions.

(AQW 17045/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Central Editorial team has 7 posts and provides the editorial function, marketing and management. The central team contributes to content across all 16 themes, particularly when new areas of content are being developed.

Additional support is provided by 8 department-based part-time theme managers.

There is also a team of 7 staff who provide technical development and support.

Barnett Consequentials

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what contact he has had with Treasury regarding possible Barnett consequentials that have not been recognised or contested by his Department in the past two years.

(AQW 17083/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Executive, along with the other Devolved Administrations, disputed the UK Government's decision not to allocate any funding to the Devolved Administrations in respect of the London Olympics. This dispute was eventually settled with a one-off allocation of £5.4 million in 2011-12.

There have been no other formal disputes over the last two years. However, my officials routinely challenge HM Treasury on spending announcements to ensure that Barnett Allocations are paid when they are properly due.

SEUPB

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether SEUPB approved capital projects are over allocated and over budget; and, if so, (i) by how much; (ii) which overallocated projects fall within the capital programme; and (iii) what is the commitment on each project.

(AQW 17093/11-15)

Mr Wilson: For the purposes of this answer it is assumed that PEACE III Theme 2.1 (Creating Shared Public Spaces) relates, as it is the key theme focussed on funding capital projects.

The total budget allocation for PEACE III Theme 2.1 is £65.6 million. Letters of Offer worth £62,090,758.18 have issued. An exchange rate of £1 = €1.25 has been used.

The PEACE III Steering Committee has approved additional projects worth £17,030,238.40, however, Letters of Offer have not yet issued to these projects. The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), as Programme Managing Authority, is working with the relevant accountable government departments and with DFP in order to agree on the most appropriate level of programme commitment to projects, taking into account factors such as slippage and exchange rate variations, and the need to maximise receipts from the European Commission.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what transfers have there been from Measures 2:2 to Measure 2:1 under the current European Regional Development Fund; and when these transfers took place.

(AQW 17094/11-15)

Mr Wilson: To date there has been no transfer of funds between Themes 2.2 and 2.1 of the PEACE III Programme.

PEACE III

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, given the potential for the reallocation of funding between programme themes under PEACE III, what underspends are currently anticipated within each programme theme, and to what extent.

(AQW 17096/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Table 1 below details the overall budgets and commitment to date under each theme of the PEACE III Programme. Commitment refers to projects which have received a letter of offer.

TABLE 1 – PEACE III BUDGET AND COMMITMENT BY THEME

Theme	Overall Budget (£)	Commitment to Date (£)	Potential Underspend (£)
1.1	112,734,640.00	116,896,436.55	-4,161,796.55
1.2	40,000,000.00	33,829,708.70	6,170,291.30
2.1	65,600,000.00	62,090,758.18	3,509,241.82
2.2	32,000,000.00	29,417,610.65	2,582,389.35
3.1	15,978,805.60	13,802,119.41	2,176,686.19
Total	266,313,445.60	256,036,633.49	10,276,812.11

However, in addition to the commitment figures presented in Table 1, a further sixteen projects approved by Steering Committee have not yet been issued with a letter of offer. The value of these projects is detailed in Table 2.

TABLE 2 – ADDITIONAL PROJECTS APPROVED BY PEACE III STEERING COMMITTEE

Theme	Additional Steering Committee approved projects (£)
1.1	11,019,435.00
1.2	3,870,458.00
2.1	17,030,238.40
2.2	0
3.1	0
Total	31,920,131.40

The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), PEACE III Managing Authority, will bring forward proposals for reallocations between Themes at the appropriate time, should it become necessary to do so in order to ensure full commitment of the PEACE III budget until the end of the programming period.

An exchange rate of £1 = €1.25 has been used where required.

Small Business Rate Relief Scheme

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 16509/11-15, when the changes to the small business rates relief scheme will come into effect.

(AQW 17107/11-15)

Mr Wilson: As I announced in my statement to the Assembly on Monday 26 November, the latest changes to the small business rate relief will come into effect on 1 April 2013, subject to the progression of the required legislation.

The full text of my statement is available at the following link:-

<http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/statement-261112-non-domestic-rating.pdf>

I trust I can rely on your support and that of your party for the Statutory Rules associated with the measures outlined in the statement as they work through the Assembly.

Further Education Colleges

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he is aware that further education colleges in England are not non-departmental public bodies; and what steps he is taking to reverse the requirements of the further education colleges.

(AQW 17123/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I was made aware that Further Education (FE) colleges in England are not non-departmental public bodies following amendments to legislation taken forward by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Following a request from my officials in February 2012, the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) put forward a case for deferral of the reclassification of FE Colleges to non-departmental public bodies. However, this was unsuccessful and to date the DEL has not submitted a further case.

Further Education Colleges

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel when he became aware that further education colleges in England were no longer non-departmental public bodies.

(AQW 17124/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I became aware that further education colleges in England were no longer non-departmental public bodies in January 2012.

Further Education Colleges

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what are the benefits from the further education colleges change of status to non-departmental public bodies.

(AQW 17125/11-15)

Mr Wilson: While the Minister for Employment and Learning is answerable to the Assembly for the further education colleges, non-departmental public body status permits their services or functions to be carried out at arms length from the Department. Change of status should bring with it greater transparency and accountability in the use of public funds through the financial and management controls required of non-departmental public bodies.

British Telecom

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what options there were to awarding British Telecom the contract for handling calls from members of the public to Government agencies; and the cost variances to the taxpayer of these options.

(AQW 17141/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The NI Direct Strategic Partner full business case considered two models for the delivery of the range of services required. Both models use a combination of NICS and private sector resources to deliver the services outlined overleaf.

Comparative costs available reflect the total cost of the NI Direct Programme, including the contract element, under the different models. Using these, the 10 year net cost variance between the lowest priced and highest priced option is £8,536,873.

	Model One	Model Two
Contact Centre Staff	NICS	NICS & Private Sector
Business Development	NICS	NICS & Private Sector
Flooding Incident Line/ Emergency Response Service	Private Sector	Private Sector
Managed ICT	Private Sector	Private Sector

Annual EU Budget

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is deemed to be Northern Ireland's share of the UK's gross national contribution to the annual EU budget.

(AQW 17208/11-15)

Mr Wilson: UK contributions to the EU Budget are managed nationally and reported to Parliament by HM Treasury.

Contributions to the EU Budget are for the whole of the UK and the Treasury does not allocate these contributions to individual countries.

Annual Reports

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is the percentage of the annual exports to (i) the rest of the UK; (ii) the Republic of Ireland; (iii) the remainder of the EU and (iv) the rest of the world.

(AQW 17210/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The information requested is currently available for the manufacturing sector only, for the period 2010/11. 2011/12 data will be available by the end of 2012.

Published data from the Manufacturing Sales and Exports Survey shows that Northern Ireland manufacturing businesses reported sales outside Northern Ireland of £12.4 billion in 2010/11.

The percentage of total annual sales outside Northern Ireland to (i) Great Britain was 59.2%; (ii) the Republic of Ireland was 9.9%; (iii) the rest of the EU was 9.9%; and (iv) the rest of the world was 21.0%. Additional information is provided in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: BROAD DESTINATION SALES AND PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SALES FROM NORTHERN IRELAND MANUFACTURING BUSINESSES 2010/11

	Total External Sales(1):	Great Britain	Republic of Ireland	Rest of European Union	Rest of World	Total Sales(2)
£m	£12,384	£7,327	£1,230	£1,228	£2,599	£15,914
% of sales	100.0	59.2	9.9	9.9	21.0	

Source: Manufacturing Sales and Exports Survey 2010/11, Economic & Labour Market Statistics Branch, NISRA

Footnotes:

1. Total External Sales = all sales outside Northern Ireland.
2. Total Sales = all sales including sales within Northern Ireland.

Foyle: Redundancy

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people in the Foyle constituency have been made redundant in each of the last five years.

(AQW 17222/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The table overleaf details the number of confirmed redundancies in the Foyle Parliamentary Constituency Area (PCA) and Northern Ireland as a whole in each of the last 5 years.

Please note that under the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (amended 8 October 2006) companies are only legally required to notify the Department of impending redundancies of 20 or more employees. Also, redundancies do not necessarily equate to job losses, for example, employees who do not qualify for a redundancy package, those on temporary contracts, will not be incorporated into the redundancy figures.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012*
Foyle PCA	297	673	145	180	13
NI Total	2,782	4,596	2,096	1,808	2,195

* Total Confirmed redundancies notified to DFP Economic and Labour Market Statistics Research Branch to 31st October 2012

Peace IV Programme

Mr A Maginness asked Finance and Personnel to outline the status of negotiations regarding a Peace IV funding package from the EU.

(AQO 2969/11-15)

Mr Wilson: For the first time at this stage in the development cycle for a future EU Structural Fund programming period, negotiations with the EU have resulted in the inclusion of a provision for a PEACE Programme in the European Territorial Co-operation draft regulation. However, a future programme remains dependent on final agreement of the EU regulations and budget. Discussions with the United Kingdom and Irish government in respect of the financing of a PEACE IV Programme are ongoing.

Implementation of Projects

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the discretionary budgets or unrestricted capital available to each Minister for the implementation of projects.

(AQW 17359/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Once the Executive has agreed budget allocations to the departments, individual Ministers have considerable discretion in terms of prioritising both resource and capital budgets. My Statement to the Assembly on 2012-13 October Monitoring and 2013-14 & 2014-15 Budget Realignment included the latest Budget position for each department for the next two financial years.

Once the Budgets are set, the discretion to move resources throughout the financial year is subject to the in-year monitoring rules, which, for example, imposes restrictions on moving resources between ring-fenced areas, key spending areas and categories of expenditure. Such movements are subject to Executive approval, which ensures that the Executive can manage the overall Budget position in line with the public expenditure rules and Budget Controls set by HM Treasury.

Departmental Accounting Officers

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the responsibility of departmental accounting officers in relation to discretionary budgets or unrestricted capital used by Ministers for the implementation of projects.

(AQW 17361/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The responsibilities of departmental accounting officers, including the effective financial management of all resources at their disposal, are set out in detail in Chapter 3 of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI), which was issued in June 2008.

Treasury Statement of Funding Policy

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the level of participation by each Minister as part of the process on the consultation and agreement between the Executive, the Secretary of State and the Chief Secretary of the Treasury, on the Treasury Statement of Funding Policy: Funding the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and Northern Ireland Assembly, which was published in 2010.

(AQW 17383/11-15)

Mr Wilson: It is the responsibility of the Finance Minister, acting on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly, to consult on the Statement of Funding Policy with HM Treasury. The Policy itself is then formally agreed between the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Should HM Treasury or the other devolved administrations suggest significant revisions to the Statement of Funding Policy, I would of course draw these to the attention of Executive colleagues.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Compensation

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much money was spent on compensating whistle blowers in his Department in (i) 2009; (ii) 2010; and (iii) 2011.

(AQW 16966/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): No compensation was paid to whistleblowers in DHSSPS for any of the three years requested.

Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on how many occasions since 2003 the Fire and Rescue Service, or its predecessor, has sent an Assistant Chief Fire Officer Technical and a Uniform Stores Manager to a trade fair where uniform and equipment were available for purchase; and to state the location of the trade fairs.

(AQW 16976/11-15)

Mr Poots: Between October 2006 and November 2012, the table below details the dates, purpose and locations of each trade fair attended.

Date	Destination	Flight Cost	Accommodation Cost	Purpose
18.10.06	London	£349.84	£366.00	Attending Emergency Services Show & Conference
28.03.07	Edinburgh	£118.92	£160.00	Attending Scottish Consortium Exhibition & Seminar
22.05.07	Birmingham	£317.88	£474.00	Attending Fire & Rescue Exhibition at NEC

Date	Destination	Flight Cost	Accommodation Cost	Purpose
17.09.07	Dusseldorf	£269.20	£1,032.00	Attending A&A Exhibition
27.11.07	Birmingham	£328.88	£700.00	Attending Emergency Services Show 2007
07.05.08	Galway	N/A	£324.60	Attending Fire Show
13.05.08	Birmingham	£506.89	£160.00	Attending Health & Safety Expo.
26.08.08	Liverpool	£152.99	£198.00	Attending Fire Exhibition
18.11.08	Birmingham	£862.62	£1,053.96	Attending Emergency Services Show 2008
27.08.08	Liverpool	£162.80	£396.00	Attending Fire Exhibition
11.05.09	Aberdeen/ Birmingham	£197.43	£203.12	Attending CFOA's Procurement meeting & Fire Show
03.11.09	Dusseldorf	£477.00	£682.02	Attending A&A Trade Fair
23.11.09	Birmingham	£626.80	£529.76	Attending Emergency Services Show 2009
24.11.09	Birmingham	£260.92	£160.00	Attending Emergency Services Show 2009
24.11.10	Birmingham	£924.25	£310.00	Attending Emergency Services Show 2010
05.07.11	Glasgow	£289.94	£264.99	Attending Scottish Emergency Services Show
05.07.11	Glasgow	£116.98	£95.00	Attending Scottish Emergency Services Show
23.11.11	Birmingham	£327.80	£152.00	Attending Emergency Services Show 2011
23.11.11	Birmingham	£327.92	£152.00	Attending Emergency Services Show 2011
21.11.12	Birmingham	£465.85	£218.95	Attending Emergency Services Show 2012

Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the cost of the wood materials purchased by the Fire and Rescue Service over the last seven years for training purposes; (ii) the specification of the material; (iii) the wood materials that were delivered to the wrong specification; and (iv) whether the incorrect wood materials were returned or what disposal method was used.

(AQW 16978/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) The cost of wood materials purchased by NIFRS in the last seven years for training purposes is £46,352.50
- (ii) The specification of the material is outlined in the attached table.
- (iii) NIFRS has confirmed that none of the wood materials purchased and delivered were to the wrong specification.
- (iv) No incorrect wood materials were received.

SPECIFICATION OF WOOD MATERIAL ORDERED BY NIFRS

Item Description

- XNON PRE-CUT CHIPBOARD - PER BATCH WITH OFFCUTS
- XNON PRE-CUT CLIPBOARDS
- XNON PRE-CUT CLIPBOARD SHEETS: 96" x 44" x QTY 40 96" x 21" x QTY 140 88" x 44"
- XNON BATCHES OF PRECUT CHIPBOARD WITH OFF-CUTS
- XNON PRECUT CHIPBOARD WITH OFF-CUTS
- 100 X 100MM BY 14 FOOT CARCASSING TIMBER
- 100 X 50MM BY 14 FOOT CARCASSING TIMBER
- 2440 X 1220 X 18MM SHEETS OF THREE QUARTER PLYWOOD
- SUPPLY 45 SHEETS OF OSB BOARD 18MM X 8FT X 4FT
- SUPPLY 45 SHEETS OF OSB BOARD 18MM X 8FT X4FT
- SUPPLY 115 SHEETS OF OSB BOARD SIZE 2440MM X 1220MM X 18MM
- 4 X 4 X 4.8M LENGTH C16 CONSTRUCTION GRADE TIMBER
- 6 X 2 X 4.8M LENGTH C16 CONSTRUCTION GRADE TIMBER
- 4 X 2 X 4.8M LENGTH C16 CONSTRUCTION GRADE TIMBER
- 8 X 3 X 4.8M LENGTH C16 CONSTRUCTION GRADE TIMBER
- 8 X 4 SHEET OF MTCC PLYWOOD
- SUPPLY OF ORIENTED STRANDBOARD (350 SHEETS)
- SUPPLY OF ORIENTED STRANDBOARD (350 SHEETS)
- 2440 X 1220 X 18.0MM ORIENTED STRAND BOARD OSB2
- TC047050T - FSC SHT FSC MIXED 70% SA-COC-002046 47X50MM CARCASSING TREATED 20/4.80
- SUPPLY OF ORIENTED STRANDBOARD (350 SHEETS)
- SUPPLY OF ORIENTED STRANDBOARD (350 SHEETS)
- SUPPLY OF ORIENTED STRANDBOARD (350 SHEETS)
- SUPPLY OF ORIENTED STRANDBOARD (350 SHEETS)

Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the overseas visits made by the Chairman and senior staff of the Fire and Rescue Service in the last three years, including the purpose of the visits and the cost in flights, hotel accommodation and other related expenses.

(AQW 16980/11-15)

Mr Poots: The table, below, details the overseas visits made by the Chairman and senior staff of NIFRS from November 2009 to date.

Date	Rank	Destination	Flights	Accommodation (Not Inc Vat)	Any Other Costs	Purpose Of Journey
03.11.09	Stores Manager	Dusseldorf	£477.00	£454.48	£996.60	Attending A&A Trade Fair
	Assistant Chief Fire Officer					
29.01.10	Area Commander	Charlottesville USA	£716.79	£77.00	N/A	Attending a Federal Executive Institute
07.06.10	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Leipzig	£906.91	N/A	N/A	Attending Fire Fighter Conference
	Transport Manager					
	Stores Manager					
31.08.11	Chairman	Newark USA	£703.70	N/A	£290.07	Attending WPFPG Events
22.08.11	CFO	New York	N/A	N/A	N/A	Attending WPFPG Events
24.09.10	Area Commander	Washington USA	£1,020.66	£107.89	N/A	Attending Leaders for a Democratic Society Programme
15.11.11	Transport Manager	Amsterdam	£230.96	£158.54	£49.53	Visit to Estepe Volvo Factory to inspect new Volvo Chassis
	Transport Engineer					

Notes: There have been no overseas visits during 2012 to date

- 1 Overseas visits are defined as anywhere outside the UK.
- 2 Other costs are deemed to be travel subsistence, taxis, accommodation
- 3 Senior staff includes Area Commander and above for uniformed staff and Principal Officer grade and above for Support staff.
- 4 CFO's visit to New York USA on 22/8/2011 was in a dual role, ie, as Vice-Chair of World Police & Fire Games 2013 Board and as NIFRS Chief Fire Officer. All travel and subsistence costs were met by WPPFG Board.

Patient Waiting Times

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the waiting times for the treatment of patients across the health spectrum in comparison with when he came to office; and how this compares with the targets which are in place.

(AQW 17052/11-15)

Mr Poots: Progress has been made across a range of areas with particular focus required to benefit all users of the HSC. A comparison of waiting times at 30 June 2011 compared to 30 September 2012 is set out in the attached table. It should be noted that although a comparison is provided based on current targets, there will have been occasions where targets will have changed to reflect my priorities since coming into office.

ANNEX A

ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST ALL TARGETS AND STANDARDS SET OUT IN THE 2012/13 COMMISSIONING PLAN DIRECTION

SEPTEMBER 2012

Target	Position at 30 June 2011	Position at 30 September 2012
From April 2012, 95% of patients, where clinically appropriate, wait no longer than 48 hours for inpatient treatment for hip fractures	77.5%	89.5%
From April 2012, ensure that 95% of patients urgently referred with a suspected cancer begin their first definitive treatment within 62 days.	82.6% treated within 62 days	September data has not been published. 81.9% treated within 62 days in June 2012.
95% of patients attending any Type 1, 2 or 3 A&E Department are either treated and discharged home, or admitted, within 4 hours of their arrival in the department	Type 1 – 79.3% Type 2 – 89.5% Type 3 – 99.9%	Type 1 – 77.7% Type 2 – 93.6% Type 3 – 99.9%
No patient attending any emergency department should wait longer than 12 hours	970 waiting longer than 12 hours	295 waiting longer than 12 hours

Target	Position at 30 June 2011	Position at 30 September 2012
From April 2012, at least 50% of patients wait no longer than nine weeks for their first outpatient appointment, increasing to 60% by March 2013.	37.9% > 9wks	30.6% > 9wks
From April 2012, no patient will be waiting longer than 21 weeks for their first outpatient appointment, decreasing to 18 weeks by March 2013.	15,561 (13.2%)> 21 weeks	5,610 (5.2%) > 21 weeks
From April 2012, no patient waits longer than nine weeks for a diagnostic test (13 weeks for a daycase endoscopy).	6,504 (14.6%) > 9 wks 7,805(40.1%) > 13 wks	10,269 (19.8%) > 9 weeks 1,964 (17.4%) > 13 weeks
From April 2012, at least 50% of inpatients and daycases are treated within 13 weeks, increasing to 60% by March 2013.	40.3% > 13wks	40.1% > 13wks
From April 2012, no patient will be waiting longer than 36 weeks for inpatient or daycase treatment, decreasing to 30 weeks by March 2013.	2,859 (5.0%) > 36 weeks	2,029 (4.0%) > 36 weeks
From April 2012, no patient should wait longer than 9 months to commence NICE approved specialist therapies for rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis or ankylosing spondylitis, decreasing to 3 months by September 2012.	290 > 3 months	1 > 3 months
From April 2012, no patient waits longer than nine weeks from referral to commencement of AHP treatment.	Month of June 2011: 4,111 waiting longer than 9 weeks.	Month of September 2012: 870 waiting longer than 9 weeks.
From April 2012, no patient waits longer than 9 weeks to access child and adolescent or adult mental health services; and 13 weeks for psychological therapies (any age).	Month of June 2011: 95 waiting longer than 9 weeks for mental health services; 202 waiting longer than 13 weeks for psychological therapies.	Month of September 2012: 521 waiting longer than 9 weeks for mental health services; 606 waiting longer than 13 weeks for psychological therapies.

Maternity Units

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the capacity for deliveries in the maternity units of the (i) Altnagevlin; (ii) Causeway; and (iii) Antrim Area hospitals; and how many deliveries have there been in each maternity unit over the last year.

(AQW 17054/11-15)

Mr Poots: The births and funded capacity for deliveries at the maternity units at Altnagevlin, Causeway and Antrim are as follows –

Unit	Births 2011/12*1	Funded capacity for deliveries12/13
Altnagevlin	2949	2908
Causeway	1422	1421
Antrim	2616	2620

It should be noted that capacity within hospitals changes over time to meet demand. Capacity in a maternity unit cannot be seen in isolation from other hospital services. Key drivers on capacity within a maternity unit include: (a) the physical environment; (b) the staffing complement of both professional and administrative staff and skill mix; and, (c) the complexity of the pregnancy.

*1 – 11/12 is the latest whole year statistics available. It should be noted that the number of births does not equate to the number of deliveries as one delivery may result in a multiple birth.

Independent Funding Request

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people made an Independent Funding Request for drugs in the last three years; and how much money (i) was requested; and (ii) awarded.

(AQW 17075/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am advised by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) that Information on individual funding requests (IFRs) for drugs has only been held centrally by the HSCB since 1 January 2012. Earlier information and analysis of IFRs for drugs could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. From 1 January 2012 to 30 September 2012 a total of 181 IFRs for drugs has been processed by the HSCB. IFRs do not always state the amount of funding sought and therefore it is not possible to quantify how much money these IFRs represent. However a total of £1.758m of funding has been identified to meet the costs associated with IFRs for drugs approved between January 2012 and 30 September 2012.

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of legal actions the Northern Health and Social Care Trust has been involved in each of the past three years; (ii) the number of the actions that related to (a) clinical negligence; (b) social care negligence; (c) breach of contract; (d) employer liability; (e) personal injury; (f) judicial review; and (iii) the amount paid out in respect of compensation and legal and administrative costs involving each of these actions.

(AQW 17106/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is not possible to provide discrete information for clinical and social care negligence cases.

Table 1 details the number of clinical/social care negligence cases that remained open at 31st March for the last three years, as well as the number which were settled or closed for the Northern HSC Trust.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF CLINICAL/SOCIAL CARE NEGLIGENCE CASES OPEN, SETTLED AND CLOSED AT 31ST MARCH 2010-2012

Outcome of Cases at 31st March	2010	2011	2012
Open ¹	396	393	377
Settled	28	30	20
Closed	34	62	76
Cases Open at Any Stage During The Year ²	458	485	473

Source: DHSSPS CN1 Annual Information Return

- 1 The outcome of 29 cases was unknown at 31st March 2010. These have been included in the figure for cases which remained 'Open' at 31st March 2010
- 2 Cases Open at Any Stage During the Years refers to the period 1st April - 31st March

It should be noted it is not possible to combine these figures to provide a three year total as there may be overlap, for example, a case opened five years ago that is still currently open will be included in the figure for cases open at 31st March 2010 and also in the figure for cases open at 31st March 2012.

Table 2 below details the length of time cases had been open at 31st March 2012, by the outcome of the case.

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF CLINICAL/SOCIAL CARE NEGLIGENCE CASES OPEN AT ANY STAGE DURING THE YEAR, BY AGE OF CASE (2011/12)

Length of Time Open	Outcome at Year End			No. Open During Year
	Open	Settled	Closed	
Less than 1 year	74	0	6	80
1 year to < 3 years	154	3	18	175
3 years to < 5 years	85	9	25	119
5 years to < 10 years	54	8	26	88
10 years to < 15 years	9	0	1	10
15 years to < 20 years	1	0	0	1
Total	377	20	76	473

Source: DHSSPS CN1 Annual Information Return

Table 3 details the total payments for all clinical/social care negligence cases open during 2009/10 - 2011/12 in the Northern HSC Trust. It should be noted that costs associated with a case may not be paid out in the same financial year and therefore the information below refers to the amount paid on each open case up to and including 31st March of the respective year.

TABLE 3: AMOUNT PAID ON CLINICAL/SOCIAL CARE NEGLIGENCE CASES OPEN IN THE NORTHERN HSC TRUST AT 31 MARCH (2010 – 2012)

Total Payments at 31st March	2010	2011	2012
Damages Paid	£3,630,514	£1,290,790	£1,884,018
Defence Costs Paid	£451,361	£317,380	£276,634
Plaintiff Costs Paid	£659,834	£488,784	£478,146
Total	£4,741,709	£2,096,954	£2,638,798

Source: DHSSPS CN1 Annual Information Return

The Northern Health and Social Care Trust has provided the information below regarding cases of breach of contract, personal injury, employer liability and judicial review as this is not collated by the Department.

Breach of Contract and Personal Injury Claims are not captured as individual types of claim, therefore they have been noted in the tables below with the type of claim under which they are most likely to fall.

Table 4 sets out the number of new cases opened in each financial year.

TABLE 4: NUMBER OF NEW CASES OPENED IN EACH FINANCIAL YEAR

Financial Year	No. new cases opened		
	Occupier's Liability (includes breach of contract)	Employer's liability (includes personal injury)	Judicial Review
2009/2010	12	47	1
2010/2011	17	40	10
2011/2012	8	29	3

Table 5 shows the amounts paid in compensation, legal and administrative costs for each of these cases. The figures represent the amounts paid in each financial year irrespective of the year in which the case was opened.

TABLE 5: AMOUNTS PAID IN COMPENSATION, LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Financial Year	Costs	Occupier's Liability (includes breach of contract)	Employer's liability (includes personal injury)	Judicial Review
2009/2010	Compensation	£39,875	£93,749	-
	Legal / Admin	£32,179	£116,612	-
2010/2011	Compensation	£131,000	£215,886	-
	Legal / Admin	£77,303	£240,402	£5,239
2011/2012	Compensation	£21,500	£114,253	-
	Legal / Admin	£34,259	£128,167	£52,465

Benzodiazepine Withdrawal Programme

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 16299/11-15, to detail (i) the protocols for benzodiazepine withdrawal programmes for GPs and pharmacists; (ii) the cost savings associated with the benzodiazepine withdrawal programme for each month of the past year; and (iii) the rights that patients have to opt out of the withdrawal programme. **(AQW 17122/11-15)**

Mr Poots:

- (i) The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has advised that protocols for benzodiazepine withdrawal programmes are derived from professional guidelines which provide for a comprehensive suite of advice and support for delivering quality, safety, and efficiency in the use of benzodiazepine drugs.
- (ii) Data regarding the cost savings associated with the benzodiazepine withdrawal programme is not held centrally or collected routinely. The benefits of the programme are seen and measured against the targeted and steady reduction in benzodiazepine usage in those GP practices that have higher usage rates.
- (iii) The withdrawal programme is based on the fundamental premise that the patient's overall health and wellbeing will improve by reducing or withdrawing benzodiazepine where it is clinically appropriate to do so. It is the decision of the GP, in consultation with their patient, to decide on the most appropriate course of treatment for the patient and to prescribe the most appropriate medication to support the ongoing treatment of the patient.

Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 16292/11/15, (i) how many mowers and trailers were purchased in the last six years; (ii) to detail the date of purchase; (iii) the current location of the mowers and trailers; and (iv) in instances where they have been sold, to whom, and for how much, the mowers and trailers were sold. **(AQW 17132/11-15)**

Mr Poots:

- (i) No mowers were purchased by Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service in the last 6 years, 13 trailers were bought, as detailed below.
- (i) and (iii)

The table below details the purchase date and current location for each trailer purchased by NIFRS within the past 6 years.

Description	Location	Purchase Date
Race Trailer (Vehicle Transporter)	FRS Training Centre	15/07/2007
Generator Trailer	FRS Training Centre	31/03/2008
Boat Trailer	Urban Search & Rescue (Central)	14/04/2008
Gritting Trailers	FRS Headquarters	14/02/2011
Gritting Trailers	FRS Training Centre	14/02/2011
Cargo Trailer	FRS Training Centre	13/03/2011
Fuel Bowser	Western Headquarters	06/05/2011
Fuel Bowser	Southern	06/05/2011
Fuel Bowser	Northern	06/05/2011

Description	Location	Purchase Date
Fuel Bowser	Eastern	06/05/2011
Boat Trailer	Urban Search & Rescue (Central)	29/06/2011
Fuel Bowser	Enniskillen District	22/02/2012
Fuel Bowser	Lisburn District	22/02/2012

(iv) One trailer has been sold in the past 6 years, on 27 January 2009, via public auction at a sale receipt of £750.00.

Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether any Fire and Rescue Service assets, including mowers and trailers have gone missing in the last five years; and whether they have been reported to the PSNI.

(AQW 17133/11-15)

Mr Poots: The table below details assets reported missing in each financial year.

Financial year	Missing Asset
March 2008	None
March 2009	Generator stolen from Headquarters
	Theft of 18 scrap cars from various stations
March 2010	3 scrap cars from Crumlin Fire Station
	Theft of parts from scrap car
	Break in at officer's home and theft of NIFRS vehicle and contents
	Theft of 2 scrap cars from Keady Fire Station
	Theft of computer equipment in Western Area Command
March 2011	Theft of scrap car from Ballywalter Fire Station
March 2012	Theft of lead from Carrickfergus Fire Station roof
	Theft of standpipe shaft, chief branch, power pack, hooligan toolbar and compressor from Western Area Command
	Theft of computer notebook

In the current financial year NIFRS is currently considering allegations of theft in respect of a power washer, a ride on lawnmower and its associated 'tow behind' trailer, which were purchased prior to 2000.

It is Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service policy to report all thefts to the Police Service of Northern Ireland; all of the above thefts were reported to the PSNI.

Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 16289/11-15 (i) to detail all the purchases of wood materials including the type, date and cost of the materials; (ii) the date of the disposal; and (iii) to provide confirmation that the materials were used for the purposes intended.

(AQW 17134/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) The type, date and cost of wood materials purchased by Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service are detailed in the attached table.
- (ii) No wood materials have been disposed of.
- (iii) The majority of wood materials were used for the purposes intended except for a small amount of wood which became damp during storage and could not be used in a controlled burning situation. Instead it was used for small building projects within NIFRS eg shelves and partitions.

SPECIFICATION OF WOOD MATERIAL ORDERED BY NIFRS

Date	Item Description	Goods
08/03/2006	XNON PRE-CUT CHIPBOARD - PER BATCH WITH OFFCUTS - AS PER YOUR QUOTATION Q2940	6300.00
08/12/2008	XNON PLEASE SUPPLY 1 BATCH OF PRE-CUT CLIPBOARDS TO NIFRS TRAINING CENTRE,	1925.00
12/06/2009	XNON PRE-CUT CLIPBOARD SHEETS: 96" x 44" x QTY 40 96" x 21" x QTY 140 88" x 44"	1500.00
13/08/2009	XNON BATCHES OF PRECUT CHIPBOARD WITH OFF-CUTS AS PER YOUR QUOTATION Q3164	5775.00
25/09/2009	XNON PRECUT CHIPBOARD WITH OFF-CUTS AS PER YOUR QUOTATION Q3164 DATED 8TH AUGUST	1925.00
06/09/2007	XNON SHEET OF 9MM WBP PLYWOOD	180.00
06/09/2007	XNON 4.8M OF 4" X 11/2" R.S.	81.60
06/09/2007	XNON 2.4M OF 4" X 11/2" R.S.	102.00
06/09/2007	XSVC DELIVERY CHARGE	10.00
26/01/2006	XNON BLOCKBOARD 8 ' X 4'	183.60
25/09/2006	XNON 'K' QUALITY SUNDELLA BOARD	75.00
02/03/2006	XNON BLOCKBOARD - 8' X 4' X 3/4"	76.50
02/03/2006	XNON PLYWOOD - 8' X 4' X 3/8" - QUOTE REF RQ9089	38.04
05/10/2010	SUPPLY 45 SHEETS OF OSB BOARD 18MM X 8FT X 4FT	518.85
07/10/2010	SUPPLY 45 SHEETS OF OSB BOARD 18MM X 8FT X4FT	618.75
09/11/2010	SUPPLY 115 SHEETS OF OSB BOARD SIZE 2440MM X 1220MM X 18MM	1345.50
09/08/2011	SUPPLY OF ORIENTED STRANDBOARD (350 SHEETS)	3937.50
07/10/2011	SUPPLY OF ORIENTED STRANDBOARD (350 SHEETS) FOR DELIVERY TO NIFRS TRAINING CENTRE, 79 BOUCHER CRESCENT, BELFAST.	3937.50
20/12/2011	SUPPLY OF ORIENTED STRANDBOARD (350 SHEETS)	3937.50
02/03/2012	SUPPLY OF ORIENTED STRANDBOARD (350 SHEETS)	3937.50
27/06/2012	SUPPLY OF ORIENTED STRANDBOARD (350 SHEETS)	3937.50

Date	Item Description	Goods
08/08/2012	SUPPLY OF ORIENTED STRANDBOARD (350 SHEETS) DELIVERY TO 79 BOUCHER CRESCENT, BETWEEN 28 AND 31 AUGUST 2012	3937.50
07/02/2011	SUNDELA K QUALITY 2440x1220x9MM QUANTITY 5	182.50
07/02/2011	MDF 2440x1220 15MM	13.68
18/02/2011	SUPPLY 1 NR PARTITION WALL WITH DOOR AND ASSOCIATED IRONMONGERY, IN THE LADIES S	310.00
27/10/2010	DOOR FRAME WHITEWOOD 108 X 32MM 6/5.1 (X30.60M)	49.15
27/10/2010	DOORSTOP RE REDWOOD 44 X 12MM 6/4.3 (X 25.80M)	14.16
27/10/2010	TIMBER SOFTWOOD RS 75 X 38 6/2.4 (X 14.40M)	12.96
27/10/2010	DOORSTOP RE REDWOOD 44 X 12MM 24/4.3 (X103.20M)	55.72
27/10/2010	6P WHITE PANEL DOORS 2032 X 813 X 44MM QUANTITY 1	28.68
27/10/2010	TIMBER SOFTWOOD RS 75 X 38MM 10/3.6 35/2.7 (X 130.5M)	110.92
27/10/2010	DOOR WHITE 6P 1981 X 762 X 35 QUANTITY 6	123.16
30/11/2010	MDF 2440 x 1220 15MM QUANTITY 3	36.93
30/11/2010	MDF 2440 x 1200 6MM QUANTITY 6	41.36
30/11/2010	PLYWOOD WBP 2440 x 1220 18MM	20.99
30/11/2010	TIMBER SOFTWOOD RS 75 x 38 8/2.4 QUANTITY 19.200	16.32
28/03/2011	DOOR PLY INTERNAL FIRECHECK 2040x826x44mm (x2)	64.89
13/09/2010	MDF 2440 X 1220 12MM X 2	25.16
28/09/2010	DOORSTOP RE REDWOOD - 20.4	11.19
28/09/2010	PLYWOOD WBP X 1	23.33
28/09/2010	TIMBER SOFTWOOD WALLPLATE - 71.4	120.80
14/03/2011	ATTEND CENTRAL FS TO INSTALL PARTITION WALL BETWEEN COLUMNS IN THE MESS AREA. 1	370.00
13/09/2010	PLYWOOD WBP 18MM X 3	62.99
24/02/2010	100 X 100MM BY 14 FOOT CARCASSING TIMBER	331.70
24/02/2010	100 X 50MM BY 14 FOOT CARCASSING TIMBER	144.70
24/02/2010	2440 X 1220 X 18MM SHEETS OF THREE QUARTER PLYWOOD	636.00
21/01/2011	4 X 4 X 4.8M LENGTH C16 CONSTRUCTION GRADE TIMBER	500.00

Date	Item Description	Goods
21/01/2011	6 X 2 X 4.8M LENGTH C16 CONSTRUCTION GRADE TIMBER	180.00
21/01/2011	4 X 2 X 4.8M LENGTH C16 CONSTRUCTION GRADE TIMBER	90.00
21/01/2011	8 X 3 X 4.8M LENGTH C16 CONSTRUCTION GRADE TIMBER	38.00
21/01/2011	8 X 4 SHEET OF MTCC PLYWOOD	465.00
19/10/2011	2440 X 1220 X 18.0MM ORIENTED STRAND BOARD OSB2	345.80
19/10/2011	TC047050T - FSC SHT FSC MIXED 70% SA- COC-002046 47X50MM CARCASSING TREATED 20/4.80	73.20
10/02/2011	FAR EASTERN PLYWOOD EXT H/WOOD MARINE GRADE 2440X1220X12MM	117.48
13/05/2010	PAR WHITE WOOD 44 X 19MM 12/4.2 QUANTITY 50.40	29.48
13/05/2010	DOORSTOP RE REDWOOD 44 X 12MM 6/4.2 QUANTITY 25.20	12.25
04/05/2010	BLOCKBOARD STANDARD QTY 6	194.70
28/06/2010	DOOR PLY INTERNAL FIRECHECK 1981 x 762 x 44	32.47
28/06/2010	HARDBOARD STANDARD 8 x 4 x 3.2MM	5.05
28/06/2010	PLYWOOD WBP 2440 x 1220 18MM	19.24
28/06/2010	PINE STANDARD HALF ROUND 21 x 8 QUANTITY 6	12.03
25/05/2010	DOOR FRAME WHITEWOOD 132 X 32MM 2/5.1 X 10.20	22.07
26/07/2010	MDF 2440 x 1220 18MM QUANTITY 2	28.52
26/07/2010	PLYWOOD WBP 2440 x 1220 18MM QUANTITY 4	76.96
26/07/2010	CONTI BOARD WHITE 8 x 24INCHES x 15MM QUANTITY 2	21.75
26/07/2010	MODESTY BLOCK WHITE QUANTITY 20	2.00
26/07/2010	MDF 2440 x 1220 15MM QUANTITY 2	27.36
05/10/2010	9 INCH X 4 INCH X 67 1/2 INCH MAHOGANY SILLS X 2	160.00
30/11/2010	PAR WHITE WOOD 44x19MM 12/3.9 QUANTITY 46.800	26.53
21/12/2010	1 X MDF 2440 x 1220 9MM	56.70
07/02/2011	PLYWOOD WBP 2440x1220 18MM QUANTITY 2	43.08
02/03/2011	CENTURION MODESTY BLOCKS WHITE PK/6 X4	2.60
28/03/2011	TIMBER SOFTWOOD RS 75x47 2/4.8 (x 9.6)	11.57
28/03/2011	DOOR FRAME WHITEWOOD 108x32mm 2/4.2 (x 8.4)	14.28

Date	Item Description	Goods
28/03/2011	PAR WHITE WOOD 44x19mm 12/4.2 (x 50.4)	28.57
28/03/2011	TIMBER REDWOOD SE 44x12mm 10/4.2 (x 42)	23.05
28/03/2011	TIMBER SOFTWOOD RS 75x47 12/2.4 (x28.8)	34.73
28/03/2011	PLYWOOD WBP 2440x1220 9mm (x10)	147.80
23/02/2010	SUPPLY AND FIT ZEBRANO AMBRE PARTITIONS, 1 NR RANGE OF TWO CUBICLES BETWEEN WALL	1990.00
07/02/2011	PLYWOOD SHEETING T AND G 2440x1200MM QUANTITY 5	103.15
07/02/2011	TIMBER SOFTWOOD RS 150x47 1/3.9 QUANTITY 3.9	9.37
26/02/2010	PAR WHITE WOOD 144 x 19 1/4.2M PRICED PER METRE QUANTITY 4.2	6.15
26/02/2010	DOORSTOP RE REDWOOD 44x12MM 4/4.5 PRICED PER METRE QUANTITY 18	8.75
26/02/2010	DOOR FRAME WHITEWOOD 108 x 32MM 2/5.1M LENGTHS PRICED PER METRE QUANTITY 10.2	17.35
26/02/2010	PAR WHITE WOOD 44 x 19 5/4.2 QUANTITY 21	12.28
26/02/2010	DOOR PLY INTERNAL PRESEALED 1981 x 762 x 40 QUANTITY 1	28.15
13/09/2010	DOOR FRAME REDWOOD EXTERNAL X 1	26.20
23/08/2011	2440X1220X18MM PLYWOOD	57.51
21/09/2011	2440X1220X18MM SHEET PLYWOOD	19.17
21/09/2011	2440X1220X25MM SHEET PLYWOOD	26.50
19/10/2011	2440x1220x25 MM HARDWOOD	80.13
19/10/2011	94X44 W/WOOD PLD	79.60
01/11/2011	2400X1220X25 MM PLYWOOD	26.71
01/11/2011	2440X1220X18 MM PLYWOOD	38.34
01/11/2011	94X44 W/WOOD PLD	79.68
01/12/2011	2440X1220X25 MM HARDWOOD	26.71
01/12/2011	94X44MM W WOOD	39.80
07/02/2012	2440X1220X25 HARDWOOD FACED	53.82
07/02/2012	94X44 W/WOOD PLY	41.34
06/03/2012	2440X1220 X18MM HARDWOOD FACED	18.58
06/03/2012	107X32 W/WOOD PLY	9.81
06/03/2012	94X44 W/WOOD PLY	68.28
06/03/2012	2440X1220X18 INDUSTRIAL MDF	74.95
01/05/2012	2440X1220X25 MM HARDWOOD FACED PLYWOOD	107.64

Date	Item Description	Goods
01/05/2012	44X12 W/WOOD ARCHITRAVE S.R.E.	2.42
22/05/2012	94X44 W/WOOD PLY	136.56
22/05/2012	2440X1200X25MM HARDWOOD FACED PLYWOOD	53.82
22/05/2012	2440X1220X18MM HARDWOOD FACED PLYWOOD	37.16
27/06/2011	PLYWOOD 2440X1220X25MM	79.50
07/07/2011	2440X1220X25MM HARDFACE PLYWOOD CE2+	79.50
07/02/2011	PLYWOOD WBP 2440x1220 9MM QUANTITY 6	88.68
28/03/2011	HARDBOARD STANDARD 8x4x3.2mm (x2)	11.90
28/03/2011	MDF 2440x1220 6mm (x1)	7.66
28/03/2011	MDF 2440x1220 9mm (x2)	18.90
28/03/2011	PLYWOOD WBP 2440x1220 18mm (x3)	64.62
06/07/2012	JUMBO PALLET BOX 1100 X 900 X 800 REF QUOTE CRAIG HOLBORN	552.50
18/07/2012	20 WOODEN USED PALLETS SIZE 1200X1000	85.00
		54,197.59

Vacancy Control Policy

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there is a Vacancy Control Policy still in operation in the Health Service; and how many permanent posts have remained unfilled since its introduction.

(AQW 17165/11-15)

Mr Poots: Recruitment matters including the determination of appropriate staffing levels are a matter for Health and Social Care Trusts taking into account service need and available resources.

HSC Trusts have advised that vacancy control measures are applied in specific situations, for example, where staff displacement is anticipated, vacancy controls may be introduced to safeguard employment. HSC Trusts ensure that the duration of vacancy controls is proportionate to the level of change required and the time taken to complete the change. In addition, where front line posts need to be filled for service provision these are processed without delay.

As vacancy control measures are applied as and when the situation dictates rather than routinely, the information requested, regarding the number of posts unfilled, is not available.

Health and Social Care

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the annual cost of providing interpreters in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 17181/11-15)

Mr Poots: The annual cost of providing interpreters in each Health and Social Care Trust is set out in the table below. The information relates to the latest data available which is for 2011/12.

HSC Trust	2011/12 £
Belfast	527,467
Northern	293,372
Southern	919,547
South Eastern	110,507
Western	196,299
NIAS	772
Total	2,047,964

Altnagelvin Hospital: Evacuation Procedures

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following the recent fire at Altnagelvin Hospital, whether he will review the evacuation procedures for seriously ill patients to other hospitals.

(AQW 17189/11-15)

Mr Poots: As a result of the recent Fire at Altnagelvin and the successful implementation by the Trust of their major incident plan, I have asked all HSC bodies to review with immediate effect their fire evacuation plans for each facility to ensure that they incorporate any lessons learned from the Altnagelvin incident including the procedures to be followed during evacuation for the movement of seriously ill patients to other hospitals if needed.

Public Awareness Project: Whooping Cough

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what public awareness projects he has planned on whooping cough; and what provisions are in place to deal with the outbreak of the cough in the last few months.

(AQW 17197/11-15)

Mr Poots: Since January 2012, regular press releases from the Public Health Agency have alerted the public to the whooping cough outbreak and the importance of ensuring that vaccines are offered and administered at the correct time to infants and young children as part of the routine childhood immunisation programme. This message has also been reiterated to GPs.

The Public Health Agency has developed information for the public, including leaflets, posters and a factsheet about whooping cough and the vaccination programme. These have been distributed to GPs and Trusts and are also available on the Public Health Agency's website at <http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/whooping-cough> .

The PHA also issued an alert letter to all GPs informing them of the outbreak, advising them to have a high index of suspicion when seeing patients with symptoms, and how to manage a case including reporting it. Correct procedures for dealing with cases requiring admission to hospital has also been highlighted to all Trusts. Standard operating procedures are in place within the Public Health Agency so that cases of whooping cough are investigated for vulnerable contacts and that control measures, including antibiotics and vaccination are offered to contacts when appropriate.

In October 2012 I introduced a temporary immunisation programme, which while aimed at pregnant women who have reached 28 weeks or more of their pregnancy, is intended to protect their children from birth until they are old enough to receive the vaccine themselves. All pregnant women are now being routinely offered vaccination by their local GP once they have reach week 28 or more of their pregnancy.

Marie Stopes Clinic

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the Marie Stopes Clinic, Belfast will be regulated; and whether Marie Stopes Clinics in England are regulated by the Care Quality Commission.

(AQW 17248/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Department has sought details through RQIA of the full range of services and medical professionals providing services at MSI, in order to determine whether this clinic would be regulated under the definition in the The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

The Department has also sought legal advice based on the information received and I have asked my officials to review the current regulations as they apply to such establishments and if not applicable, whether they require amendment to ensure that they provide the appropriate safeguards as intended by legislation.

In England the Care Quality Commission (CQC) operates under a much wider regulatory regime applying to the delivery of health and social services, including high street services, whereas the RQIA regulates establishments and agencies under the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. In short our legislation is different and the focus of the regulation differs accordingly.

Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what bearing the Secretary of State for Health's decision to review the recommendations of the UK Safe and Sustainable Review Team will have on the consultation on the future of Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 17249/11-15)

Mr Poots: The review announced by the Secretary of State for Health in England has no immediate relevance to the review being undertaken by the Health and Social Care Board on paediatric cardiac surgical services in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland public consultation is therefore continuing as planned and I expect to reach a decision on the provision of this service for the population of Northern Ireland in early 2013.

Ulster Hospital

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients had to wait on trolleys in the Ulster Hospital for a period of (i) less than 4 hours; and (ii) more than 4 hours in each month of the winter of 2011.

(AQW 17255/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on monthly emergency care waiting times, including performance against the 4 hour Ministerial target, is published on a quarterly basis 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

Ulster Hospital: Accident and Emergency

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what additional steps he is taking to improve performance on the four hour Accident and Emergency waiting time target for the Ulster Hospital.

(AQW 17256/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Emergency Department Improvement Action Group which was established in April 2012 has been working with all Health and Social Care Trusts to improve emergency department waiting

times and the patient experience. In October 2012, 74.7% of people attending the Ulster Hospital Emergency Department were treated and discharged home or admitted within four hours.

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has a comprehensive reform and modernisation programme in place to meet the increased demand for emergency care at the Ulster Hospital. The Trust has opened 40 extra beds, increased staffing in the Emergency Department, and increased services and community capacity. The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) is monitoring the position closely with the Trusts and I look to the HSCB to continue its work with the Trusts to ensure that a focus remains on improving the performance of our emergency departments.

S2 Health Service

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether under S2, formerly Article 112, Health Service patients can be referred to private clinics or private surgeons outside the United Kingdom.

(AQW 17257/11-15)

Mr Poots: Under the S2 (formerly E112) system patients are not entitled to access private clinics or private surgeons. As such no S2 certificates have been issued to patients for private care.

S2 Health Service

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Health Service patients have been referred to private clinics and private surgeons outside the United Kingdom under S2, formerly Article 112, in the last five years.

(AQW 17258/11-15)

Mr Poots: Under the S2 (formerly E112) system patients are not entitled to access private clinics or private surgeons. As such no S2 certificates have been issued to patients for private care.

Adoption

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many applications have there been to adopt siblings in the past five years; and how many have been approved, including intercountry applications.

(AQW 17305/11-15)

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

Respite Care

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the process and criteria by which respite care is allocated.

(AQW 17322/11-15)

Mr Poots: Respite care is essentially a break for the carer from their caring role and is a service which a carer, or sometimes others, can request directly from their Trust key worker. It may also be suggested by the key worker. The key criterion for the allocation of respite is an assessment that respite is necessary to sustain the carer in their care-giving role.

A report by the Health and Social Care Board last year on respite care services strongly encouraged the use of a formal carer's assessment as part of the process of allocating respite. The Board is now requiring Trusts to make this a mandatory step, with the proviso that professional judgement can be applied in individual cases if a carer's assessment is refused by the service user.

Adult Social Care

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of how the funding allocated for adult social care is used.

(AQW 17323/11-15)

Mr Poots: While the levels of funding provided towards adult social care are just sufficient at present, these are coming under increasing pressure. Given the UK wide funding outlook, together with the demographic changes which will have an impact on adult social care for decades to come, the challenges ahead require careful consideration. It is for that reason that I have embarked upon a three stage process of reform to establish the future direction and funding of care and support. In September I launched the first step of that reform with the publication of a discussion document setting out the challenges that the system is facing. My Department is currently facilitating a public debate around the future of care and support. This consultation will run for 6 months rather than the usual 3 months to ensure that as many people as possible are given the opportunity to contribute to the reform process and have their views heard. I am strongly urging everyone to engage in that debate and to let us know your thoughts and opinions on how we face the challenges ahead.

Health and Social Care Trust

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many hospital appointments in each Health and Social Care Trust have been missed in the last twelve months.

(AQW 17334/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) Information on the number of consultant led appointments missed by the patient (Did Not Attend), in each Health and Social Care Trust in each quarter of the last twelve months, is shown in the table below.

Quarter ending	Number of Missed Appointments, by HSC Trust					Northern Ireland
	Belfast	Northern	Southern	South Eastern	Western	
December '11	18,739	4,329	4,968	6,214	6,056	40,306
March '12	19,184	4,649	4,914	5,851	6,283	40,881
June '12p	18,862	4,242	4,807	6,013	6,304	40,228
September '12 ^p	18,600	3,915	4,852	5,704	5,880	38,951
Total	75,385	17,135	19,541	23,782	24,523	160,366

Source: Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (QOAR) Part 1

^p Data that relate to the June 2012 and September 2012 quarters are currently provisional

30 Day Payment Performance Targets

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how each of his Department's arm's-length bodies has performed on the 30 Day Payment Performance Targets; and whether any sector has been paid more quickly than others.

(AQW 17364/11-15)

Mr Poots: The prompt payment performance of the Department's arm's-length bodies (ALBs) for the 2012/13 year to date, and for the prior year, is shown in the following table:-

DEPARTMENT'S ARM'S-LENGTH BODIES (ALBS) PROMPT PAYMENT 2011/12 AND 2012/13		
	% of bills paid within 30 days or other agreed terms for the 2011/12 year	% of bills paid within 30 days or other agreed terms for the 2012/13 year (up to the end of October 2012)
ALB	%	%
Northern Trust	93.88	93.00
Belfast Trust	92.00	89.30
Western Trust	96.20	93.80
South Eastern Trust	92.60	91.70
NIAS	97.50	93.10
Southern Trust	91.20	92.70
HSCB	91.70	93.70
BSO	95.70	92.80
NIBTS	96.20	97.30
NIFRS	95.40	95.45
NIGALA	98.70	99.00
NIMDTA	93.72	91.60
NIPEC	98.70	96.70
NISCC	86.00	92.80
PCC	96.80	96.90
PHA	92.32	97.10
RQIA	96.20	96.10

Information on prompt payment by sector is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. Notwithstanding this, no sector is given preferential treatment and the 30 day prompt payment target applies equally to all suppliers.

Alcohol: Minimum Price

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress is being made to set a minimum price for a unit of alcohol.

(AQW 17368/11-15)

Mr Poots: The price at which some supermarkets sell alcohol, sometimes cheaper than bottled water, is damaging to individuals, communities, and families. Therefore I am determined to take action to address alcohol's affordability, and I believe this is vital given that alcohol is 67% more affordable now than it was in 1980.

My Department has been working closely with the Department for Social Development, who led a joint consultation on the principle of introducing minimum unit pricing in 2011. We are now commissioning research to model the likely impact of introducing minimum unit pricing in Northern Ireland. This research is essential as it will help inform our future decisions in this area, and allow us to bring forward proposals that will have a proportionate and positive impact on physical and mental health and

wellbeing in Northern Ireland. We will also continue to watch developments in Scotland, England and Europe very closely.

However, minimum unit pricing is only one part of our approach to this issue, and it is important we take a range of actions, including education and early intervention and providing services for those to need additional support, to address alcohol misuse across the population.

Emergency Ambulance Station

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety where is North Down's nearest emergency ambulance station.

(AQW 17374/11-15)

Mr Poots: I refer the Member to the answer I gave on 26 November 2012 to AQW 16557/11-15.

Transforming Your Care

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of representations by affected interests, including the Causeway Hospital Campaign, whether he will extend the consultation period for Transforming Your Care by a period of 30 days.

(AQW 17377/11-15)

Mr Poots: The public consultation on the proposed changes emerging from Transforming Your Care is to run from 9 October to 15 January, representing a 14 week consultation period to account for the Christmas holiday period.

The public consultation process includes provision of information via a dedicated website and the ability to comment by electronic means and via written submissions. A number of public meetings have also been organised by the HSCB across Northern Ireland to provide the opportunity for local communities to contribute.

Following the conclusion of the consultation and decisions on the way forward, there will be further consultation exercises on significant service changes which will provide the opportunity for service users and the wider public to have their say on such changes as they emerge over time.

I do not believe that in light of the arrangements already in place that it is necessary to extend the current consultation period.

Ministerial Co-ordination Group on Suicide Prevention

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 16461/11-15, whether he plans to put East Belfast's recent cluster of suicides on the agenda for the next meeting of the Ministerial Co-Ordination Group.

(AQW 17404/11-15)

Mr Poots: As explained in AQW 15582/11-15, there is no evidence, through the Sudden Death notification system, of a spike in suspected deaths by suicide in the East Belfast area over recent months. I may, however, consider including the media coverage of community group interviews on this issue as an agenda item. Some of the coverage referred to a "suicide epidemic in East Belfast". Evidence shows that this type of sensationalist reporting can normalise suicide and lead to adverse outcomes for already vulnerable people.

Whooping Cough

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what measures his Department has put in place to minimise the threat of Whooping Cough.

(AQW 17466/11-15)

Mr Poots: Since January 2012, regular press releases from the Public Health Agency have alerted the public to the whooping cough outbreak and the importance of ensuring that vaccines are offered and administered at the correct time to infants and young children as part of the routine childhood immunisation programme. This message has also been reiterated to GPs.

In Northern Ireland we continue to achieve very high vaccine uptake rates – over 97% for children up to 12 months for the whooping cough vaccine, which had ensured that since the introduction of the routine immunisation programme the number of cases of whooping cough had fallen to very low numbers. Therefore while the number of whooping cough cases has now increased dramatically compared to recent years this is still much lower than the number of cases that occurred prior to the introduction of routine immunisation.

The Public Health Agency has developed information for the public, including leaflets, posters and a factsheet about whooping cough and the vaccination programme. These have been distributed to GPs and Trusts and are also available on the Public Health Agency's website at <http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/whooping-cough> .

The PHA also issued an alert letter to all GPs informing them of the outbreak, advising them to have a high index of suspicion when seeing patients with symptoms, and how to manage a case including reporting it. Correct procedures for dealing with cases requiring admission to hospital has also been highlighted to all Trusts. Standard operating procedures are in place within the Public Health Agency so that cases of whooping cough are investigated for vulnerable contacts and that control measures, including antibiotics and vaccination are offered to contacts when appropriate.

In October 2012 I introduced a temporary immunisation programme, which while aimed at pregnant women who have reached 28 weeks or more of their pregnancy, is intended to protect their children from birth until they are old enough to receive the vaccine themselves. All pregnant women are now being routinely offered vaccination by their local GP once they have reach week 28 or more of their pregnancy.

Department of Justice

Case Involving Caroline Barnes

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 12905/11-15, whether the final costs in this case have been submitted to the Legal Services Commission, and if so, to provide the figures.
(AQW 16847/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission has not received any claims for payment in this case subsequent to the answer I gave in AQW 12905/11-15.

Offendy Levy

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether fines are being reduced, as sentence for convictions, to accomodate the Offendy Levy and for his assessment of this practice.
(AQW 16848/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Offender Levy does not form part of the sentence imposed by the court, rather it is an additional amount set at the point of sentencing and applied on top of the sentence given.

Specific statutory provision has been included in levy provisions of the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, whereby the court must not reduce a fine on account of the levy, except where it has determined that the offender has insufficient means to pay both. This accords with provision made in the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1994, which allows a fine to be reduced by the court when a compensation order has been given in addition to a fine and the offender has the inability to pay both.

A formal evaluation to assess the levy's operation is to be undertaken once the system has had adequate time to bed in. The effectiveness of the levy's imposition is a specific area we would wish to consider as part of the evaluation exercise.

Dungannon Courthouse

Lord Morrow asked Minister of Justice why Dungannon Courthouse is the slowest at progressing Crown Court cases, and the reasons for the delays.

(AQW 16875/11-15)

Mr Ford: In 2011/12, Fermanagh and Tyrone was the best performing of the 7 Court divisions.

In the period from July to September 2012 the average waiting time from Committal to Hearing in the Crown Court in Fermanagh and Tyrone, which includes Dungannon sittings, was 90 days compared to the Northern Ireland average of 143 days.

Misconduct in Public Office

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases of misconduct in public office are in the magistrates court system, broken down by court division.

(AQW 16930/11-15)

Mr Ford: As at 20 November, there were no cases of misconduct in public office before the Magistrates' Court.

Prisoners at Risk Initiative

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 16111/11-15, to detail (i) the number of staff who have received Supporting Prisoner at Risk training and Prisoner at Risk awareness sessions, broken down by the following grades (a) basic grade officer; (b) senior officer; (c) principal officer; (d) governor; (e) health care officer; and (f) nursing officer; (ii) who conducted the awareness sessions; and (iii) the content and duration of each session.

(AQW 16931/11-15)

Mr Ford: From available records, the numbers of staff who have received Supporting Prisoners at Risk (SPAR) training are included in the table below:

Staff Grades	SPAR Training Numbers
Basic Grade Officer	272
Senior Officer	75
Principal Officer	24
Governor	17
Hospital Officer	4
Nursing Officer	18

Initially, this training was delivered by staff training officers in half day sessions and included examples of good practice, and the implications of not adhering to this; case studies; and the completion of documentation. Following a review, this training has been increased to a full day's course and now includes participation in role play and assessments.

Prior to the introduction of SPAR training in May 2009, staff training officers provided briefing/awareness sessions on Prisoner at Risk 1(PAR1) with each session lasting approximately two hours. I am unable to provide a total figure of the staff trained in this area.

Issues covered by these briefing sessions included ensuring that staff were familiar with their responsibilities in relation to the care of those identified as being at risk; the processes and procedures required for monitoring prisoners on PAR1; and log book completion.

Bail Hostel

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to bail hostels such as that run by the Sisters of Charity in Armagh, whether they have been inspected as suitable premises to remand men accused of serious offences, given the close proximity of some of the hostels to schools and there being no facilities for electronic tagging.

(AQW 16979/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are no bail hostels in Northern Ireland. There are six premises, accredited by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and approved by the Probation Board, for the accommodation of individuals on bail or post-custodial licence who require additional levels of supervision. These approved premises are subject to regular inspection by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland.

The majority of defendants seek to be bailed to their own home address or to that of family or friends. Individuals who do not have any accommodation may be granted bail to approved premises or, where the court believes that additional supervision measures are not required, to other residential properties managed by voluntary sector organisations providing services to homeless persons. I understand that those organisations which apply to be a 'Supporting People' provider are accredited and monitored by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The granting of bail is a judicial decision and I am therefore unable to comment on determinations made by the court in specific cases. Where electronic monitoring is imposed by the court as a condition of bail this will be implemented provided the property owner or manager has consented to its installation and the structure of the building does not impede the transmission of the electronic signal.

Roe House, Maghaberry Prison

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether any infections or outbreaks of illnesses have been reported at Roe House, Maghaberry Prison, since the commencement of the republican separated prisoners' dirty protest; and whether tests are carried out to monitor the potential for germs and organisms, including e-coli.

(AQW 16981/11-15)

Mr Ford: There have not been any reports of infections or outbreaks of illness since the commencement of the dirty protest by separated republican prisoners in Roe House, Maghaberry Prison.

Five bacterial tests are conducted on a monthly basis. These are C1 perfringens; E.coli; Enterococci; Total coliform; and Total viable count.

Northern Ireland Prison Service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) whether the Northern Ireland Prison Service has paid for counselling services for the partner of a prisoner being held in the Pre-Release Unit; (ii) the number and dates of the sessions that took place; (iii) the total cost of providing the counselling, including travel costs for the partner; (iv) who authorised the counselling; and (v) whether the provision of the counselling services in such instances is approved by the Prison Service, including where information on this provision is available.

(AQW 16983/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) is aware that a prisoner at the Prisoner Assessment Unit attended a programme of psychotherapy, which also involved his wife. This reflected a court decision to defer sentencing his wife pending her undergoing psychotherapy. This decision was endorsed by the Life Sentence Review Commissioners.
- (ii) The psychotherapy programme for the prisoner ran between 2007 and 2009 during which time the prisoner's wife attended approximately 65 sessions which comprised joint and separate sessions.

- (iii) The cost of the clinical sessions involving the prisoner's wife, as well as her travel costs to the Prisoner Assessment Unit, was approximately £8,000.
- (iv) A NIPS-led Life Sentenced Prisoner Multi-Disciplinary Team which is made up of senior NIPS governors, clinical and forensic consultants and managers from the Probation Board, approved the involvement of the prisoner's wife in the psychotherapeutic treatment programme which was endorsed by the Parole Commissioners Northern Ireland as being important to minimising the risk of marital violence to both spouses or violence being directed towards others.
- (v) The provision of these services was determined by the multi disciplinary team taking into account the risk assessment and the need to ensure that interventions were in place to help the prisoner address his offending behaviour.

Camera Hidden in a Prisoner's Watch in HMP Maghaberry

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 15977/11-15, to detail (i) whether the prisoner was in possession of the watch on admission to HMP Maghaberry and whether the watch was checked for recording devices before the prisoner was permitted to retain it; or (ii) whether the watch was acquired after the prisoner's admission and how it was brought into the prison.

(AQW 16987/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) The prisoner was not found to be in possession of the watch on his admission to prison.
- (ii) It is believed the watch was acquired after his admission, having been brought in to the prison by a person unknown at this time.

Prison Officers

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice what action he is taking to ensure that prison officers who are retiring and leaving the Prison Service will be given assistance to obtain a personal protection weapon if they have made an application to the PSNI.

(AQW 17001/11-15)

Mr Ford: As this question relates to the personal security of prison staff it would not be appropriate to provide specific details. However, I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Police Service of Northern Ireland have agreed revised arrangements to address staff concerns regarding obtaining personal protection weapons following retirement.

Northern Ireland Community Safety College

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Justice what assessment was carried out, during the tender process, on the potential use of biofuel at the Northern Ireland Community Safety College at Desertcreat.

(AQW 17011/11-15)

Mr Ford: The design team investigated various forms of biofuel during the design development stage, including biomass and biogas. It was subsequently determined that biomass was the most appropriate form of biofuel for this site, considering the environment we are creating.

Approximately 18 acres of the site will be used to grow biomass material, which will be available for harvesting by the appointed supplier.

The final design has all heating on site provided by biomass boilers fuelled by wood chips. There will be a back-up oil fired boiler system in case of failure.

Prison Closure

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) when and why the messes serving prisons were closed; and (ii) what assessment was made of the security implications of the decision.

(AQW 17025/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service ceased providing subsidised canteen facilities on 1 May 2010 due to the very low uptake of the service which led to a sizeable monetary loss. Vending machine facilities were made available, but the contractors withdrew this service at Magilligan and Hydebank Wood as the facilities were not being used.

A security assessment was not deemed necessary at that time as facilities are available within each prison for staff during meal breaks.

Social Clubs Serving Prisons

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) when and why the social clubs serving prisons were closed; and (ii) what assessment was made of the security implications of the decision.

(AQW 17026/11-15)

Mr Ford: The staff social clubs at Magilligan and Maghaberry Prisons were closed with effect from 31 March 2011. This decision was based on the findings of an Internal Audit report. The social club at Hydebank Wood Young Offender Centre and Prison had already closed some time prior to this.

At that time it was acknowledged that a security threat remained but as it was considerably reduced the need to retain the staff social clubs had diminished. The Director General concluded that it was no longer appropriate or necessary to maintain these clubs.

Downpatrick Courthouse

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the plans for Downpatrick Court House.

(AQW 17038/11-15)

Mr Ford: Downpatrick Court House will be considered within the Estate Strategy my officials are developing which I announced on 22 November 2012.

Camera Hidden in a Prisoner's Watch in HMP Magahaberry

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 15977/11-15, whether any of the content recovered from the recording device has presented a security risk.

(AQW 17047/11-15)

Mr Ford: I can confirm that no security risk has been identified.

G8 Summit

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice whether he is expecting a contribution from the national government to cover the costs of policing the G8 Summit.

(AQW 17056/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am aware that the G8 Summit will place additional pressure on the policing budget. My officials will be in discussions with the relevant funding organisations to agree who will provide the necessary funds.

PSNI

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice whether the PSNI can retain any monies from the sale of closed PSNI stations.

(AQW 17062/11-15)

Mr Ford: PSNI may retain any monies from the sale of surplus police stations up to the level of their receipts line budget, provided there is sufficient PSNI capital spend to offset the receipts. Any potential additional monies derived from the sale of police stations may be retained by applying through monitoring rounds, subject to DFP approval.

Prison Service Staff

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in light of the Prisoner Ombudsman's report into the death in custody of Samuel Carson, whether he has the authority to overrule the Director General's decision not to take disciplinary action against any Prison Service staff.

(AQW 17089/11-15)

Mr Ford: Matters of Discipline are dealt with by NICS Departments and Agencies as employers; as such there is no provision for Ministerial involvement in the process.

Prisoner Held in HMP Maghaberry Under a False Name

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 16110/11-15, what measures are taken to ensure that a prisoner entering custody has provided the correct personal details.

(AQW 17090/11-15)

Mr Ford: At the point of committal, the identity of the person being committed is confirmed by either a member of the Police Service of Northern Ireland or a member of Prisoner Escort Court Custody Services staff who has escorted them to prison. A member of staff working in the reception area of the relevant prison establishment will ask the person to confirm their name, date of birth, and that they are the person named on the committal warrant.

Previous records such as photographs, fingerprints and distinguishing marks can also be used to confirm the identity of those persons who have previously been in custody.

Earnings

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the threshold of (i) earnings per annum; and (ii) savings or assets below which defence legal aid can be granted; and whether the earnings or assets of an applicant's partner are taken into consideration.

(AQW 17098/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no fixed financial threshold for criminal legal aid in respect of a defendant's means. It is a matter for the court to determine, in all the circumstances, whether a defendant has sufficient means to pay for his own defence. A defendant's means can include his own earnings and assets in addition to any funds which may be available to him from someone else. It is a matter for the court to determine whether or not such additional funds should be taken into account.

An application for legal aid to bring or defend a civil action can be granted through two of the civil legal aid schemes: Assistance by Way of Representation (ABWOR) and Civil Legal Aid. Annual earnings and capital thresholds are considered as outlined below.

ABWOR:

- The disposable lower income limit is £5,200 per annum.
- The disposable capital limit is £3,000.

Civil Legal Aid:

- The disposable lower income limit is £3,355 per annum.
- The disposable lower capital limit is £3,000.

Under both these levels the income and capital of any partner is taken into consideration unless they have a contrary interest, live apart or it is inequitable or impractical to aggregate their means.

Sexual Offences Order 2008: Abuse of Trust

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice what consideration he has given to extending the Abuse of Trust provisions, in the Sexual Offences Order 2008, to sport as a means of protecting athletes over 16 years of age.

(AQW 17101/11-15)

Mr Ford: This matter was fully considered in 2010, following consultation by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure with the appropriate sports bodies in Northern Ireland.

I concluded then that the policy underpinning the creation of the abuse of trust offences was not designed to include positions outside the formal definition in the current legislation, and that to add sports coaches as a single group would be outside of the scope originally envisaged. I continue to hold that view.

Since then, I understand that, as a result of discussions DCAL held with SportNI and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, SportNI has introduced enhanced safeguarding training with an additional element which will help to protect athletes over 16 years of age.

Magilligan Prison

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice whether there has been an interim report, update, or any other information supplied to his Department, regarding the full body pilot scanning scheme at Magilligan Prison, at any time prior to 22 November 2012.

(AQW 17105/11-15)

Mr Ford: As the member will be aware, two separate pilots of Millimetre Wave technology commenced in Magilligan Prison and Hydebank Wood Prison and Young Offender Centre (YOC) on 26 September and 24 October respectively. Each pilot will run for three months.

Upon completion, both pilots will be evaluated to determine their effectiveness for use in a prison environment and I look forward to receiving a report by the end of January 2013. Due to the short duration of these pilots I have not commissioned an interim report on either of the trials, although I have had brief verbal updates as part of regular discussions with senior Prison Service officials.

Legal Aid

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice what potential savings can his Department make on legal aid.
(AQW 17114/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am committed to bringing legal aid within budget, and have already brought forward significant reforms in criminal legal aid which will reduce annual expenditure in that area from £60m to under £37m by 2014/15.

Expenditure on civil legal aid has continued to rise and I estimate that further annual savings of around £20m will be required. I set out a range of reforms to achieve this in the Departmental Action Plan which I published earlier this year. The first of those reforms, which will deliver annual savings of £2.8 – 4.2m was considered by the Justice Committee on 22 November and was published for consultation on 29 November.

Department Savings

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice what areas of potential savings his Department is considering.
(AQW 17115/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice (DOJ) has prepared savings delivery plans for the Budget 2011-15 period covering the financial years 2011-12 to 2014-15.

Throughout this period, the Department will regularly monitor progress against these plans and will publish six monthly updates.

The latest update is available on the DOJ website www.dojni.gov.uk via the following link:

<http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/publications/publication-categories/pubs-departmental-business/doj-savings-delivery-plan-update-as-at-31-march-2012.pdf>

Attacks on Nurses within the Prison Service

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 16333/11-15, what action has been taken to ensure that there is no repeat of a situation where a panic alarm fails to activate; and how frequently panic alarms are tested.

(AQW 17139/11-15)

Mr Ford: A robust testing procedure is in place in each prison establishment to minimise the possibility of the failure of any alarm. All fixed point and personal alarms are tested daily and alarms on radio sets are tested once per week.

All faults are reported for immediate investigation and repair.

Prison: CCTV

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the level of CCTV coverage in prisons, to protect vulnerable staff such as nurses.

(AQW 17140/11-15)

Mr Ford: CCTV is deployed in Prison Service establishments to enhance both the security of the prison and the safety of staff and prisoners.

As this question relates to current security measures in prisons, it would not be appropriate to provide specific details other than to confirm these matters are kept under constant review.

Part Time Reserve Gratuity Scheme

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice why the £392,000 surplus funds in the Part Time Reserve Gratuity Scheme are not being distributed among those with applications deemed out of time.

(AQW 17156/11-15)

Mr Ford: While I sympathise with those who have missed the deadline for various reasons, the Gratuity payment was an ex gratia payment. Due to the terms of the Scheme there had to be a deadline as the value of each payment was dependent on the number of verified applications. The onus had to be with the applicant to ensure their application was made within the deadline. Therefore I am unable to reopen the scheme to allow late applications.

This residue will be retained until the Department is confident that no further payments may be made. No decisions have yet been taken on how the residue can and should be used.

Firework License Fee

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Justice if he has any plans to reduce the £30 licensing fee for the purchase of fireworks.

(AQW 17161/11-15)

Mr Ford: Obtaining a fireworks licence incurs a fee of £30 if there are less than 100 people attending the display; £80 if there are to be less than 1000 persons attending and £160 if there are to be more than 1000 people attending.

My officials have recently engaged in discussions with relevant statutory bodies on the arrangements for the small scale applications, and I expect to receive advice on their conclusions shortly.

Prison: Millisle

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what plans he has for the former prison facility at Millisle.
(AQW 17168/11-15)

Mr Ford: The site will continue in its present role as the Prison Service College until the Northern Ireland Community Service College at Desertcreat is completed. This is currently scheduled for 2015. Thereafter, the Millisle site will be advertised for sale on the open market.

Bangor Courthouse

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to explain the rationale behind the decision to close Bangor Courthouse, given that it processes 50 percent more cases than Strabane Courthouse which will remain open.

(AQW 17169/11-15)

Mr Ford: The rationale behind the decision to close Bangor Courthouse included a number of factors and was not based solely on business volumes. The efficiency savings, facilities for victims and witnesses, accessibility of the court office for all court users and investment required to bring Bangor Courthouse to an appropriate standard were key considerations.

Strabane Courthouse has facilities to hear a wider variety of court and tribunal hearings and offers universal access to the court office.

Limavady Courthouse

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Justice how many jobs are expected to be lost when Limavady Courthouse is closed in 2014.

(AQW 17198/11-15)

Mr Ford: The closure of Limavady Courthouse and the transfer of business to Coleraine Courthouse will not result in any job losses for the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service.

Working Out Unit

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Justice how the proposed Working Out Unit on the Crumlin Road will operate.

(AQW 17199/11-15)

Mr Ford: Further to my statement to the Assembly on 26 November, I can confirm that work is ongoing and Northern Ireland Prison (NIPS) officials are working closely with DOJ, Probation Board and other colleagues to develop proposals on how best to operate the proposed Working Out Unit on the Crumlin Road.

This will be a collaborative exercise which will take into consideration conclusions reached in a number of recent reports, including the CJINI review of transition to community arrangements for life sentence prisoners in Northern Ireland, the Prison Review Team report and the internal NIPS review of the working of the Prisoner Assessment Unit.

Working Out Unit

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Justice whether he will carry out a consultation with the local community in relation to the proposed Working Out Unit on the Crumlin Road, Belfast.

(AQW 17200/11-15)

Mr Ford: Further to my statement to the Assembly on 26 November, I can confirm that NIPS officials, working closely with DOJ, Probation Board and other colleagues, are developing options on how best to redevelop the former Prisoner Assessment Unit as a Working Out Unit.

As part of that work, the exact client group will be determined, their needs identified and agreement reached on the services required to effectively meet those needs. Once the options for the development of a Working Out Unit are clear, consideration will then be given on how best to engage with the local community.

Prison Officers

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how many Prison Officers have applied for personal protection weapons because of dissident republican threats.

(AQW 17203/11-15)

Mr Ford: As this question relates directly to the personal security of prison staff it would not be appropriate to place this information in the public domain.

Prison Officers

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how many Prison Officers have applied for bullet proof windows because of dissident republican threats.

(AQW 17204/11-15)

Mr Ford: As this question relates to the personal security of prison staff, it would not be appropriate to place this information in the public domain.

Restorative Justice Schemes

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how many Restorative Justice Schemes are currently in operation.

(AQW 17207/11-15)

Mr Ford: In addition to the system of statutory Restorative Youth Conferencing, there are 15 community-based Restorative Justice Schemes accredited under the Government Protocol which are currently operational.

Prison Service

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to outline the role of long serving Prison Officers in introducing new recruits to the Prison Service.

(AQW 17211/11-15)

Mr Ford: New recruits to the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) are trained, monitored and assessed by skilled tutors based at the Prison Service College. These officers are long-serving and experienced members of NIPS.

Each new Custody Officer will experience working in residential units in order to build their operational knowledge and they will do so alongside experienced staff.

Custodial Facility for Women

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) what options are being considered for the development of a custodial facility for women; and (ii) when female prisoners will be relocated from Hydebank Wood to a new facility.

(AQW 17230/11-15)

Mr Ford: The development of a custodial facility for women will be subject to a full business case process involving the generation and consideration of a range of different options for its provision.

Across the Department of Justice work is currently being taken forward to speed up justice, address fine default and identify alternative community disposals where appropriate. DOJ officials are also engaged in refreshing the existing Women's Strategy to see what more needs to be done for women, particularly around prevention and diversion. This work, as well

as further research on the characteristics of the women offender population, will help to inform the development of an options appraisal paper on the sizing and configuration of any new facilities to be provided.

At this stage, it is not possible to forecast when female prisoners will be relocated from Hydebank Wood to a new facility.

Fuel Laundering

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of prosecutions and convictions for fuel laundering in each of the last three years.

(AQW 17310/11-15)

Mr Ford: HM Revenue & Customs have confirmed that for 2010/2011 there were four prosecutions and convictions and for 2011/2012 there were six prosecutions and convictions.

Access NI

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the average length of time for the clearance of applications by Access NI in each of the last five years.

(AQW 17360/11-15)

Mr Ford: Access NI commenced operations on 1 April 2008. Its published service standards are to:

- Deliver 90% of basic and standard checks within 14 days; and
- Deliver 90% of enhanced checks within 28 days

from receipt of an application. Performance is published on the internet.

Unfortunately due to the limitations of AccessNI's management information system, I am unable to provide information on the average time taken to deliver a certificate for the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009. However, it is well documented that significant delays were experienced in dealing with applications between May and December 2008, after which the position improved significantly.

Information with regard to average times for delivery is available after 1 April 2009 and is detailed in the table below:

	1 Apr 09 - 31 Mar 10	1 Apr 10 – 31 Mar 11	1 Apr 11 - 31 Mar 12	1 Apr 12 - 30 Sept 12
Basic	7.2	5.3	5.9	6.1
Standard	7.2	5.8	5.8	5.9
Enhanced	15.3	13.3	20.9	21.6

AccessNI keep their timescales and procedures under review. For instance, from 26 November 2012, and in line with new legislation, AccessNI no longer sends enhanced applications to PSNI, or indeed other police forces, except where it is believed that information about the applicant may exist. This will have an impact on the average time taken to deal with such cases. Early results show that the timescale for some enhanced checks will reduce significantly.

Bangor Courthouse

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice what responsibility his Department has for the future maintenance of Bangor Courthouse after April 2013, given that it is a listed building.

(AQW 17395/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service is responsible for maintaining Bangor Courthouse in line with Department of Environment and Department of Finance and Personnel guidance

to ensure it is kept secure and in reasonable condition until such times as it is no longer part of my Department's estate.

Prostitution

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice what more his Department can do to tackle prostitution.
(AQW 17424/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department commissioned a research paper on prostitution, which was published in 2010, and hosted a stakeholder conference in 2011. From these initiatives a range of follow-up actions were identified and are being progressed by the Department and its partners in the PSNI and in the health, community and voluntary sectors. The Department is considering what further steps it can take to tackle prostitution, in consultation with stakeholders, as part of its current work to refresh its 'Women's Offending Behaviour in Northern Ireland' strategy.

Bangor Courthouse

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice what consideration has been given to adapting Bangor Courthouse for community use after it ceases to operate as a court facility in April 2013.
(AQW 17482/11-15)

Mr Ford: Bangor Courthouse will be offered to other Departments to utilise and, if not required, may be placed on the open market. I would be happy to consider alternative uses for the community provided they are cost neutral for my Department.

Osbourne Group: Armagh Prison

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Justice what assistance his Department has provided to the Osbourne Group in the sourcing of historical Prison Service items from the old Armagh Prison.
(AQW 17484/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department has had no direct contact with the Osbourne Group with regard to historical items from the former Armagh Prison which are currently stored at the Prison Service College. However, NIPS officials have met with representatives from Armagh City Council and the Prince's Regeneration Trust to discuss the possibility of relevant artefacts being made available to the Council on loan, for the Armagh Prison regeneration project.

Department for Regional Development

Road Deaths

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how much has been spent by his Department on preventing road deaths in the last three years; and (ii) and how the annual figure is calculated.
(AQW 16778/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): My Department's Roads Service is committed to providing safer roads for all road users through the continued investment in the established programmes of Local Transport and Safety Measures (LTSM) which include, various engineering measures, such as, collision remedial measures.

Details of funding for the LTSM programme in the last three financial years are provided in the table below:

Year	Funding For The LTSM Programme (£)
2009/10	22 million

Year	Funding For The LTSM Programme (£)
2010/11	12.2 million
2011/12	22 million

In addition, I should advise that the Department of the Environment has responsibility for an advertising campaign which has been successful in raising driver awareness of key road safety messages, such as, speeding and drink/drugs. Such campaigns also make a significant contribution towards reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads.

Environmental Damage Caused by Fuel Laundering

Mr Elliott asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQO 2804/11-15, how the figure of £700K to £750K is calculated.

(AQW 16905/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the estimated figure of £700k-£750k per month is based on an estimate of the increased inflationary cost. This is calculated using a construction cost of approximately £250m and a forecasted average inflation rate of 3.5%, which equates to £729k per month.

Flood Alleviation Scheme

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development why the Flood Alleviation Scheme for Cushendall has not commenced.

(AQW 16922/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, in conjunction with DARD's Rivers Agency and Northern Ireland Water, it is investigating the causes of recent flooding in Mill Street and Shore Street in Cushendall. As a result, measures are being drawn up to improve the resilience to flooding at these locations.

The first of these works, to be undertaken by Roads Service in the Shore Street/Layde Road area, has already been commissioned and is expected to commence soon.

Roads Service has also commenced negotiations with landowners in the Layde Road area to agree measures to prevent surface water flowing from private lands onto the public road.

Ederney Wastewater Treatment Works

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) what is the capacity of the Ederney Wastewater Treatment Works; (ii) how many dwellings and businesses it serves, as opposed to sewerage connections approvals which have yet to be implemented; and (ii) whether NI Water can service further development in light of the number of connections.

(AQW 16929/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that (i) the Ederney Wastewater Treatment Works was designed for a population equivalent of 850. The assessment of 'population equivalent' is based on a formula which takes into account the number of industrial, agricultural, commercial and domestic users in the area served by a treatment works. (ii) The Works currently serves some 253 domestic properties, 26 businesses (ie non-domestic properties) and a school. While the Works is presently complying with its Water Order Consent, it is operating at capacity.

In relation to (iii) NIW is satisfied that in order to maintain compliance no further development in the area can be approved unless there is extant planning approval or the proposed discharge is on a like-for-like basis. The ultimate decision to approve or reject a planning application remains with Planning Service.

Education: Cycling

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Regional Development what work he is carrying out in conjunction with the Minister of Education to enhance cycling education in the curriculum and cycling provision in schools.
(AQW 16932/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Travelwise Team continues to liaise with schools to promote sustainable travel including cycling to places of education and employment through a programme of sustainable travel events.

My Department works closely with the Department of Education to host a programme of school visits, providing educational materials and organising supporting sustainable travel events such as the annual Bike week activities.

Car Parking

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on providing extra car parking spaces in Donaghadee.
(AQW 16952/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I understand that since my meeting with the Member, along with representatives of the Donaghadee Commerce and Development Group (DCDG), in September 2011, Roads Service officials have been liaising with Mr John Caldwell of DCDG to assess the viability of town centre sites in Donaghadee for potential conversion to car parks. However, as I stressed during our meeting, even if a suitable site can be found, there is no guarantee of funding to carry out the necessary works.

Of the eight sites considered by officials, the most promising in terms of size, cost of conversion and access was the Methodist Church Car Park. The current access from Church Lane is good, although Church Lane itself has limitations. Unfortunately, I have been advised that representatives of the church would not be willing to enter into a long term lease agreement at this time.

Car Parking: Residents

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to create resident only car parking on Spencer Street, Holywood.
(AQW 16953/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it is working towards the introduction of Residents' Parking Schemes within all areas of parking restraint identified in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2015 (BMTP).

Officials have further advised that, while Holywood is not specifically identified within the BMTP in this respect, a number of requests have been received for the provision of residents' parking within residential areas of the town centre, including Spencer Street. Accordingly, Roads Service has added these locations to its list of areas for future consideration, once all the areas identified within the BMTP have been addressed.

Aggregates Tax

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development what measures are in place to prevent contractors and sub-contractors illegally avoiding the payment of aggregates tax on any work carried out under the auspices of his Department.
(AQW 16963/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the aggregate levy is an environmental tax on the commercial exploitation of aggregate in the UK. As such, the supplier of the aggregate must register and complete quarterly returns to HM Revenue & Customs who, in turn, monitor potential avoidance and evasion of the levy.

Officials have further advised that they incorporate a signed declaration in contracts, to ensure the main contractor is fully aware of the requirement for the aggregate levy to be paid on aggregates sourced in connection with such contracts. Compliance checks are subsequently completed during the operation of these contracts.

Door-2-Door Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many people have used the Door-2-Door service in each of the last five years.

(AQW 16974/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below details the statistical information available. Please note that the information regarding the number of users for Moneymore Coaches (in Administration), previously Chambers Coach hire, is only available from December 2007. Similarly information from Disability Action is only available from April 2009. In both cases booking systems in place previously did not record the information.

NUMBER OF DOOR-TO-DOOR USERS

	Moneymore	Disability Action	Bridge	Total
2007/08	991	-	-	991
2008/09	1,480	-	153	1,633
2009/10	1,885	529	203	2,617
2010/11	1,844	623	180	2,647
2011/12	1,612	538	170	2,320

Note:- D2D Services in Londonderry and Belfast commenced September 2008

Door-2-Door Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for an estimate of the potential savings for the Door-2-Door service by removing the following categories of qualifying clients (i) referral by GP letter; (ii) people in receipt of high rate care Disability Living Allowance; and (iii) people who were members of Bridge Accessible Transport or Disability Action in 2006.

(AQW 17005/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: It is not possible to estimate any potential savings by removing these categories of membership. The Door-to-Door service providers are contracted to provide services to all members across all eligibility bands at a broadly fixed sum. If the eligibility criteria was changed, then this could result in services being more widely available for members who meet the remaining criteria.

Door-2-Door Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many people availed of the Door-2-Door service in each of the last five years who qualified (i) through referral by a GP letter; (ii) by being in receipt of high rate care Disability Living Allowance; and (iii) as members of Bridge Accessible Transport or Disability Action in 2006.

(AQW 17006/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below details the statistical information available. Please note that the information regarding the number of users for Moneymore Coaches (in Administration), previously Chambers Coach Hire is only available from December 2007. Similarly information from Disability Action is only available from April 2009.

(I) GP ELIGIBILITY

	Moneymore	Disability action	Bridge	Total
2007/08	124	-	-	124
2008/09	327	-	25	352
2009/10	389	189	46	624
2010/11	412	196	49	657
2011/12	371	171	44	586

(II) DLA CARE ELIGIBILITY

	Moneymore	Disability Action	Bridge	Total
2007/08	57	-	-	57
2008/09	96	-	6	102
2009/10	97	17	10	124
2010/11	123	27	18	168
2011/12	125	22	21	168

(III) DISABILITY ACTION MEMBERS

	Total
2007/08	0
2008/09	0
2009/10	91
2010/11	82
2011/12	66

(III) BRIDGE ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT MEMBERS

	Total
2007/08	0
2008/09	58
2009/10	64
2010/11	30
2011/12	13

*D2D Services in Londonderry and Belfast commenced September 2008

Footpath Replacement/Improvement Schemes

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any footpath improvement or replacement schemes planned for the North Down area in 2013/14.

(AQW 17008/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise the Member that the detailed budget for the 2013/14 financial year has not yet been finalised. Therefore, it is not possible to provide details of future works programmes at this time.

Tughan Court, Bangor

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans there are to carry out work on the pavements at Tughan Court, Bangor.

(AQW 17037/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the flagged footways in this area are considered to be in a safe and serviceable condition. While it currently has no plans to undertake improvement works on the footway network within Tughan Court, Bangor, officials have indicated that Tughan Court could potentially be included in the 3-year rolling footway programme in 2014/15, subject to available funding and other competing schemes.

Roads Service will continue to inspect the footways on a cyclical basis and any defects identified will be programmed for repair in accordance with current maintenance policies and procedures.

Door-2-Door Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what provision is made for the application of local knowledge when booking arrangements for the Door-2-Door service.

(AQW 17049/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Booking staff from all three Door-to-Door service providers have built up local knowledge in regard to addresses, member requirements and usual destinations. They apply this knowledge to assist members and driving staff and where possible to enable sharing of buses, although this can be complex at times given the nature of the service and the specific needs of each member.

Door-2-Door Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Door-2-Door service vehicles are available in the North Down area on a Sunday; and how this compares with the rest of the week.

(AQW 17050/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Currently there are three vehicles which operate in the North Down area on a Sunday. Usage figures suggest that the demand from members on a Sunday is being met. The service provider has provided assurances that it regularly reviews statistical data to ensure that this is the case.

The greatest demand for services is between Monday and Friday and the operator has six to seven vehicles available depending on demand.

Door-2-Door Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how much has been spent on advertising the Door-2-Door service in each of the last five years.

(AQW 17051/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The information requested is as follows:-

2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
£54,170.41	£147,570.61	£2,545.90	£381.00	£1,259.00

You will note from the information provided that substantial monies were spent on advertising the Door-to-Door scheme when it was first introduced on a roll-out basis between 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. This resulted in a significant number of people wanting to join the scheme which has led to a membership figure in excess of 13,000. However, overall the number of members who use the scheme when compared to the number of actual members is low.

Door-2-Door Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what checks his Department carries out to ensure that the Door-2-Door service has the correct number and range of vehicles to meet the needs of its users.

(AQW 17053/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The number and range of vehicles used by the service providers equate to the number and range submitted in the tender submissions upon which contracts are agreed. Service providers have been provided with information on the number of people with limiting long term illness, health problem or disability illness by operating areas.

All vehicles used by all the service providers are accessible vehicles. The providers of service have operational responsibility to ensure, as far as possible and in line with contract terms, that the vehicles are allocated to meet the demand and needs of users within available resources. There are occasions when, due to high demand, requests for transport from members at a certain time or for a particular type of vehicle may not be able to be met. In these circumstances all service providers try to accommodate members by offering transport at other times when vehicles are available.

Departmental officials monitor complaints from users and have conducted telephone surveys of members. This did not suggest a major problem with deployment of vehicles. The current consultation exercise currently on-going in regard to Door to Door services, although not specifically about vehicle usage or deployment, is due to close in January.

Car Parking Offences

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many fixed penalty notices for car parking offences have been issued in North Down in each of the last three years.

(AQW 17060/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that details of Penalty Charge Notices issued in North Down for parking contraventions, in each of the last three years, along with the most up to date figures available for the current financial year, are shown in the table below:

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	April – September 2012
Bangor	3672	3156	3411	1994
Holywood	1201	1865	1657	574
Total	4873	5021	5068	2568

Traffic Wardens

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many traffic wardens operate in the North Down area.

(AQW 17061/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that in the North Down area, there are four Traffic Attendants based in Bangor and one Traffic Attendant based in Holywood.

Traffic Attendants can be deployed at other locations in the North Down area, as required.

Water Pipe Repairs

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what has been the cost of repairing broken water pipes in each of the last three years.

(AQW 17063/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the expenditure over the past three financial years on repairing broken, leaking or burst water pipes which are part of the public water infrastructure is as follows:

2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
£6.8 million	£6.4 million	£6.3 million

Footway Resurfacing

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what extra resources are available for footway resurfacing schemes in the North Down area.

(AQW 17064/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am pleased to advise the Member that I have been able to release additional capital funding for carriageway and footway resurfacing schemes within the North Down area.

My officials are developing scheme programmes to the value of £700,000 that will include footway resurfacing schemes in Holywood and Groomsport.

Door-2-Door Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what provision is available for wheelchair users under the Door-2-Door scheme.

(AQW 17084/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: All vehicles used by the three service providers are wheelchair accessible. In addition all drivers have received MiDAS (Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme). This is a nationally recognised standard for minibus training which comprises on-road driving assessment, classroom based theory training and also additional training for drivers who will be transporting passengers with disabilities. This training also covers issues such as tail-lift operation and proper securing of wheelchairs using wheelchair restraint systems.

yLink Card Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what has been the cost to date of the yLink card scheme for 16-23 year olds.

(AQW 17108/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The issue of discounted promotions is an operational matter for Translink. However they have advised that capital costs which covered the provision of the relevant hardware and set up costs were £50,325.

Bus and Rail Fares

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans the Department has to provide additional concessionary bus and rail fares for school children aged between 16 and 18 years.

(AQW 17110/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Currently, only young people between the ages of 16 and 18 years, who have certain disabilities, may qualify for concessions for bus and rail travel under the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fare Scheme.

Normally, the Department of Education provides free travel for post primary school children who live more than 3 miles from their school. Also, a child with a statement of special educational needs, that includes transport requirements, may be eligible for transport assistance irrespective of how far they live from school.

School children aged 16 and over, who are not eligible for assistance under the above arrangements, can get discounts of at least one third on public transport fares by using Translink's y-link smartcard. This card offers substantial savings across all Translink services and is available to those aged between 16-23 years.

Given the current pressures on my budget, I am not in a position to provide additional concessionary fares for school children aged between 16 and 18 years. The current budget for the Concessionary Fares Scheme is around £30 million per annum.

yLink Card Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development why the yLink card scheme does not extend to return travel day passes or season tickets.

(AQW 17111/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The yLink card is a commercial product introduced by Translink to allow students and those under 24 to have access to the 'lowest fare' when buying a single, 'for cash' ticket. Translink advise that the development/design of this product followed research which identified that the majority of students will not make the (financial) commitment to purchase more than a single journey; therefore the product is tailored to the demands of the market. Other multi-journey tickets already offer discounts which are available to passengers in this age group.

Bus Shelters

Ms McCorley asked the Minister for Regional Development what criteria is used to determine the location of bus shelters; and when the current contract with Adshel ends.

(AQW 17112/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, assuming the location is suitable in terms of footway width, sight lines etc, Translink is consulted in relation to existing and likely passenger usage at the particular stop and whether it is considered to be an appropriate location. All new bus shelters are subject to the normal planning application process.

Officials further advise that the current contract for the provision and maintenance of bus shelters in Northern Ireland, between my Department and Adshel, expires in 2015.

Gritting

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what more his Department can do to ensure that grit boxes are fully stocked on a regular basis in the North Down area to cope with a potential heavy snowfall this year.

(AQW 17116/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that all salt bins within the North Down area have been restocked in advance of the winter season. Regular checks will be carried out throughout the winter period to ensure that further restocking takes place in a timely matter, subject to the availability of staff resources at the time.

I am further advised that Roads Service has no proposals to change the current operational arrangements which have worked effectively in the past in the North Down area.

Savings

Mr Easton asked Minister for Regional Development what areas of potential savings his Department is considering.

(AQW 17117/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has been working to generate savings of £159.1 million across the Budget period (2011-12 to 2014-15) through our Savings Delivery Plan, and has delivered savings of £15.46 million in the first year. The Savings Delivery Plan consists of a range of measures, which are detailed on my Department's website, the link to which is provided below.

DRD Savings Delivery Plan -<http://www.drndi.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-details.htm?docid=7051>

This Savings Delivery Plan is currently being updated to reflect the Executive's 7 November 2012 decision, as part of its Jobs and Economy Initiative, not to increase car parking tariffs over the remainder of the Budget period. The Executive in making its decision agreed to fund the budgetary impact of this loss of income to my Department, thereby reducing the level of savings required across the Budget period from £159.1 million to £146 million.

yLink Card Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to extend the scope of the yLink card to (i) return journeys; (ii) day passes; and (iii) season tickets.

(AQW 17145/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The issue of discounted promotions is an operational matter for Translink. They have advised me that they have no plans to extend yLink to give additional discount on further ticket/fare types. The product was introduced to allow students and those under 24 to have access to the 'lowest fare' when buying a single, 'for cash' ticket.

Translink have also advised that the development/design of this product follows research which identified that the majority of students will not make the financial commitment to purchase more than single journeys, therefore the product is tailored to the demands of the market.

Road Gritting and Salting

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development where his Department obtains the salt and grit used on the roads during the winter months.

(AQW 17153/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department purchases supplies of salt from Irish Salt Mining & Exploration Co. Ltd. of 10 Fort Road, Kilroot, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim.

Grit supplies are purchased under local contracts from various quarries across Northern Ireland.

Lennon-v-DRD Fair Employment Tribunal

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development, following the conclusion of the Fair Employment Tribunal proceedings in Lennon-v-DRD, whether his Department will now apologise to Alan Lennon for the discrimination against him by the former Minister.

(AQW 17157/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Fair Employment Tribunal upheld Dr Lennon's allegation of unlawful discrimination on the grounds of religious belief and dismissed his complaint of unlawful discrimination on the ground of political opinion. The Department has now agreed terms in full and final settlement of the case. As there was no allegation made by Dr Lennon against any official within the Department I consider the matter concluded.

Lennon-v-DRD Fair Employment Tribunal

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the anticipated cost of defending the Lennon-v-DRD Fair Employment Tribunal cost.

(AQW 17158/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Department is not yet in a position to provide the full costs of defending the Tribunal case. I can however confirm that the actual legal fees for the Tribunal Case to the end of the last financial year, 2011/12, amounted to around £85,000.

Department Costs

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development how much has been paid by his Department in each of the last three years and in the current year to date in (i) compensation and (ii) legal fees.

(AQW 17159/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the amount of (i) compensation and (ii) legal fees paid by my Department, in the last three financial years and to date in the current financial year, are shown in the table below:

Fiscal Year	Compensation (£000's)	Legal Fees Paid (£000's)
2009/10	1,983	2,039
2010/11	2,347	1,982
2011/12	2,133	2,384
2012/13 *	1,338	1,467
Totals	7,801	7,872

* Unaudited figures – subject to change.

Double Yellow Lines

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 16415/11-15, whether the absence of the end marking affects the enforceability of any associated legal status.

(AQW 17176/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Officials from my Department's Roads Service have advised that the absence of end markings does not undermine the prohibition on waiting as indicated by yellow lines.

Northern Ireland Traffic Penalty Tribunal

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to question 16415/11-15, who is responsible for giving legal advice to the adjudicators in the Northern Ireland Traffic Penalty Tribunal.

(AQW 17177/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise that Adjudicators at the Traffic Penalty Tribunal are legally qualified persons, who are appointed by the Lord Chancellor or by the First Minister and deputy First Minister, acting jointly.

Should you have any further queries about proceedings and provisions relating to Adjudicators, these should be addressed to the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service.

Lennon-v-DRD Fair Employment Tribunal

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development what investigation has been conducted, and with what result, into the former Minister, Conor Murphy, having access to privileged legal advice to the Department arising from the finding in the Lennon-v-DRD Fair Employment Tribunal.

(AQW 17209/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Department did not provide the former Minister Conor Murphy with any legal advice arising from the finding in the Fair Employment Tribunal.

Taxi Parking Spaces in the Derry City Area

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 16623/11-15, what plans he has to increase the number, given that over 1,000 taxis operate in the constituency.

(AQW 17227/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service, along with key stakeholders, including taxi representatives, has been involved in developing Transport Plans for the City of Culture 2013. As part of these plans, temporary facilities for all modes of public transport for specific large events are being considered.

Currently, taxi ranks are installed in areas where there is greatest demand from pedestrians requiring the services of a public hire taxis. Therefore, in order to maintain their efficiency, taxi ranks should not be used as parking facilities.

In the past, Roads Service has worked in consultation with City Centre Initiative and taxi representatives to identify areas throughout the City where taxi ranks are in greatest demand. Roads Service has also been involved in discussions with the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) and taxi representatives, regarding proposed changes to legislation in relation to taxi licensing. Roads Service has agreed to review taxi rank provision, in conjunction with the implementation of the proposed new legislation.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Penalty Charge Notices have been issued as result of vehicles being parked illegally at the Electrical Vehicle Charging Point in the Monaghan Street Car Park, Newry, since the provision of the facility.

(AQW 17231/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Officials from my Department's Roads Service have advised that, as of 23 November 2012, two Penalty Charge Notices have been issued to illegally parked vehicles at the designated spaces for electric vehicle charging in this car park.

Sewer Flooding Incidents

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the criteria used to assess whether people can have their properties added to the DG5 register of sewer flooding incidents.

(AQW 17235/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that its DG5 process for registering properties at risk of internal flooding from sewers is similar to that used by the water companies in England/Wales, and is governed by rules which are audited on an annual basis. The DG5 process commences automatically after an incident of internal flooding has been reported to NIW and does not require any action by property owners. DG5 investigations are also initiated as part of NIW's Drainage Area Plan process.

In order for a property to be placed on the DG5 internal flooding register, the following criteria apply:

- The property is deemed to have been affected by an internal flooding incident when foul, combined or surface water escaped from the public sewerage system onto the property and entered a building or passed below a suspended floor;
- The property is normally occupied and used for residential, public, commercial, business or industrial purposes. Buildings whose prime purpose is storage or installation of domestic appliances are excluded;
- The internal flooding was due to hydraulic incapacity in the sewer;
- The internal flooding incident is investigated robustly and inclusion on the register is approved by a NIW panel of experts.
- Properties where, during a minor rainfall event, internal flooding was prevented from overloaded sewers only by a temporary measure (e.g. non-return valve in the sewer) may qualify for inclusion on the DG5 register.
- Flooding arising from severe weather events (greater than 1 in 20 year event) is excluded.

NI Water

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made on NI Water's capital projects in the North Down area.

(AQW 17288/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that the planned expenditure within its Capital Works Programme for the North Down constituency area is as detailed in the table below.

Period	Expenditure (£000s)
PC10 year 3 (2012/13)	£6,741
PC13 year 1 (2013/14)	£6,671
PC13 year 2 (2014/15)	£7,830
Total	£21,242

This will include expenditure on projects such as improvements to the Holywood sewer catchment area (including Kinnegar Lagoons), the Bangor area sewerage network, the Millisle Drainage Area Plan, capital maintenance upgrades to eight pumping stations and North Down watermain improvements.

Sewage Treatment Works

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the proposed upgrade to the sewage treatment works at Kinnegar, Holywood.

(AQW 17298/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the £3.5 million project to resolve the sewage pollution at Kinnegar Lagoons, Holywood is on target to be delivered within its PC13 Business Plan which covers the period April 2013 to March 2015. Subject to the usual statutory approvals and budgetary constraints, NIW may be able to commence the project early within the next financial year with a construction period of approximately twelve months.

While this project will prevent further pollution to the Lagoons, a second phase will consider the remediation options for the Lagoons and particularly the odours emanating from the mud at low-tide. NIW has commenced work on this second phase and it is progressing well with several environmental studies and mud samplings completed this year. Further water sampling and flood analysis is also planned and the emerging findings will be known in the Spring of 2013 along with any financial and timing implications which will be largely dependent on the recommended remediation option.

Bus Lanes

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the success of the new bus lanes in Belfast.

(AQW 17375/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Prior to the start of the implementation of the Belfast on the Move Sustainable Transport Enabling Measures traffic flow surveys were carried out on the arterial routes into and through the city centre. Following the completion of these works, which is scheduled for mid 2013, further surveys will be carried out to measure the success of the project.

In the meantime we have gathered some preliminary data which indicates that:

- traffic levels are lower across the city centre and that some of the 'through' traffic has diverted to more strategic routes;
- there now appears to have been no significant impact on journey times through the city centre; and
- there was no decline in the numbers of cars parking in the city centre. This would indicate that people are still driving into the city to park and there is no evidence to suggest that the changes have deterred car borne shoppers.

My Department is also liaising with Translink in relation to the impact the project to date has had on bus services within the city. Early indications from Translink are that buses are getting through the city centre more quickly, the services are staying on schedule and are more reliable and their customers are seeing real benefits. In addition the Park & Ride facilities serving Belfast have seen a marked increase in usage.

In view of the initial indications above it would appear that the project has to date been successful. Once the works are completed and the further surveys are carried out we will be able to measure the full impacts of the project.

Transport Policy

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what action is taken to ensure that public health is considered when transport policy is being decided.

(AQW 17444/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department liaises closely with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) who have lead responsibility for public health matters. Officials from both departments are currently engaged on policies that cut across transport and public health responsibilities. These include the Active Travel Strategy, the Obesity Prevention Framework, Autism Strategy and the Action Plan for implementing the recommendations from the Bamford review for improving all public services for people with mental health or learning disabilities.

The Department's transport policies are also an integral part of the Draft Strategic Framework for Public Health, "Fit And Well - Changing Lives 2012-2022" on which consultation by DHSSPS recently closed.

When developing the new approach to Regional Transportation Strategy, my Department, in accordance with guidance from the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister, undertook an assessment on health as part of the development of an Integrated Impact Assessment.

Department for Social Development

Welfare Reform

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development, in the event of a delay in the delivery of the software for Welfare Reform, will benefits be paid at the old rate; and whether any shortfall will be taken out of the block grant.

(AQW 16672/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): Two new software systems will be introduced as a result of Welfare Reform – one for Universal Credit and one for Personal Independence Payment. Both systems are being developed by Department of Work and Pensions and are on target to be delivered in time for implementation. Personal Independence Payments and Universal Credit cannot be introduced until after the Welfare Reform Bill has received Royal Assent.

The implementation of Universal Credit in Great Britain commences in April 2013 with early pathfinder activity in the greater Manchester area followed by a phased national roll-out commencing from October 2013. The date for introducing Universal Credit in Northern Ireland has been changed to April 2014. The 6 month delay in introducing Universal Credit in Northern Ireland is to allow the system to be adapted to accommodate the changes announced on 22 October (split payments, housing cost payments direct to landlords and more frequent payments). This timescale is challenging but realistic for making the required changes but as always there will be contingency arrangements in the event that the system has not been fully adapted.

When Personal Independence Payments and Universal Credit are introduced in Northern Ireland they will be paid at the rates set for these benefits.

Under the current funding structure spending on social security benefits for Northern Ireland is classified as Annually Managed Expenditure (AME), funded from HM Treasury in line with actual need, outside of the Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL) funding allocated to and managed by the NI Executive. The costs of administering the social security system such as the cost of information technology and staff are funded from the NI Executive managed Departmental Expenditure Limit.

Where the Welfare Reform Bill (NI) 2012 has been enacted and there is a delay in the delivery of associated software, contingency arrangements will be put in place. These are likely to be clerical workarounds and it is expected that the additional costs will have to be met from NI Executive managed Departmental Expenditure Limit. Provided that Northern Ireland is maintaining parity of benefit rates, it is not expected that there would be any adjustment to the NI Departmental Expenditure Limit under the current funding arrangements for the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

If however the Welfare Reform Bill is not enacted or is delayed and the Northern Ireland Executive decide to pay benefits on a different basis or rate to those in the rest of the United Kingdom, the Statement of Funding Policy, allows UK Ministers to consider the level of any adjustment to the NI Executive managed Departmental Expenditure Limit. In this situation the costs of administering different social security systems and using complex IT systems which the Department for Work and Pensions have moved on from will also have to be met from the NI Executive managed Departmental Expenditure Limit.

Charity Commission: Salary Band

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development (i) what is the salary band for members of the Charity Commission; (ii) for how long it has been operating; (iii) the total cost of running the Commission during this time; and (iv) to outline the function of the body.

(AQW 16913/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Board of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI) comprises a Chief Commissioner, Deputy Chief Commissioner and five Commissioners. Remuneration is £5,000 per

annum for the Chief Commissioner, £3,000 per annum for the Deputy Chief Commissioner and £2,000 per annum for each of the five Commissioners.

The Commission was established as a non departmental public body under the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 on 27 March 2009 to provide a system of regulation and registration of charities operating in Northern Ireland. The total cost of running the Commission from 27 March 2009 to 31 March 2012 is £1,986,748.

The general functions of the Commission are set out in the Charities Act and are namely:

- 1 Determining whether institutions are or are not charities.
- 2 Encouraging and facilitating the better administration of charities.
- 3 Identifying and investigating apparent misconduct or mismanagement in the administration of charities and taking remedial or protective action in connection with misconduct or mismanagement therein.
- 4 Determining whether public collection certificates should be issued, and remain in force, in respect of public charitable collections.
- 5 Obtaining, evaluating and disseminating information in connection with the performance of any of the Commission's functions or meeting any of its objectives.
- 6 Giving information or advice, or making proposals, to the Department on matters relating to any of the Commission's functions or meeting any of its objectives.

Single Room Rate

Ms Fearon asked the Minister for Social Development how many people in Newry and Armagh will be affected by the introduction of the single room rate.

(AQW 16938/11-15)

Mr McCausland: On 1 January 2012 changes were introduced which increased the age criteria from 25 years to 34 years for single people who were limited to a single room rate (Shared Accommodation Rate) of the Local Housing Allowance. Claimants aged 25-34 in receipt of Housing Benefit before 1 January 2012 were protected from the changes until their next anniversary of their claim. Protection ends for all cases on the 31 December 2012.

The number of people affected in Newry and Armagh is detailed in the table below: -

Council area	Claimants under 35yrs on SAR* at 31/10/12	Claimants aged 25-34 on SAR* at 31/10/12	Anticipated number of claimants (25-34) still to be affected by SAR* changes
Newry	529	338	43
Armagh	204	129	13

* Shared Accommodation Rate

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to Employment and Support Allowance to detail the number of people who, between June 2011 and October 2012, have (i) been through the work capability assessment process; (ii) been refused entitlement; (iii) lodged an appeal; (iv) had their appeal heard; and (v) had their initial refusal overturned.

(AQW 16960/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Between June 2011 and October 2012:

- i) 84,024 claimants have participated in the Work Capability Assessment process.
- ii) 33,166 claimants have been refused entitlement following participation in the Work Capability Assessment process.
- iii) The Department has received a total of 21,872 Employment and Support Allowance appeals against decisions made by Departmental decision makers.
- iv) 10,219 claimants have received the outcome of their appeal following a determination made by an Appeal Tribunal.
- v) In 3,543 cases, the appeal was upheld in the claimants favour.

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Welfare Advice Organisations

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the level of funding that welfare advice organisations in South Down currently receive from his Department; and (ii) whether he will consider releasing additional funding to the voluntary and community sector so that it may adequately deal with the impact of Welfare Reform.

(AQW 16995/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department funds voluntary generalist advice services through the Community Support Programme, which allocates funding to councils, who in turn contribute additional resources and commission advice services locally based on the needs of their areas. Advice organisations provide information and advice on a wide range of subjects including welfare and benefits, health, education, employment, housing, debt, consumer and legal issues. South Down covers three council areas - Down District Council, Newry and Mourne District Council and Banbridge District Council. My Department's advice funding to these areas is approximately £170,000 per annum. My Department also provides funding to Regional Advice Support organisations, who support frontline advice providers in delivering services.

The Social Security Agency is currently considering what further support customers require in relation to Welfare Reform. Officials have already begun to engage with representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector to discuss the role they can play in implementing Welfare Reform in Northern Ireland.

Co-ownership Scheme

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the current annual budget for the Co-Ownership Scheme; and how this compares with the same period over each of the last five years.

(AQW 17078/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The annual level of funding provided by my Department to the Co-Ownership Scheme for the current financial, and each of the preceding 5 years, is as follows:

2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008-09	2007-08
£33 million	£28.25 million	£18 million	£15 million	£15 million	£18.8 million

Pilot Projects under ReStore

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister for Social Development to list the pilot projects that have been rolled-out under the ReStore programme; and how much funding each project has received under this programme.

(AQW 17086/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Seven pilot ReStore projects have been rolled out across Northern Ireland, with funding allocations for each as follows: -

- 1 Belfast, Castle Street - £165k
- 2 Belfast, North Street/Smithfield - £130.5k
- 3 Belfast, Glen Road - £150k
- 4 Larne, Main Street – £150k
- 5 Lurgan, William Street, High Street, Market Street - £150k
- 6 Londonderry, Bank Place/Union Hall Place - £158k
- 7 Londonderry, Spencer Road - £108k

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics.

Funding for projects similar to the ReStore Programme

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister for Social Development whether he intends to provide funding to support projects similar to the ReStore programme.

(AQW 17087/11-15)

Mr McCausland: An evaluation of the seven ReStore pilots completed to date is currently being finalised. My decision on mainstreaming the ReStore initiative will be made in the context of that evaluation and other budgetary pressures and priorities in my Department.

Benefit staff asking for Bank Details

Lord Morrow asked Minister for Social Development, in light of the advice that people should not give out their bank details over the phone, can benefits staff to make phonecalls to ask customers, from whom they are seeking to recoup overpayments, for their bank details.

(AQW 17088/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The recovery of benefit overpayments is administered by the Debt Centre NI in the Social Security Agency. It is not the policy of the Debt Centre to phone customers to request bank details for the recovery of overpayments. Where a recoverable overpayment occurs and a customer is on benefits, recovery is made through deductions from their benefit. Where a recoverable overpayment occurs to a customer who is no longer in receipt of benefits the following methods of payment are made available:

- Cash,
- Cheque;
- Postal Order;
- Bank Standing Order;
- Debit Card.

None of these methods require the transfer of bank details (e.g. bank account number and sort code) over the phone.

In the case of Bank Standing Orders, the customer is issued with a standing order template to complete and present to their bank. The bank establishes the standing order and provides the Debt Centre with a copy of the completed template.

In the case of payment by debit card the Debt Centre does not require the customer's bank account details. To progress the transaction the customer is asked to provide the following information: name,

national insurance number, value of payment, debit card type, debit card number, from and to card dates, issue no (if applicable), and the three digit security code. No other banking information is required.

Home Owner Schemes

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what grants or schemes are available for home owners to improve or extend their properties.

(AQW 17109/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The following grants are available through the Housing Executive's Home Improvement Grants Scheme to help home owners improve their properties:-

- Disabled Facilities Grants - to make the home of a person with a disability suitable for his/her needs;
- Repairs Grants - to assist landlords with the cost of compliance with a Notice of Unfitness;
- Renovation Grants - only available in exceptional circumstances to improve houses where there is imminent and significant risk to the health and safety of the occupants;
- Home Repair Assistance Grants - also only available in exceptional circumstances to facilitate moderate repairs and improvements to the external fabric of the home;
- Group Repair Schemes - to improve the facades of terraces of houses;
- Warm Homes Scheme - to provide loft and cavity wall insulation and to provide new heating where none exists or to replace Economy 7 heating with oil or gas;
- Boiler Replacement Scheme - to replace old, inefficient boilers that are more than 15 years old in owner occupied houses.

Personal Independence Payments

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 15626/11-15, whether the formal award will include a clause to ensure that home visits are carried out when required.

(AQW 17120/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The contract for the Personal Independent Payment assessment service in Northern Ireland has been awarded to Capita Business Services Limited.

The Personal Independent Payment medical assessment requirements describe the circumstances that health professionals will consider to ensure that assessments are carried out in an appropriate manner. This is informed by each customer's personal circumstances and includes determining whether the medical assessment will be in a claimant's home.

Free Independent Advice for Universal Credit

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development what action his Department is taking to ensure that people will be able to access free independent advice in advance of the expected implementation of universal credit.

(AQW 17130/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department funds voluntary generalist advice services through the Community Support Programme, which allocates funding to councils, who in turn contribute additional resources and commission advice services locally based on the needs of their areas. Advice organisations provide information and advice on a wide range of subjects including welfare and benefits, health, education, employment, housing, debt, consumer and legal issues. My Department stands by its commitment to protect the most vulnerable and provide support for those who need it.

DSD frontline advice support is approximately £1.6 million per annum throughout Northern Ireland with £1.9 million allocated in 2012/13 by local councils. Funding is also provided to the Northern Ireland Advice Services Consortium who support frontline advice providers in delivering services. My officials

are engaging with the Consortium to discuss how the Advice Sector can best support our customers through the implementation of Universal Credit in Northern Ireland.

Social and Affordable Homes

Mrs Dobson asked Minister for Social Development, in relation to his target of building 1,825 new social and affordable homes, how many are planned for the Banbridge District; and what impact these houses will have on meeting demand.

(AQW 17149/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The 2012/13 Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) does not currently include any schemes for Banbridge District Council area.

Clanmil Housing Association has a proposal at Dromore Street, Banbridge for 18 Elderly units. Although this scheme was originally programmed to be delivered during 2012/13, the housing association has recently advised that, due to slippage, the scheme is unlikely to start until 2013/14.

The 2012 Housing Need Assessment shows a requirement for 126 units in Banbridge District over the period 2012-2017. The greatest concentrations of need are in Banbridge Town (100 units), Dromore (15 units), Kinallen (6 units) and Loughbrickland (5 units).

The Housing Executive is currently in the process of formulating a draft 3 year Social Housing Development Programme for the period 2013/14 – 2015/16. It is anticipated that this programme will include a number of new social units for the Banbridge district.

Affordable homes are currently delivered through the co-ownership scheme with the areas in which properties are purchased being determined by the demands of applicants to the scheme.

Double Glazing Scheme

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development whether the change in specification of window hinges to be used in the Housing Executive double glazing programme has been referred to, or approved by, the Central Procurement Directorate.

(AQW 17150/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Central Procurement Directorate has no part to play in the approval process for changing, amending or creating new specifications for materials, components etc for Housing Executive properties. This is a matter reserved for either the Housing Executive Chief Executive's Business Committee or the Housing Executive Board.

The Housing Executive is designated as a Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE).

Meetings with Groups from the Glass and Glazing Industry

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development how many times he has met with the Glass and Glazing Federation regarding the Housing Executive double glazing programme.

(AQW 17151/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I met with representatives of the Glass and Glazing Federation twice. I have also met with other representatives of the glazing industry but I am not aware if they were members of the Glass and Glazing Federation.

Double Glazing Scheme

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development how many redecoration grants have been paid in each year since the introduction of the new Housing Executive double glazing scheme, broken down by region.

(AQW 17172/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The number of redecoration allowances paid as part of the Housing Executive's double glazing window replacement schemes since 12 March 2012 are as follows:-

North Region	South Region	Belfast Region	Total
242	697	417	1356

These payment figures are inclusive of schemes that have commenced on site prior to 12 March 2012, or where the Housing Executive's contractual obligations predated 12 March 2012.

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Departmental Staff Suspensions

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development how many staff in his Department are currently (i) suspended due to internal investigations; and (ii) continuing to work while facing an internal investigation. **(AQW 17174/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: One member of staff in the Department for Social Development is currently suspended due to an internal investigation. Twenty staff are continuing to work while facing an internal investigation.

Location of Housing Benefit Tribunals

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 16697/11-15, for his assessment of the impact on vulnerable claimants, such as those with a mental illness, of housing benefit tribunals within a court setting; and whether his Department allows claimants to request a different location. **(AQW 17221/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) has administrative responsibility (under a Service Level Agreement with the Department) for the efficient management and delivery of appeal tribunals, including the provision of appropriate venues. The increased use of court buildings by the Appeals Service is subject to ongoing assessment with officials from both NICTS and DSD engaging directly with appellants, representatives and panel members on site to seek feedback on the experience of tribunal users coming to a court venue.

It is appreciated that some court and tribunal users may find coming to a courthouse a worrying and perhaps stressful experience. We are committed to providing a high standard of customer care, to reduce the stress of the experience as much as possible. It will provide an informal but dignified setting with appropriate waiting areas and consultation rooms without close proximity to major criminal business. Officials will also arrange pre-hearing visits to help familiarise claimants with both the environment and procedures on the day and try to facilitate any requests to attend a hearing in an alternative venue in a timely manner.

Transfer of St Patrick's Barracks

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 16551/11-15, who is responsible for the legal process for the conveyance of the former military housing from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to his Department. **(AQW 17252/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: The Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO) is responsible for the legal conveyance of the former military housing at St Patrick's Barracks from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to the Department for Social Development.

The conveyance from OFMDFM to Fold Housing Association via my Department completed on 28 November 2012.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what proportion of Employment and Support Allowance assessments are carried out at (i) Royston House, Belfast; (ii) the home of the applicant; and (iii) another location.

(AQW 17264/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Atos Healthcare began providing medical assessment on behalf of the Social Security Agency on 20 June 2011. Since this date a total of 29,084 Employment and Support Allowance medical assessments have been carried out. Of this total:

- (i) 12,594 or 43.30% have been completed in the Belfast Medical Examination Centre at Royston House;
- (ii) 306 or 1.05% have been completed at the claimants home; and
- (iii) 16,184 or 55.65% have been completed at the 9 other Medical Examination Centres located throughout Northern Ireland.

Thompson House, Belfast

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development in relation to Thompson House, Belfast, to detail (i) when applications for enhancements and upgrades were submitted; (ii) what they were; (iii) the total cost; (vi) who approved them; and (v) from what budget they were paid, including any funding provided from any external source.

(AQW 17265/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Thompson House has been in existence since 1985 and was previously owned and run by the Presbyterian Board of Social Witness. It had become unfit for purpose and Helm Housing Association agreed to take it over for renovation. Proposals for re-improvement were received by the Housing Executive on 23 December 2010 and approved by the Housing Executive on 16 February 2011.

The work involved bringing the existing building up to current standards, with an additional new build extension on the side. The previous facility housed 15 residents. This has now increased to 19 residents. The accommodation now comprises 15 x one person en suite bedrooms, which share a range of communal facilities including dining room and kitchen facilities and recreation, hobbies and sitting rooms. In addition, there are 4 x one person self contained apartments and 2 staff en suite bedrooms with associated staff and office facilities.

Given the project has only just completed and final accounts have yet to be received, the final costs have not yet been confirmed. However, at project approval stage, total cost of provision was assessed at £2.3million, including purchase of the property, construction and associated on costs including legal and administration costs. The Housing Executive approved Housing Association Grant totalling £2.1 million, with the balance financed by Helm Housing through private borrowing.

My Department, through the Housing Executive, has responsibility for the capital funding of all new social housing projects. This includes supported housing projects for a wide range of vulnerable groups, including ex-offenders. The £2.1 million grant towards the work to Thompson House was therefore funded from my Department's Social Housing Development Programme budget.

Community Background of those appointed to Housing Executive

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development what is the total number and percentage of (i) Protestants; and (ii) Roman Catholics who (a) applied; and (b) were appointed to posts in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the year ending 31 December 2012.

(AQW 17286/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested. However, the table below details the figures in relation to the total number and percentage of (i) Protestants and (ii) Roman

Catholics who applied and were appointed to posts in the Housing Executive for the period 1 January to 29 November 2012.

	Protestant	Roman Catholic	Total
Applicants	132 (58.9%)	92 (41.1%)	224
Appointments	7 (46.7%)	8 (53.3%)	15

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Work Capability Assessment of Employment and Support Allowance

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development when his Department will conduct an evidence based review of the descriptors used in the Work Capability Assessment of Employment and Support Allowance.

(AQW 17319/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As part of his ongoing review of the Work Capability Assessment, Professor Malcolm Harrington tasked a number of charitable and representative groups, including Mind, Mencap and the National Autistic Society, to suggest refinements to the mental health function and fluctuating conditions descriptors.

In response to proposals from these groups the Social Security Agency, in conjunction with the Department for Work and Pensions, will conduct an evidence based review of the mental, intellectual and cognitive descriptors (including fluctuating conditions) used within the Work Capability Assessment in Spring/Summer 2013.

Support Services

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development what discussions he has had with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in relation to support services for people suffering from a mental illness during the transitional period in the changes in the welfare system.

(AQW 17320/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In implementing Welfare Reform, I am committed to supporting the needs of the most vulnerable in Northern Ireland. Whilst I have not yet met with the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety in relation to Welfare Reform, I have secured a commitment from Department for Work and Pensions Minister for Disabled People, Esther McVey, that in relation to Personal Independence Payment all views and concerns expressed from people and organisations in Northern Ireland will be carefully considered as they evaluate what further changes may be needed to ensure a fair reflection of disabled people's needs.

My officials continue to engage with Customer Representative Groups to understand customer views and concerns and reflect these in the planning and delivery of each of the Welfare Reform initiatives.

Assistance with Online Application for Universal Credit

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development what training and resources his Department will provide to assist people in their online application process for universal credit who (i) have never used the internet; (ii) have limited or no access to internet facilities; and (iii) due to disability or impairment, are unable to use the internet.

(AQW 17321/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Fresh claims and change of circumstances updates for Universal Credit in Northern Ireland will be available on a multi-channel basis. Claimants will have the option to make an application via the telephone or face-to-face as well as online. This is another key operational flexibility which I have secured for the people of Northern Ireland.

Research indicates that a significant number of people will be able to operate the online process successfully with little or no assistance. For those who do not have access to a computer or have limited access or are unable to use the internet, I am putting in place a number of measures to support the transition to online. This includes a Digital Inclusion programme, run within local communities using IT facilities, in either community centres or libraries, delivered by qualified instructors to improve IT literacy skills. There will also be Internet Access Points within the Jobs and Benefits offices to facilitate access for those without computers. As the introduction of the Universal Credit system will be phased I am also planning the introduction of a number of Assisted Digital services accessible by phone, email or Webchat to help people complete their online application process.

Welfare Reform

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development for an estimate of the cost to the public purse caused by the delay in the implementation of Welfare Reform as a result of the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements; and how this estimate was calculated.

(AQW 17393/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The current estimated cost to the Northern Ireland Block from potential delays in the Welfare Reform Bill not securing Royal Assent and the impact on the associated regulations is £18million.

This is based on a 3 month delay in the current timetable and represents an estimate of the annually managed expenditure controls which will not be achieved and the funding which may have to be found by the Northern Ireland Executive for the discretionary elements of Social Fund.

Under the Statement of Funding Policy, Northern Ireland's funding can be adjusted where the Northern Ireland Executive makes decisions or takes actions which result in additional costs to the UK Exchequer.

Figures are based on a three month delay and are pro rata business case financial estimates available for Employment and Support Allowance Contributory Time Limiting, Housing Benefit under occupancy, the Benefit Cap and the Discretionary Social Fund.

Northern Ireland currently uses Department for Work and Pension IT systems to administer calculate and pay benefits to its 600,000 customers. Additional costs of administrative work arounds, accessing later IT releases or using IT systems which the Department for Work and Pensions have updated or amended are excluded from the estimated costs of delay.

Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Boards

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development when elections were last held for representatives on Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Boards in the Foyle constituency.

(AQW 17450/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Formal elections are not held for representatives on Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Boards. The overall aim of each Partnership is to secure balanced representation in respect of the Neighbourhood Renewal Area and membership should comprise key community, political, statutory and private sectors. Where a Partnership requires new or additional representatives, it should identify how to fill that need and which individual(s) and/or organisation(s) should be approached. Any decision taken by the Partnership should reflect the principles of openness, transparency and inclusivity.

Double-Glazing Scheme

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the rationale behind the change in the specification of hinges to be used in the Housing Executive's double-glazing schemes, from reversible to a standard casement hinge.

(AQO 3009/11-15)

Mr McCausland: When I came into office I was astounded to learn that the Housing Executive estimated that 48,000 of their homes required double glazing. I was even more concerned about the apparent lack of haste in dealing with this, as they originally planned to have this work completed by 2021. Therefore I ensured that in the Programme for Government, the Northern Ireland Executive gave a commitment that the thermal efficiency of all Housing Executive properties would be improved by 2014/15 through the provision of double glazing.

However, I also had to ensure that the double glazing programme delivered value for money for the tenants of the Housing Executive and the tax payers of Northern Ireland.

That is why, earlier this year I asked the Housing Executive to research the specifications used as I was concerned that the Housing Executive's specification for the supply and fitting of double glazing did not offer best value for money and also that the specification for hinges and handles was much higher than the industry standards for domestic properties. I was advised that there was potential for significant savings and following the review significant savings have been identified.

The Housing Executive has now advised me that their rationale for varying the performance related standard specification is: -

- to address capacity concerns from a delivery perspective;
- effect cost savings in the window manufacture, glazing and hinge arrangements; and
- to widen out the manufacturer supply base from what was historically a very narrow supply area.

Alternative Energy Sources

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Social Development what measures are available to encourage alternative energy sources to help reduce householders' over reliance on oil as their main energy source.

(AQO 3010/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In September 2012, I launched a new Boiler Replacement Scheme, following on from the pilot scheme which ended in March 2012. The new scheme offers a grant to of up to £1,000 towards the cost of replacing old, inefficient boilers, if the householders have an income of less than £40,000.

Householders with an income of up to £20,000 could be eligible for a maximum grant of £1,000 and householders who earn between £20,000 and £40,000 could be eligible for a maximum grant of up to £500.

The level of grant will depend on whether householders replace oil with oil or oil with gas or indeed they can arrange to install a wood pellet boiler. Householders can choose an installer of their choice as long as they are appropriately qualified.

The Housing Executive has received almost 22,000 expressions of interest in the scheme and over 15,000 application forms have been issued. £12 million has been allocated to the scheme over the next three years, with £4 million available for grants before the end of March 2013.

Double Glazing Scheme

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's double-glazing scheme for properties in Ballyclare.

(AQO 3011/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has a total of 514 tenanted properties in Ballyclare and 369 of these are included in a double glazing scheme which is provisionally due to start in September 2013 and end in January 2014, at an estimated cost of £611,000 within its programme of improvement and maintenance schemes.

Alcohol Consumption

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the work to tackle irresponsible alcohol consumption.

(AQO 3012/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Dealing with the problem of Irresponsible consumption of alcohol is primarily a matter for my colleague the Minister for Health. My Department is responsible for policy in respect of liquor licensing and I have been concerned for some time about the way in which alcohol is promoted and marketed. In particular I am concerned about promotions that encourage young people to buy and consume more alcohol than is good for them.

Earlier today the Assembly approved the introduction of regulations to ban irresponsible drinks promotions such as, "all you can drink for £20". This will come into operation from 1st January next year.

I have also endorsed the drink industry's Code of Practice on responsible retailing of alcohol. The code seeks to promote best practice and to prevent alcohol being irresponsibly promoted, served or sold.

The drinks industry has appointed an independent complaints panel that oversee the implementation of the code and deal with all complaints.

My officials are continuing to work with officials in the Health department on the introduction of minimum unit pricing in Northern Ireland. Before a final decision is taken we need to understand the impact of such a policy. Research into the impact will be commissioned shortly. I was encouraged by the announcement last week of the UK Government's plan to consult on the introduction of minimum unit pricing. Scotland passed legislation on this matter earlier this year. We will continue to watch developments in England and Scotland very closely.

Living Over the Shop Scheme

Mr I McCreagh asked the Minister for Social Development, in light of the recently launched Housing Strategy, how his Department will take forward the Living Over the Shops scheme.

(AQO 3013/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I am keen to hear consultees' views on how the proposal for a re-vitalised Living over the Shops Initiative, and all other proposals within the Housing Strategy, should be taken forward. On considering consultation responses, and subject to securing the necessary resources, I will agree how this and other proposals within the Housing Strategy can be taken forward. This proposal will of course clearly link with my Department's Urban Regeneration Framework and the work currently being taken forward to revitalise our towns and cities. It presents a real opportunity to bring life back to our town centres, creating vibrant spaces for all and help address the need for more one bedroom accommodation arising for the Welfare Reform changes.

Social Security Benefit Expenditure

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the levels of fraud and error in the Social Security benefit expenditure.

(AQO 3014/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Significant progress has been made in reducing fraud and error. The Social Security Agency operates a rigorous benefit security strategy which has resulted in a steady reduction in losses through fraud and error, from £109m in 2002/03 to £39.9m in 2011. The current performance is the best ever.

Put into context, £39.9m now represents 0.9% of the Agency's £4.5bn annual expenditure, compared to 1.1% in 2010. The 2011 result is made up of £13.2m or 0.3% official error, £7.3m or 0.2% customer error and £19.4m or 0.4% customer fraud.

The Agency also estimates the level of underpayments arising from official and customer error. Identifying those cases not receiving their full entitlement and correcting benefit payments is an integral part of the Agency's business. Total underpayments in the Agency reduced to 0.4% of benefit expenditure in 2011 compared to 0.5% in 2010.

Social Housing

Mr Byrne asked the Minister for Social Development whether the £8 million transferred from the social housing new build programme could have been used to build small one or two bedroom units to help meet demand following the introduction of the under occupancy legislation.

(AQO 3015/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The transfer of £8 million from the Social Housing Development Programme to the Co-Ownership Scheme was the result of efficiencies achieved in the delivery of a number of social housing schemes throughout the 2012/13 financial year.

There has been a failure to provide small one and two bedroom units in previous years and the Programme for 2012/13 did not include any one bedroom units, failing to take account of the forthcoming Welfare Reform changes. I was not prepared to accept this and asked my Department, in conjunction with the Housing Executive, to have the Housing Associations submit proposals on how schemes for one and two bedroom units may be brought forward.

A number of pilots for one and two bedroom units have now been launched and my Department, and the Housing Executive, will assess the outcomes of these pilots, as well as the potential to convert existing supply to one bed units or shared accommodation, to inform the composition of the future Social Housing Development Programme for 2013/14 and beyond. However, given the limited timescale in which to formulate new schemes that would deliver additional one and two bed units, it would not have been possible to utilise £8 million of expenditure within the remainder of the financial year.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Assembly Committee Papers

Lord Morrow asked the Assembly Commission for an estimate of the savings, per annum, since the folders and binders used for Assembly committee papers have been recycled.

(AQW 17040/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The recycling of folders and binders commenced in early 2010. Unfortunately it is not possible to isolate binders and folders solely used for committee papers from all other Assembly business. However, the total savings for the Assembly since they have been recycled is £3,335.52 or 89% for calendar year 2010. This is further illustrated in the table set out overleaf.

The slight increase observed in 2012 to date is due to the large amount of folders and binders gathered during Dissolution in 2011 that have been reused on numerous occasions and are now required to be replaced.

		2010(Jan-Dec)		2011(Jan-Dec)		2012(Jan-Dec)	
Product Description	Unit of Issue	Quantity	Sales	Quantity	Sales	Quantity	Sales
A4 Lever Arch File	Pack10	0	0.00	2	6.60	48	159.57
Banner Pob A4 2R Binder 25Mm Black	Box10	0	0.00	17	39.30	155	394.52

Product Description	Unit of Issue	2010(Jan-Dec)		2011(Jan-Dec)		2012(Jan-Dec)	
		Quantity	Sales	Quantity	Sales	Quantity	Sales
Banner Pob A4 2R Binder 25Mm Green	Box10	0	0.00	1	2.50	0	0.00
Banner Pob A4 2R Binder 25Mm Yellow	Box10	0	0.00	1	2.50	0	0.00
Banner Pp A4 2R Binder 25Mm Black	Pack12	193	3,037.82	12	188.88	0	0.00
Banner Pp A4 2R Binder 25Mm Blue	Pack12	7	110.18	0	0.00	0	0.00
Banner Pp A4 2R Binder 25Mm Red	Pack12	6	94.44	0	0.00	0	0.00
Banner Pp A4 2R Binder 25Mm Green	Pack12	7	110.18	0	0.00	0	0.00
Banner Pp A4 2R Binder 25Mm Yellow	Pack12	7	110.18	0	0.00	0	0.00
Banner L/Arch File Fs Port 70Mm Cl	Pack10	66	204.60	32	101.40	33	110.26
Banner L/Arch File A4 Port 70Mm Cl	Pack10	26	80.60	23	71.30	0	0.00
Total			£3,748.00		£412.48		£664.35

Parliament Buildings: Flags

Mr Hazzard asked the Assembly Commission which two flags were flying from Parliament Buildings on 20 November 2012; and to outline the rationale behind the decision to fly these flags on that day.
(AQW 17085/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The arrangements for the flying of the Union flag from government buildings in Northern Ireland are set out by the Flags Regulations (NI) 2000, as amended by the Flags Regulation (NI) (Amendment) 2002. The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission follows these Regulations.

The two flags flying from Parliament Buildings on 20 November 2012 were Union flags, to mark the occasion of the anniversary of the wedding of Her Majesty the Queen. This anniversary is one of the designated days under the above Regulations. (Copy attached)

2012

DAYS FOR HOISTING FLAGS ON GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS IN NORTHERN IRELAND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FLAGS REGULATIONS

- 20 January Birthday of The Countess of Wessex
- 6 February Her Majesty's Accession
- 19 February Birthday of The Duke of York
- 10 March Birthday of The Earl of Wessex

- \12 March Commonwealth Day#
- 17 March St Patrick's Day
- 21 April Birthday of Her Majesty The Queen
- 9 May Europe Day
- 2 June Coronation Day
- 10 June Birthday of The Duke of Edinburgh
- \16 June The Queen's Official Birthday*
- 15 August Birthday of The Princess Royal
- \11 November Remembrance Sunday**
- 14 November Birthday of The Prince of Wales
- 20 November Anniversary of Her Majesty's Wedding

NOTE:

Commonwealth Day is the second Monday in March

* The day appointed for the official celebration of Her Majesty's Birthday

** Remembrance Sunday is the second Sunday in November. Flags should be flown right up all day and not at half-mast.

\ Dates confirmed by publication in the Belfast Gazette on Friday 27 January 2012

ON THE ABOVE DAYS FLAGS SHOULD FLY FROM 8AM UNTIL SUNSET**Parliament Buildings: Flags**

Mr Campbell asked the Assembly Commission whether the same dimensions of Union Flag are flown from the two flagpoles on Parliament Buildings on each of the designated days,
(AQW 17103/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): When the Union flag is to be flown at Parliament Buildings, a decision is made prior to hoisting the flag, as to which of two sizes of flags is to be used, i.e. a full size flag (dimensions: 12 ft x 6 ft) or a 'storm' flag (dimensions: 7 ½ ft x 3 ¾ ft). The decision is subjective and is based upon prevailing weather conditions. In poor weather, as was the case on 20 November 2012, two storm flags are normally flown. Health and safety must also be a consideration, as in strong winds or wet weather, a full size flag may break the flagpole and present a risk to persons below.

Assembly Gift Shop

Mr Flanagan asked the Assembly Commission whether there are any plans to commission additional sporting memorabilia, such as Gaelic footballs, sliotar or hurls for sale in the Assembly Gift Shop.
(AQW 17226/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): There are no specific plans to commission additional sporting memorabilia for retail in the Assembly Gift Shop.

There are two methods by which the Assembly decides on products that are to be sold in the Assembly Gift Shop;

- (i) Items that are purchased by our contractor, Eurest, for sale in the Gift Shop. These are purchased with the agreement of Support Services Office, and are usually bespoke items that contain the Assembly blue flax crest, and are therefore extremely popular amongst the many visitors who attend Parliament Buildings each year. The Eurest policy on the procurement of gifts is that Gifts for retail sale are procured from local companies where possible. The range of gifts with the NI

Assembly crest is placed with NI firms who provide employment for local people. Most gifts are manufactured or processed within N.I.

- (ii) Items that are selected via the Designer Makers Initiative. The overarching aim of this initiative is for the Northern Ireland Assembly to work in collaboration with Craft NI in order to encourage a variety of makers from throughout Northern Ireland to apply to showcase their goods in the Assembly Gift and Coffee Shop. A third Designer Makers Initiative commenced on Wednesday, 1 November 2012 in the Assembly Gift & Coffee Shop. The Initiative has proved to be very popular in recent years and the current Initiative will run for six months ending on 30 April 2013.

The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission welcomes applications from throughout Northern Ireland and have been encouraged to see a diverse range of products put forward to date for showcasing in the Gift Shop.

Further information relating to the opportunity to apply for the next Designer Makers Initiative will be placed on the Craft NI website via <http://craftni.org/outlets/northern-ireland-assembly-gift-shop/>

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Published by Authority of the Northern Ireland Assembly,
Belfast: The Stationery Office

and available from:

Online

www.tsoshop.co.uk

Mail, Telephone, Fax & E-mail

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Telephone orders/General enquiries: 0870 600 5522

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TSO@Blackwell and other Accredited Agents

ISSN 1463-7162

Daily Editions: Single copies £5, Annual subscriptions £325

Bound Volumes of Debates are issued periodically during the session: Single copies: £90

Printed in Northern Ireland by The Stationery Office Limited

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ISBN 978-0-339-70274-5

