

Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

Friday 22 March 2013

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Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 22 March 2013

Written Answers to Questions

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Single Farm Payment Claims

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to Single Farm Payment claims, to outline the rationale as to why marker posts are not accepted as field boundaries when they are acceptable in England and Wales.

(AQW 19974/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): It is a matter for each administration to determine what features are accepted as field boundaries and my Department has decided not to recognise marker posts as field boundaries. In making changes to its mapping system to satisfy the Commission's concerns, DARD did not want to include any boundary marking that could give rise to further criticism. The Commission wants to ensure that there is only a single claimant on a field parcel and that the claimant is an active farmer.

To meet the Commission's requirements, land claimed for single Farm Payment and other schemes must have a clearly defined boundary with a stock proof fence if the land is used for grazing. Marker posts would not indicate that a particular piece of land is being managed separately

If there are circumstances where a number of farmers are actively farming a shared field and they can provide us with evidence to demonstrate this, and that sub-dividing that field with a fence is not a feasible option, then the Department will consider allocating notional shares of that field to each farmer in the same way it allocates common land. This will allow farmers who are genuinely carrying out agricultural activity on the land to use their share of that land to claim their SFP entitlements and allow the Department to exercise proper control over such allocations. This will however, be used only in exceptional circumstances where no other reasonable alternatives exist.

Cost of Translating Departmental Letters and Documents

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the cost of translating departmental letters and documents into (i) Irish; and (ii) each other language, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20505/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The breakdown of expenditure incurred by the Department on translating departmental letters and documents into (i) Irish; and (ii) each other language, in each of the last five years up to end of March 2012 are attached.

DARD: Total Overtime Payments

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the total overtime payments made to staff in her Department, in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 20520/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Overtime payments made to staff in the Department, including Forest Service and Rivers Agency, for the last three financial years are as follows:

Year	2009/10	2010-11	2011-12
	£000's	£000's	£000's
Department	3,093	2,696	2,981
Recoupment	(847)	(778)	(743)
Total	2,246	1,918	2,238

The highest incidence of overtime costs each year is recorded by Veterinary Service Group. The majority of these overtime costs are claimed back from the Food Standards Agency (FSA), as reflected in the recoupment figures above.

Destruction of Native Trees

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the action that she is taking to prevent the destruction of native trees by people reducing the overshadowing of grassland in line with the mapping needs of Europe.

(AQW 20538/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department contributes to the prevention of the destruction of native trees through the administration and delivery of EU funded area-based schemes, such as the Single Farm Payment Scheme, the Less Favoured Areas Compensatory Allowances Scheme and the NI Countryside Management Scheme. These schemes promote sustainable agricultural practices and encourage responsible environmental stewardship of the land. All farmers in these schemes must meet Cross-Compliance requirements including that a farmer must not remove a hedgerow tree without permission from DARD and must not cut a tree inside the closed period (1 March to 31 August). A breach of these requirements may result in a penalty being applied to the farmer's direct agricultural support payments.

There are exceptions to the Cross-Compliance requirements which allows for tree cutting or removal where health and safety is an issue unless a tree preservation order is in place. Hedgerow trees may also be removed on rotation for timber, provided young saplings are left to grow as replacement trees in the hedge. Full details can be found in the Cross-Compliance Verifiable Standards Summary 2013 on the DARD website at

www.dardni.gov.uk/2013-cross-compliance-verifiable-standards-_summary-document_.pdf

The new farm business maps are issued to assist farmers in determining the area of eligible land they can claim under these EU funded area-based schemes. With regard to trees which overshadow grassland, my Department does not capture the canopy of trees if they are in a single line hedge feature, as grass is assumed to be present. If there is eligible grassland under the canopy of other trees which DARD has marked as ineligible, farmers should inform DARD who will apply the change but mark it as 'unverified' until the change is verified.

Where a claim for these area-based schemes is subject to an inspection, DARD Inspectors will assess the eligibility of the area under a tree canopy. Where this is bare soil or leaf litter it may be considered ineligible for area payment.

Central Investigation Service

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to whom the Central Investigation Service is accountable when completing work for other Departments, Agencies or Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

(AQW 20589/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Central Investigation Service (CIS) is accountable in the first instance to the Head of Financial Policy & CIS Branch in regard to the achievement of objectives and targets. In undertaking work for other Departments, Agencies and Non-Departmental Public Bodies, the CIS is accountable to the customer as defined in formal Service Level Agreements (SLAs), which clearly set out roles and responsibilities.

DARD: Claims

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much has been paid to settle claims against her Department, in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 20599/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill:

Financial Year	Amount £
2009-10	240,642
2010-11	204,967
2011-12	93,365

The highest incidence of claims each year is recorded by Central Service Group. These claims are largely in relation to Industrial Employer Liability issues.

DARD: Annual Report and Accounts for year ending 31 March 2011

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to point 22 of her Department's Annual Report and Accounts for year ending 31 March 2011, to provide details of the suspected fraud cases which were not reported to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

(AQW 20604/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: During 2010/11 all cases of suspected fraud referred to the Central Investigation Service (CIS) for investigation were registered on the CIS database. However, some were not immediately notified to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) due to an administrative oversight. The C&AG was subsequently notified, in January 2011, of all cases of suspected fraud referred for investigation during the year and the CIS has fully complied with reporting requirements since that date.

The Department is unable to provide details of the cases that were belatedly notified to the C&AG. It is considered that this information constitutes and contains personal sensitive data relating to third parties of which you are not the data subject. To release this information would breach the first and second principles as set out in schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act 1998. Specifically, it is considered that disclosure would represent unfair processing of the data by the Department.

Small Hill Farmers

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the pressures felt by small hill farmers in places such as the Mourne area in South Down, to outline the opportunities that exist to help protect and promote future farming opportunities.

(AQW 20663/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The recent farm income figures illustrate the financial pressures farmers are facing right across the north at the moment. They highlighted vividly the importance of CAP direct payments in supporting and protecting our farmers in such difficult times. That is why I am fighting hard to secure a flexible CAP under the current reform negotiations so that we can tailor the support framework in such a way as to best meet the balance of local needs.

Although last year was an extremely difficult one for farmers, I remain optimistic about the future and the possibilities arising from the increasing global demand for livestock products. I hope to take

receipt of the Agri-Food Strategy Board report soon and I want to work with industry, the Board and other relevant departments to develop the opportunities identified. This will help shape the new Rural Development Programme (RDP), which also needs to consider the creation of off-farm opportunities for farm families and how these can best be promoted. The experiences of last year serve to emphasise the importance of setting a clear strategic direction and working together to achieve our agreed goals. The new RDP will be fundamental to this process and I hope stakeholders will engage fully with us in shaping the programme so that we can maximise its effectiveness.

Hill Subsidy Review

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the findings of the Hill Subsidy Review; and for her assessment of the best way to promote young farmers in order to future proof the farming industry.

(AQW 20664/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: DARD conducted a review of support arrangements for Less Favoured Areas (LFA) and collated an extensive evidence base which was subject to public consultation in 2009, along with options for the future of LFA support.

The evidence from that review at that time pointed to an underpinning rationale for an LFA support mechanism which had a clear focus on contributing, through continued use of agricultural land, to delivering positive environmental outcomes and, in particular, avoiding land abandonment and environmental degradation.

In light of the uncertainties created by the forthcoming CAP reform process and the re-designation of Less Favoured Areas, my predecessor, Minister Gildernew, decided that the architecture of the Less Favoured Area Compensatory Allowances Scheme would remain unchanged until the end of the current Rural Development Programme.

As far as young farmers are concerned, the attractiveness of the agricultural industry as a place to forge a long-term career will be driven to a significant degree by its inherent profitability and long term prospects. These long term prospects are generally regarded as being much more positive now than they were a number of years ago, and that is to be welcomed. The key now is to ensure that the local industry, including young farmers, is best placed to capitalise on these prospects. I very much hope that the analysis and recommendations emerging from the Agri-Food Strategy Board will help create a collective focus on grasping these opportunities. Ensuring that farmers have the necessary skills and knowledge and access to new technologies will certainly play a part in this, and you will be aware of the significant investment my Department makes in this area each year through CAFRE and AFBI. The reform of the CAP also offers the opportunity secure a flexible policy framework which we can tailor best to meet the balance of local needs. That is something I am working hard to achieve.

The design of our next 2014-20 Rural Development Programme also offers the opportunity to create a framework to improve the competitiveness of the agricultural industry, and within that, to consider any specific provision for young farmers. This design is something on which my Department is already engaging with stakeholders and which will be the subject of public consultation later this year.

BBC Spotlight Investigations

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline why she did not take the opportunity to contribute to the BBC Spotlight investigations into the issue of horse meat entering the food chain.

(AQW 20665/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I was unavailable.

Low Value Horses

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps her Department has taken regarding holding yards for low value horses since concerns were raised in 2009.

(AQW 20671/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In 2009, during the consultation of the Welfare of Animals Bill, one welfare organisation raised a general concern about the welfare conditions at holding yards used for horses. No specific complaint was made about any incident or premises.

This response, together with all other consultation responses received at that time, was used to inform the drafting of the Welfare of Animals Bill, and to ensure that sufficient powers were contained within the Bill to address such issues in the future.

The Bill was passed by the Assembly in February 2011 and became the Welfare of Animals Act on 29 March 2011. All the provisions in the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 are now commenced, with the final provision on the docking of dogs' tails commenced on 1 January 2013.

The new Act provides strong powers to deal with any person responsible for an animal who fails to meet the needs of that animal to the extent required by good practice or causes that animal to suffer unnecessarily. This includes any person responsible for horses in so called "holding yards".

The maximum penalty for any person convicted of causing unnecessary suffering is 2 years imprisonment and, or, an unlimited fine.

Since 2 April 2012, these powers have been enforced by Councils in respect of non-farmed animals (domestic pets and equines). Prior to this the PSNI enforced these powers. The delay in transferring these powers to Councils was to honor a commitment given to the Assembly by my predecessor to allow Councils a year to prepare for their implementation following the Act receiving Assent. These powers enable Councils to investigate animal welfare complaints in respect of horses whether privately owned or held in a holding yard.

Since 2 April 2012, Councils have received and investigated over 900 complaints in respect of horse welfare. This has resulted in the Councils' Animal Welfare Officers taking a range of enforcement actions including providing advice to owners, issuing 22 Improvement Notices, seizing 12 animals and humanely destroying 4 equines. Prosecution action is also pending in a number of cases. Such actions would have included concerns about holding yards, if brought to the Councils' attention.

Horse Exports

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action her Department has taken in regard to concerns about horse exports following a meeting in 2011 at Aintree Racecourse.

(AQW 20672/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The meeting at Aintree Racecourse in November 2011 was primarily about the welfare of some horses transported from Ireland (north & south) to Britain. The attendees were enforcement and welfare officers from DARD, Defra, English Local Authorities and two animal welfare charities (the Scottish Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals and World Horse Welfare). The main concern was the poor condition of some horses, with reports of horses not being fit for transport.

The action DARD took after this meeting was intensifying welfare checks (vehicle and documentary) at the ports and gathering information, sharing intelligence and assisting in investigations undertaken by the Police and other enforcement agencies.

Hedge Cutting Deadline

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what consideration she has given to extending the hedge cutting deadline, in light of poor weather and ground conditions.

(AQW 20686/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The closed period for hedge-cutting is one of the Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) requirements under the Cross - Compliance standards. All farmers and landowners wishing to claim under direct aid schemes, including Single Farm Payment, must not cut hedges from 1 March to 31 August. However hedge cutting will be permitted between 1 March and 31 August where health and safety is an issue, for example, roadside hedges.

Hedge Cutting Deadline

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how the 28 February was reached as a deadline for all hedge cutting to be completed; and whether her Department consults regularly with stakeholders with a view to changing the deadline.

(AQW 20687/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The closed period for hedge-cutting is one of the Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) requirements under the Cross-Compliance standards. All farmers and landowners wishing to claim under direct aid schemes, including Single Farm Payment, must not cut hedges from 1 March to 31 August. In addition, these dates help those that farm the land to avoid damaging birds, nests or chicks and thereby comply with the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (NI) 2011 which makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.

The GAEC standards for hedge cutting in the north of Ireland were taken from the verifiable standards in Good Farming Practice (GFP) introduced in 2000 in consultation with stakeholders. The dates aimed to ensure an appropriate level of environmental protection and compliance with the EC Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) and the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 and were based on the scientific evidence for the nesting periods of hedgerow nesting Priority Species in the north.

Over the past few years my Department has consulted regularly with stakeholders on the subject of hedge cutting dates. Any change to Cross-Compliance hedge cutting dates has to be based on scientific research evidence and the impact of this change on biodiversity and agricultural practices. To date no new evidence has been presented, however DARD will respond to any new evidence as it comes forward.

Illegal Horse Movements

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 19667/11-15, what caused the prevention of movement of the relevant consignment; and whether any prosecution or penalty followed as a result.

(AQW 20693/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer you to my answer to AQW 20655/11-15.

ARC North West

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the (i) number of grants (a) approved; and (b) paid by ARC North West; and (ii) the administrative costs to ARC North West of grant applications compared with similar clusters

(AQW 20726/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: (i) (a) To end of February 2013 ARC North West has approved and issued Letters of Offer to 248 projects to the value of £11.8m.

- (i) (b) ARC North West has paid £5.6m to 189 projects.
- (ii) ARC North West has incurred £1.99m in admin spend which equates to 35% of project spend. The compares with the other six Axis 3 clusters as follows:

Cluster	admin / project spend
GROW	31%
NER	30%
LRP	40%
DRAP	46%
SOAR	32%
SWARD	30%

Fraud Hotline: Costs

Mrs Dobson asked Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 19384/11-15 and AQW 20136/11-15, to detail the total costs incurred by her Department of operating the Fraud Hotline in each of the last three years.

(AQW 20733/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department does not hold information in relation to operating the Fraud Hotline. The only tangible cost is that which was provided to you in response to AQW 19385/11-15. The Central Investigation Service has responsibility for monitoring Hotline calls and they ensure that anonymous information will be acted upon in a prompt and confidential manner.

ARC North West

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the reasons for the lack of approved grant applications by ARC North West since August 2012.

(AQW 20735/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As the member will be aware the Quality of Life Axis (Axis 3) of the EU Rural Development Programme is delivered through the EU LEADER approach by ARC NW Joint Council Committee (JCC) working in partnership with a Local Action Group (LAG) in the North West (NW) area.

All decisions in respect of calls for applications, processing of applications, and allocation of funds to successful applicants are entirely a matter for the ARC NW Joint Council Committee working with a Local Action Group (LAG) to manage the successful delivery of the Axis across the ARC NW area. ARC NW implementation plans indicate that they remain on course to achieve this.

I am aware that following receipt of over 200 applications across several measures, seeking funding in excess of available budget, ARC NW are now in a position to schedule assessment panels after Easter, with the intention of issuing Letters of Offer in the summer.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Boxing Clubs

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how the recently announced investment in boxing clubs will be funded within her Department's current budget.

(AQW 13751/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The recently announced investment in boxing clubs will be funded through Sports Lottery funding over the next 3 years. In addition to this, other sources of possible funding are also being explored, for example, from district councils.

Football, Gaelic Football and Rugby

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the estimated participation rates of adults playing (i) football; (ii) gaelic football; and (iii) rugby for each of the past five years.

(AQW 17884/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Estimated participation rates of adults playing football, gaelic football and rugby are available through the Continuous Household Survey (CHS), an annual household survey taken from across the north of Ireland.

The table below sets out the CHS's estimated adult participation rates across Association football, Gaelic football and Rugby up to, and including, 2010/11.

PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS WHO PARTICIPATE¹

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Association Football ²	9	7	7	8	7
Gaelic football	2	2	2	2	2
Rugby	1	1	1	1	1

Source: Continuous Household Survey

- 1 Participation rate, at least once, in the last 12 months.
- 2 Includes both indoor and outdoor football.

In addition, Sport NI has provided the following figures from its information management system which shows the total number of senior members recorded by the named governing bodies from 2009/10 and detailed below.

ADULT MEMBERS BY GOVERNING BODIES

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Irish Football Association	26,863	27,041	27,041
Gaelic Athletics Association	36,098	71,049	67,500
Ulster Branch, Irish Rugby Football Union	9,316	12,898	16,140

Vacancies for Trustees on the Board of National Museums Northern Ireland

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the number of vacancies for Trustees on the Board of National Museums Northern Ireland; (ii) when the vacancies occurred; and (iii) when the vacancies will be filled.

(AQW 19205/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) There are currently eight vacancies for Trustees on the Board of National Museums Northern Ireland.
- (ii) One vacancy occurred on 1 January 2009, a further vacancy occurred on 6 September 2010 and six vacancies occurred on 1 July 2012.
- (iii) The vacancies will be filled in the coming months.

EU Eel Fisheries

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) who attended the meeting in the Community Centre at 135a Shore Road, Ballyronan at 11.00am on 21 February 2013; her response to the proposed threat to EU eel fisheries; and (iii) the outcome of the meeting.

(AQW 20289/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) I chaired a meeting of local stakeholder interests at Ballyronan on 21 February in view of the potential threat facing the eel fishery in Lough Neagh. The meeting was attended by the DARD Minister, Lough Neagh commercial fishery stakeholders consisting of representative from the Toome Eel Fishery, Lough Neagh Fishermen's Co operative Society Ltd, Lough Neagh Partnership, local fishermen, a local MLA and representatives from 5 District Councils.
- (ii) There has been a proposal for the unilateral suspension of eel fishing across Europe. I am not prepared to consider any changes without independent scientific evidence, an appropriate equality impact assessment, consultation with all stakeholder interests and appropriate compensation for fishermen affected during any proposed suspension. I have written to the Minister responsible for Fisheries in the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to express my concerns and to ensure that these views are conveyed to the European Parliament.
- (iii) We discussed the threat posed by the proposals and I set out my position. There was total support for the stance that I have taken. The interest of our three MEPs was also welcomed. I advised that I would be monitoring the situation closely and will be engaging with our MEPs in ensuring we reject the proposals in Brussels.

400th Anniversary of King James I

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans her Department has to celebrate the 400th anniversary of King James I granting a Charter to Londonderry.

(AQW 20355/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: There are no specific plans to mark the anniversaries of the award of individual Charters. However, I have approved funding for the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) – Ulster Scots Academy to undertake a partnership project with the Ulster Historical Foundation, to research the impact and contribution of the award of Town Charters in the early part of the 17th Century.

This project will have a particular emphasis on the Ulster-Scots dimension to Charters awarded across the island of Ireland. The research will be used to develop a Charters award touring programme in conjunction with the Ulster Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge to disseminate the findings across the island.

Department of Education

Savings Delivery Plan

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 18553/11-15, what other aspects of the Savings Delivery Plan were monitored in 2011/12; and what levels of savings were achieved in each area.

(AQW 19996/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): All other aspects of my Department's published Savings Delivery Plan were monitored in 2011-12 and continue to be monitored. I shall shortly publish details of the savings delivered during 2011-12 in each of the areas set out in that plan.

Nursery Provision

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 17794/11-15, from which constituencies were the (i) 24 applications for children who were left unplaced; (ii) 31 late applications; and (iii) 542 applications which did not express further preferences.

(AQW 20414/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

(i) Unplaced children

ELB Area	Parliamentary Constituency	Number of Unplaced Children
BELB	Belfast East	1
	Belfast North	1
	Belfast South	1
WELB	-	0
NEELB	East Antrim	1
	South Antrim	1
SEELB	Lagan Valley	2
	North Down	9
	Belfast West	1
SELB	Mid Ulster	1
	Upper Bann	6

(ii) Unplaced late applications

ELB Area	Parliamentary Constituency	Number of Unplaced Children
BELB	Belfast East	2
WELB	Foyle	5
	West Tyrone	4
NEELB	East Antrim	2
	South Antrim	2
	Mid Ulster	1
SEELB	Lagan Valley	1
	North Down	5
	-	1 (child from England)
SELB	Newry & Armagh	3
	Upper Bann	5

(iii) Unplaced at end Stage 1 and did not submit further preferences

ELB Area	Parliamentary Constituency	Number of Unplaced Children Who Did Not State Further Preferences at Stage 2
BELB	Belfast East	23
	Belfast North	9
	Belfast South	35
	Belfast West	9
	Lagan Valley	5
	North Down	1
	South Antrim	2
	Strangford	2
WELB	East Derry	1
	Fermanagh & South Tyrone	20
	Foyle	33
	West Tyrone	24
	-	6 (children with Rol addresses)
NEELB	East Antrim	14
	North Antrim	10
	South Antrim	31
	North Belfast	15
	East Derry	18
	Mid Ulster	5
SEELB	Lagan Valley	17
	North Down	27
	South Down	7
	Strangford	10
	Belfast East	17
	Belfast North	1
	Belfast South	13
	Belfast West	7
	South Antrim	6
	Upper Bann	3
	-	2 (children moving from England)

ELB Area	Parliamentary Constituency	Number of Unplaced Children Who Did Not State Further Preferences at Stage 2
SELB	Fermanagh & South Tyrone	11
	Lagan Valley	4
	Mid Ulster	15
	Newry & Armagh	41
	South Down	24
	Upper Bann	74

DE: Special Adviser

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 19246/11-15, whether his Special Adviser has made any declarations of interests.

(AQW 20418/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Special Adviser has not made any declaration of interests.

Voluntary Grammar Sector

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education, in light of his statement to the Assembly on 26 February 2013 on Area Planning, when he will meet with representatives from the voluntary grammar sector.

(AQW 20536/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: To date I have received no requests to meet with representatives of the voluntary grammar sector however should a request be forthcoming I will do my best to accommodate it.

Educational Under-Achievement in Protestant Working Class Areas

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education (i) what action he has taken over the past two years to address the problem of educational under-achievement in protestant working class areas; (ii) what outcomes have developed from these actions; and (iii) what further action he plans to take in the next two years.

(AQW 20617/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

- (i) **Action over the past two years to address the problem of educational underachievement in Protestant working class areas.**

As Minister for Education my focus has been and continues to be on providing coherent, sustained and effective evidence based interventions that break the cycle of deprivation and educational underachievement wherever it exists.

Since coming to office I have continued to implement policies to raise standards and tackle educational underachievement in schools. These policies include the school improvement policy, the literacy and numeracy strategy, the revised curriculum, entitlement framework, the framework for early years education and learning and the SEN and inclusion review.

My Department has also dedicated substantial resources to provide a range of assistance, programmes and services to ensure disadvantaged children have access to and can fully participate in school life, obtain formal qualifications, enhance their employment opportunities and ultimately provide a route out of poverty. These include the provision of Free School Meals and clothing allowances and a range of programmes targeted at socially deprived areas, including

Sure Start, extended schools, full service provision, Achieving Belfast and Achieving Derry-Bright Futures and Integrated Services for Children and Young People.

(ii) **Outcomes that have developed from these actions.**

These policies and programmes are realising improvements for all our young people. The results of the PIRLS and TIMSS surveys show that our primary school pupils are performing well above the international average in both literacy and numeracy. This also provides evidence that the characteristics of a good school - good teaching and good leadership with strong community engagement and a clear focus on the needs of the pupil – are being embedded in our primary school system across all sectors.

The Achieving Belfast and the Achieving Derry-Bright Futures programmes have realised improved performance in schools in both the controlled and maintained sectors. In the north of Ireland, the percentage of Protestant school leavers entitled to free school meals achieving 5+ GCSEs A*-C (or equivalent) including English and Maths increased from 18.6% in 2006/07 to 23.3% in 2010/11.

In 2012/13, the Extended Schools programme provided £11.8million additional funding that enables those schools that draw pupils from some of the most disadvantaged communities to provide a range of services and programmes outside the traditional school day to help meet the needs, as identified by the schools, of pupils, their families and wider communities.

(iii) **Further action in the next two years.**

However, more needs to be done, especially in areas of social deprivation. The key now is to step up the pace of implementation and delivery of these policies and to maintain the focus on raising standards to ensure that every pupil is able to achieve to their full potential.

There is also an important role to be played by Unionist political leaders in raising educational awareness and aspiration in socially deprived communities.

The continued use of academic selection by grammar schools is a barrier to addressing underachievement in disadvantaged communities. It damages children's confidence, their motivation to learn, and lowers their expectations of themselves contributing to the high levels of underachievement we are seeking to tackle. That is why academic selection needs to end now and my Department is working to bring that about.

Sir Robert Salisbury's review of the Common Funding Scheme, which I commissioned, recommended increased levels of formula funding for pupils from deprived backgrounds through the introduction of a pupil premium. I will assess the impact of this recommendation, along with the others in the report, very carefully to inform my own proposals for change, which I intend to bring forward later in the year.

My Department also has a key role in working with other Departments to ensure a coherent approach to proactively tackling disadvantage and improving educational outcomes. This includes the Delivery Social Change project to recruit 230 additional teachers and provide literacy and numeracy support for pupils most at risk of underachieving.

We also need to raise parental aspirations and the value of education within our communities. That is why I launched the 'Education Works' advertising campaign in September 2012 to inform and engage all parents, but in particular those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, to become more engaged in their child's education.

On the 1 March I announced an additional £3m to be targeted at raising educational standards in each of the next two years. £1m per year will be used in developing literacy and numeracy programmes in disadvantaged areas. A further £2m per year will be used to develop community initiatives to increase family and community involvement in education.

Lisanelly Shared Campus

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education what representations, on the Lisanelly shared campus, has his Department made to external funding bodies.

(AQW 20689/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department has not made any official representations to external funding bodies on the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus project.

I will of course wish to explore any potential avenues of funding in support of this flagship project.

Entrepreneurship Amongst Young People

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 20399/11-15, what discussions he has had with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment on encouraging entrepreneurship amongst young people; and what research he has carried out into whether certain schools are better than others at promoting entrepreneurship.

(AQW 20725/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Supporting young people in their career decision making to increase their participation in education, training and employment, including self employment, is a key aim of the Preparing for Success careers strategy. The Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment (DETI) was a key stakeholder in the development of this strategy and in the accompanying careers map and guide. My officials, along with DETI colleagues, continue to oversee the full and continuing implementation of the strategy through their joint membership of the careers strategy steering group.

In tandem, I work with ministerial colleagues, including the DETI chair of the Executive Sub-committee on the Economy to highlight the foundation role education plays in helping rebalancing and rebuilding the economy through the provision of a flexible and responsive skills system that provides young people with clear progression routes to become the employees, employers and entrepreneurs of the future.

My Department has not commissioned research into whether certain schools are better than others at promoting entrepreneurship and has not asked the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) to inspect Entrepreneurship in schools, per se, as it is not on the curriculum as a subject. However lessons on entrepreneurship are a part of Learning for Life and Work in which there is some focus on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs and this is subject to ETI inspection in schools.

Sports Coaching Lessons

Mrs Dobson asked Minister of Education what consideration his Department has given to the provision of sports coaching lessons to students in the final year of teacher training courses.

(AQW 20732/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My officials have not had discussions with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety or the Minister for Employment and Learning regarding the benefits to the pupils of students in their final year of teacher training courses, being provided with sports coaching lessons.

I recognise the importance of physical activity and the contribution that keeping physically active can make to the health and wellbeing of our young people. Taking part in sport can be a valuable and enjoyable way of building a young person's self-esteem and increasing their motivation to learn and achieve to their full potential. Physical Education is therefore a compulsory element of the revised curriculum at all key stages.

In addition, my Department funds the Curriculum Sports Programme which is delivered by coaches from the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Irish Football Association. While the key focus of the Programme is to develop the physical literacy skills of our youngest pupils (Years 1-4), it also contributes to the professional development of teachers through the transfer of skills from the coach to the teacher which raises the confidence and skills of teachers in delivering Physical Education.

In Stranmillis University College students on initial teacher education courses have the choice of enrolling for a module in Fundamental Movement Skills which provides them with the appropriate pedagogical approaches and practical experiences in planning, teaching, assessing and evaluating the performance of children in movement skills which are the essential building blocks for sports performance. A wide range extra-curricular courses related to sport is also offered. In St Marys University College, all students have sports coaching lessons in the first three years of their programme. In addition, students who take Physical Education as a specialist subject, receive training in the provision of sports coaching lessons in each of the four years of their programme.

Sports Coaching Lessons

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education what discussions his officials have had with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety or the Minister for Employment and Learning regarding the benefits to the pupils of students in their final year of teacher training courses, being provided with sports coaching lessons.

(AQW 20734/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My officials have not had discussions with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety or the Minister for Employment and Learning regarding the benefits to the pupils of students in their final year of teacher training courses, being provided with sports coaching lessons.

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Irish-Medium Nurture Units

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education whether there are any plans to create Irish-Medium nurture units.

(AQW 20792/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Signature Project under the Delivering Social Change Programme will allow the establishment of 20 additional nurture units. Locations for these new units will be identified using objective criteria which will focus on social need.

During the life of the Signature Project a major evaluation of nurture group provision and its impact will be undertaken and the findings used to inform an evidenced based policy position. This will include the criteria for identifying schools for any future expansion of nurture group provision.

Grammar and Voluntary Sector

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what criteria must be met to establish a representative body for the whole of the grammar and voluntary sector.

(AQW 20805/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have no plans to establish such a body.

End of Key Stage Assessment Levels

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact of the lack of standardisation in the application of End of Key Stage Assessment levels, particularly the view of school leaders that applying the assessment levels honestly and fairly may lead to the appearance of underperformance when compared to the Northern Ireland average.

(AQW 20813/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I know from consultation and feedback that schools did not have confidence in the outcomes resulting from the previous assessment arrangements. I also recognise that schools have expressed concerns about the lack of standardisation of data this year, due in part to the fact that moderation is voluntary in the Primary sector in 2012/13.

My Department's policy, decided after consultation and engagement across the education sector, is that the most effective way to gain confidence in outcomes is to adopt a robust model of moderated teacher assessment. This model recognises the primacy and professionalism of teachers as those best able to assess the progress of their pupils and at the same time provides a level of consistency and rigour.

I recognise that schools will need time to adjust to the new moderation arrangements and will require flexibility and support over the coming years. In 2012/13 (and 2013/14) the focus is on capacity building and embedding of assessment standards and requirements within the system. It will take time for the new system of assessment to bed down and for reliable data to be established and collected.

With any use of data from these first years of implementation, for example in monitoring school performance against targets, there is a potential variance of outcomes wider than in previous years. This will be kept under continuous review to ensure that all stakeholders have a full understanding of the nature of the assessment data and how it is to be used. I will ensure that my Department, the ETI, CCEA, the ELBs and CCMS are aware of the transition to the new arrangements and the impact that this will have on the nature of the data available at school and system level.

End of Key Stage Assessment Levels

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the concerns raised by school leaders with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment on the application of End of Key Stage Assessment levels; and what action he will take to address these concerns and work towards the standardisation of these levels.

(AQW 20816/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I know from consultation and feedback that schools did not have confidence in the outcomes resulting from the previous assessment arrangements. I also recognise that schools have expressed concerns about the lack of standardisation of data this year, due in part to the fact that moderation is voluntary in the Primary sector in 2012/13.

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End of Key Stage Assessment Levels

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to outline the mechanisms his Department will use to ensure that all End of Key Stage Assessment Levels are applied in a fair and consistent manner; and what action his Department will take to rectify the situation when this is found not to have been the case.

(AQW 20818/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I know from consultation and feedback that schools did not have confidence in the outcomes resulting from the previous assessment arrangements. I also recognise that schools have expressed concerns about the lack of standardisation of data this year, due in part to the fact that moderation is voluntary in the Primary sector in 2012/13.

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Capital Works Projects

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education what capital works projects are currently being considered by his Department.

(AQW 20908/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Eleven major capital projects were on site at the beginning of the current financial year representing a capital investment of over £81m.

These projects were:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ■ Bangor GS | ■ Magherafelt PS and Nursery School |
| ■ Carrick PS Warrenpoint | ■ Scoil na Fuiseoige Belfast |
| ■ Dromintee PS | ■ Strathearn Grammar |
| ■ Lagan College | ■ St. Colmans PS Lambeg |

- St. Columbas PS Straw
- St. Marys PS Newcastle
- Torbank Special School.

In June 2012 I announced investment to 18 new school builds:

- Coláiste Feirste, Belfast
- St Clare's Convent & St Colman's Abbey Primary School, Newry
- St Joseph's Convent Primary School, Newry
- Dromore Central Primary School
- Eglinton Primary School
- Tannaghmore Primary School, Lurgan
- Ebrington Controlled Primary School, Derry
- Foyle College, Derry
- St Teresa's Primary School, Lurgan
- Victoria Park Primary School, Belfast
- Enniskillen Model Primary School
- St Mary's Primary School, Banbridge
- Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin, Belfast
- Belmont House Special School, Derry
- Rossmar Special School, Limavady
- Castletower, Ballymena
- St Gerard's Resource Centre
- Arvalee Special School.

In my statement to the Assembly on 22 January 2013 I confirmed that 22 primary and post-primary schools would be advanced in planning:

- Islandmagee PS solution
- St Joseph & St James PS, Poyntzpass
- Gaelscoil Ui Dhochartaigh, Strabane
- Gaelscoil Ui Neill, Coalisland
- St Bronagh's Primary School, Rostrevor
- St Mary's PS/Glenravel P
- Omagh Integrated Primary School
- Braidside Integrated PS
- Portadown Integrated PS
- Craigbrack PS/ Mullabuoy PS/ Listress PS
- Corran Integrated PS
- Elmgrove Primary School
- Glenwood Primary School / Edenderry Nursery
- Holy Trinity College, Cookstown
- Strabane Academy
- St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon
- St Mary's, St Paul's & St Michael's Grammar School, Lurgan
- Parkhall Integrated College, Antrim
- Devenish College / Lisnaskea, Enniskillen
- Portora Royal / Collegiate, Enniskillen
- Down High School

I have also committed £730k to the refurbishment of the old Dungiven Primary School for Gaelscoil Neachtain.

In total I have committed some £435m to these projects.

DE: Cost of Postage

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how much his Department has spent on postage in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 20912/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The table below sets out how much my Department has spent on postage in each of the last three financial years.

Financial Year	Total £'000
2009-10	151

Financial Year	Total £'000
2010-11	150
2011-12	148

Feeder Schools for Knockbreda High School, Belfast

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Education to detail each of the feeder schools for Knockbreda High School, Belfast; and how many first preference choices for school places were received from each feeder school, over the last two years.

(AQW 20934/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The feeder primary schools to Knockbreda High School as listed in the school's published admissions criteria for admissions in September 2013, are as follows:

Academy PS, Alexander Dickson PS, Beechlawm (Reading Unit), Belvoir PS, Bloomfield College Prep, Braniel PS, Brooklands PS, Cabin Hill Prep, Carr PS, Cairnshill PS, Carryduff PS, Cregagh PS, Dundonald PS, Elmgrove PS, Euston St PS, Gilnahirk PS, Harding Memorial PS, Inchmarlo Prep, Knockbreda PS, Leadhill PS, Lisnasharragh PS, Moneyrea PS, Nettlefield PS, Orangefield PS, Rosetta PS, Strandtown PS, Tullycarnet PS

The number of first preference applications received by Knockbreda High School from each feeder (and other) school for the last two years are set out in the following table:

Feeder School	2011/12	2012/13
Avoniel PS	1	0
Belvoir Park PS	2	0
Botanic PS	0	1
Braniel PS	0	1
Cairnshill PS	0	1
Cottown Reading Unit	3	0
Cregagh PS	2	0
Donegall Road PS	0	2
Elmgrove PS	1	1
Euston St PS	12	6
Fane St PS	1	0
Gilnahirk PS	1	0
Harding Memorial PS	3	1
Holy Rosary PS	1	0
Knockbreda PS	2	0
Lisnasharragh PS	2	1
Nettlefield PS	8	5
Orangefield PS	0	1
Rosetta PS	1	1

Feeder School	2011/12	2012/13
Outside NI	4	0
Total	44	21

Cost of Translating Departmental Letters and Documents

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the cost of translating departmental letters and documents into (i) Irish; and (ii) each other language, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20960/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The cost for translating my Department's letters and documents into (i) Irish; and (ii) each other language in the last 5 financial years is detailed in the table below.

Language	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Irish	13273.87	47061.97	39370.45	37659.00	36834.49
Albanian	82.25				
Arabic	70.50			45.00	
Bengali				45.00	
Bulgarian	70.50				
Cantonese	621.58	1167.24	1492.04	656.55	
Chinese (Simplified)					597.94
Chinese (Traditional)					597.94
Czech	70.50				
Farsi		94.00		230.00	
Filipino		372.60	277.40		
Fijan	82.25				
French	235.00	105.75			
Hindi	82.25			45.00	
Hungarian	364.25			525.21	491.17
Italian	458.25				
Latvian	479.42		710.00	525.21	491.17
Lithuanian	1007.59	973.29	1194.62	565.21	491.17
Malayalam	82.25				
Malaysian	82.25				
Mandarin	842.54	256.82	925.00	656.55	
Nepalese	82.25				
Philipino	82.25				
Polish	2886.06	936.49	1080.62	565.21	700.17

Language	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Portuguese	840.99	893.22	986.92	473.87	629.65
Punjabi				45.00	
Romanian	94.00	82.25			
Russian	188.00				
Shona	82.25				
Slovak	70.50	111.55	256.22	565.21	491.17
Spanish	293.75	10.07			50.40
Swahili	82.25				
Tagalog	82.25	607.01	334.20	40.00	
Thai	94.00				
Turkish			710.00	525.21	
Ulster Scots	107.66	260.61	35.00		
Urdu	82.25	10.07		45.00	
Totals	22973.71	52942.94	47372.47	43212.23	41375.27

Schools: Integrated Status

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many maintained sector schools have transferred to integrated status over the last four years.

(AQW 20981/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Under Article 68 of the 1989 Education Reform Order, any existing grant-aided school, apart from a special school, is eligible to transform to integrated status. The decision to pursue integrated status for any school is a matter for the parents and for the wider school community. There is guidance and practical help available for those who decide to do so. However, to date, no maintained school has transformed.

Counselling Services at Primary School Level

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the provision of counselling services at primary school level and its impact on children; and what measures his Department is taking to appropriate adequate funds to meet the counselling needs of primary school pupils.

(AQW 21009/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not make provision for counselling support, which is independent of the school, on a universal access basis in primary schools.

However counselling support through the Independent Counselling Service for Schools is made available to primary age pupils as part of the response to a critical incident.

Schools, including primary schools, can provide counselling support from within their own resources. Some primary schools have used funding from other sources, such as, the Extended Schools Initiative, the Big Lottery or Neighbourhood Renewal to purchase counselling support.

Counselling is a reflective process and evaluation of the impact of the intervention is an on-going part of process. The Department does not collect information from primary schools about the provision made or its impact.

Any expansion of the Independent Counselling Service for Schools into the primary sector would require significant additional resources which are not available at present.

Department for Employment and Learning

DEL: Claims

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much has been paid to settle claims against his Department, in each of the three financial years.

(AQW 20560/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): The total amounts paid to settle claims against the Department, in each of the last three financial years, were as follows:

2009/10	Nil
2010/11	£10,470
2011/12	Nil

Magee Campus of the University of Ulster: Daycare Facilities

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the (i) financial deficit of the daycare facilities at the Jordanstown campus of the University of Ulster over the last ten years; (ii) the total rent and overheads the University of Ulster has charged the Magee and Jordanstown campuses daycare facilities during this period; and (iii) the amount his Department has allocated to the University for Widening Access.

(AQW 20708/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department does not hold all of the information requested. However, my officials have contacted the University of Ulster and were advised that the financial deficit for the day care facility at the Jordanstown campus for each of the last ten years was as follows:

02/03	(£26,471)
03/04	(£39,001)
04/05	(£28,113)
05/06	(£38,006)
06/07	(£67,536)
07/08	(£84,380)
08/09	(£90,923)
09/10	(£104,737)
10/11	(£80,027)
11/12	(£73,918)

* Figures in brackets represent a deficit

The University has advised that no rent or overheads were charged to either the Magee or Jordanstown day care facilities over the last 10 years.

The University has confirmed that the only other charges during this period were for additional services provided such as, postage, telephone, catering, printing and photocopying, and repairs and

maintenance. The total additional charges to the child care facility at the Jordanstown campus was £29,691.71 and for Magee the total was £32,809.12 over the ten year period.

My Department makes two types of premium funding available to higher education institutions to widen participation from disadvantaged students and to widen access for disabled students. In addition, my Department also funds the Step-Up Magee and Belfast programmes to promote widening participation in higher education. The total payments to the University of Ulster over the last ten years are listed below.

	Widening Participation	Widening Access	Step-Up Magee	Step-Up Belfast
2003/04	£696,540	£181,728	£86,195	-
2004/05	£729,144	£198,058	£133,793	-
2005/06	£762,009	£199,740	£156,702	-
2006/07	£782,964	£244,610	£170,385	£449,871
2007/08	£804,496	£236,216	£178,172	£237,956
2008/09	£826,620	£171,925	£183,210	£281,088
2009/10	£843,152	£171,038	£183,210	£282,771
2010/11	£843,152	£169,526	£183,210	£312,061
2011/12	£792,563	£160,286	£183,210	£293,219
2012/13	£745,009	£146,121	£183,210	£307,733
Total	£7,825,649	£1,879,248	£1,641,297	£2,913,801

Magee Campus of the University of Ulster: Daycare Facilities

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consultation took place on the proposal to close the crèche facilities at University of Ulster.

(AQW 20719/11-15)

Dr Farry: The University of Ulster is an autonomous body and as such decisions relating to the operation of student services at the University are a matter for the management of the University. However, my officials have raised this issue with the University and have been advised that the decision to close the university managed childcare facilities at the Magee and Jordanstown campuses from 31 July 2013, was taken because the childcare provision has continued to sustain a significant annual deficit of approximately £114k and is no longer considered economically viable by the university.

The University has stated that it is making this change with the support of its Student Union and also that it held discussions on the proposal with key stakeholders. The University has advised that in line with agreed procedures when any possible restructuring or closure is being considered, the first meeting took place with the relevant Trade Unions on 30 January 2013. This was followed by meetings the same day with staff in the day care nurseries and staff from Social Services, the body which has an oversight role in this area. The University reports that at that stage the discussion centred on the proposed closure pending the completion of an equality screening exercise. The University has stated that all parents with children in the nurseries were informed of the proposed closure by letter on 30 January.

The University further advises that on completion of the equality screening exercise follow up meetings were held with the Trade Unions on 7 February 2013 and with the staff in the nurseries on 8 February at which time the decision to close the nurseries was communicated. The University states that on 8 February parents received a second letter advising them of the decision and that a meeting was subsequently held with parents on 14 February to discuss the decision and the alternatives open to

them. The University argues that it was not possible to meet with parents until it had met with the Trade Unions and informed the nursery staff in the first instance.

On 8th February 2013 the University of Ulster confirmed its decision to close its university managed childcare facilities in the Magee and Jordanstown campuses from 31 July 2013.

University Transfers

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many undergraduate students have transferred from universities in (i) England; (ii) Scotland; and (iii) Wales to universities in Northern Ireland, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20724/11-15)

Dr Farry: As my Department does not hold the information requested, departmental officials contacted the universities and university colleges.

The University of Ulster has advised that it does not collect this information and Stranmillis University College has confirmed that, in the last five years, one student transferred from an English University to an undergraduate course at the College. Information provided by Queen's University Belfast and St. Mary's University College is attached at Annex A.

Annex A

Queen's University Belfast

Queen's University only holds data for students who transfer to Queen's with credit and this information is set out below.

CREDIT TRANSFERS TO QUEEN'S FROM UNIVERSITIES IN ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND WALES 2008-2012

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
England	8	10	4	12	11	45
Scotland	6	3	1	1	2	13
Wales	0	0	1	0	2	3
Total	14	13	6	13	15	61

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
England	1	3	1	2	0	7
Scotland	1		1			2
Wales						0
Total Transfers to Year 1	2	3	2	2	0	9

Magee Campus of the University of Ulster: Daycare Facilities

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 20714/11-15, whether his Department has received an application for change of use of the buildings.

(AQW 20969/11-15)

Dr Farry: Initial contact has been made with the Department and it is likely that a meeting will take place in the near future for an initial discussion on the matter. As yet, no application for a change of use of the buildings has been received.

Access to Work Scheme

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many profoundly deaf people are supported in employment by the Access to Work Scheme.

(AQW 20975/11-15)

Dr Farry: There are currently 92 people with profound hearing loss being supported in employment through the Access to Work Scheme.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

InvestNI: Hospitality Expenses

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the spend by InvestNI on hospitality in 2011/12.

(AQW 20502/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The spend on hospitality for 2011/12 was £511,699.

This included enhanced expenditure on three major golf tournaments, the Irish Open at Royal Portrush, the US Open and the Ryder Cup, following specific requests from Ministers and other elected representatives, to capitalise on the surge in interest in Northern Ireland following the success of our three golf Major winners and to maximise these as opportunities to build and develop relationships with potential inward investors.

Electricity Theft

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given the recent BBC NI Spotlight programme on electricity theft, to outline the steps that are being taken to prevent this.

(AQW 20602/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department is responsible for the development of energy policy, but has no role in the policing of the market. Procedures for the detection and protection of theft, damage and meter interference are conditions in the licences of electricity suppliers in Northern Ireland. The Utility Regulator monitors licence conditions and undertakes investigation if there is reason to believe that a licence condition has been breached. Where suppliers identify theft of electricity, damage to equipment or evidence of meter tampering they are obliged to report details to NIE as owner of the electricity network. NIE has advised that it has a dedicated team which has been in place since 2000 and which investigates meters following receipt of information from electricity suppliers, the PSNI, the general public and its own staff.

Trade Missions

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline all planned overseas trade missions in 2013.

(AQO 3656/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Information on planned trade missions and events can be found in the trade calendar on Invest NIs website at www.investni.com/tradecalendar.

Invest NI: Job Creation

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many jobs have been created as a direct result of InvestNI intervention since April 2012 compared with the targets set out in the Programme for Government.

(AQO 3650/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI reports on the number of jobs promoted by assisted projects, in line with the targets set in the Programme for Government. Results for the year will be published following validation of the full year figures and will be laid before the NI Assembly in early July, before summer recess, as part of the organisation's Annual Report.

Housing: Renewable Energy

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the financial assistance available for the purchase and installation of renewable energy sources for homes.

(AQO 3651/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department currently provides householders with grant support of up to £3,500 under the Renewable Heat Premium Payment Scheme to purchase and install renewable heating technologies.

In addition, households can benefit from the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation which provides a revenue stream for renewable electricity generated.

Information Economy Strategy

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions she has had with the British Government on the development of the proposed information economy strategy.

(AQO 3652/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My officials have had discussions with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills on the development of its wider Industrial Strategy, of which the information economy strategy will form a strand. To date no specific discussions have taken place with our Government on the development of the proposed information economy strategy.

Employment Law: Business

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline how she is working with the Minister for Employment and Learning to ensure that the voice of business is heard in relation to the reform of employment law.

(AQO 3653/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I meet regularly with the Employment and Learning Minister to discuss a range of issues of mutual interest. When we have discussed the current Employment Law review, I have used the opportunity to emphasise the importance of reducing the regulatory burden on business, while recognising the need to protect employees.

I understand DEL officials are fully engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including business organisations, as the review progresses.

Licensed Premises: Opening Hours

Mr F McCann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether the Northern Ireland Tourist Board supports the extension of opening hours for licensed premises.

(AQO 3654/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board supports the proposal, which was put forward by the Department of Social Development in its consultation, to introduce occasional additional late

opening hours for licensed premises, where entertainment or food is being served. This will allow such premises, in particular pubs, to benefit from key events.

Invest NI: Job Creation

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the conversion rate between jobs promoted by InvestNI and jobs created in the last three years.

(AQO 3655/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI measures the number of jobs promoted by assisted projects, in line with Programme for Government targets. The recent Northern Ireland Audit Office report on Invest NI quoted a conversion rate of 75% although this does not specifically relate to the last three year period. The current evaluation of Selective Financial Assistance, due for completion in June this year, should provide a more up to date figure.

Department of the Environment

Unfinished Developments

Mr Molloy asked the Minister of the Environment what enforcement action he intends to take against developers who leave developments unfinished or in a state of disrepair.

(AQW 6645/11-15)

Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment): I have made a case in point in relation to developers leaving developments unfinished or in a state of disrepair. The response to this issue has to be multifaceted. It shall include short term financial interventions for developers to improve sites, with a clawback clause requiring developers to pay back monies.

First, DOE will also use its own powers against developers where possible. Whilst the Department does not have any powers to make developers implement a grant of planning permission or to force the completion of any building works that have begun on site, Article 37 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 enables the Department to terminate a planning permission in certain circumstances.

Second, Other Departments/ agencies/ bodies may too have powers to act in such circumstances. The response to this problem will therefore include building up the capacity in councils to deploy the legislative powers they hold to deal with dangerous or sites in decay. Belfast City Council, for example, has a vigorous programme around the use of existing power to deal with sites and properties where issues exist. Other Councils should adopt the same approach.

Third, if there is a need for further power and law beyond these measures, I will consider how to proceed.

Divisional Planning Office

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment whether the PSNI are currently investigating allegations of bribery at a Divisional Planning office.

(AQW 19319/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I cannot comment on any individual case, particularly when the disciplinary process has not yet been completed. The Department would refer a case to the PSNI if there appeared to be any grounds for suspecting that a crime had been committed.

Wind Turbine Development

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the Landscaped Architects report commissioned by Planning Service in 2008 which stated that West Tyrone was already at a point of

near capacity and there was only limited scope for further wind turbine development, why this position has been superseded by further planning approvals and applications pending.

(AQW 19542/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The West Tyrone Study undertaken by the Department's landscape architects, at the request of Planning Service, was a review of the existing planning approvals and planning applications then under consideration. This was in response to an unprecedented number of separate planning applications being submitted in the West Tyrone area at that time.

Its purpose was to inform the subsequent decision making process in relation to planning applications under consideration at the time. The views expressed in the study were the professional assessment of the Department's landscape architects. They represent a material consideration, one among the range of material considerations, which inform the Department's final decision on individual planning applications.

The content of the study has status as one of guidance. It does not represent the Department's policy position, which is contained in PPS 18. Decisions on subsequent planning applications were, and are being, taken on their individual planning merits having regard to the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations.

However, I have requested a further update on this issue.

Wind Farm Complaints

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of the Environment whether there has been an increase in the number of complaints to local councils concerning wind farms over the last five years.

(AQW 19580/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department holds information only in relation to noise complaints made to councils. Councils report noise complaints statistics to the Department under the following six categories: industrial; commercial and leisure; domestic; transport; noise in the street; and construction. Therefore the Department is not able to disaggregate those in relation to wind farms. The latest Noise Complaint Statistics report (2011/12) is available on the Department's noise website, www.noiseni.co.uk.

Individual District Councils are responsible for dealing with complaints about noise under their own Environmental Health legislation.

Where a wind farm operation is found to be in breach of planning conditions the case will be referred to Planning.

However, I have asked Councils to identify the number of complaints on windfarms in the last 5 years and shall advise in due course.

Wind Farms

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of the Environment what mitigating measures are contained in planning policy for residents and councils affected by wind farms.

(AQW 19603/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The main planning policy for the assessment of a planning application for wind energy is contained within Planning Policy Statement 18 'Renewable Energy'. Policy RE1 requires the Department to ensure that the proposal will not result in an adverse impact on public safety, human health and residential amenity.

In assessing applications for wind turbines, the impact of the proposed development on adjacent occupied properties is a material consideration that the Department will take into account in reaching a balanced judgement.

To mitigate against any adverse impacts, for windfarm development PPS 18 will require the application of a separation distance of 10 times the rotor diameter to occupied property with a minimum distance of not less than 500m.

In addition, as part of its consideration of a planning application, and in order to further inform the decision making process, the Department will consult with the Environmental Health Department of the District Council, who will provide expert advice in relation to planning related matters such as the potential noise impact of the proposed development on an adjacent occupied property.

In these and other ways, the issue of windfarm impact is addressed. That said, in meeting resident and community objectors and applicants, I am aware of the arguments. I will discuss this issue further at the next meeting of the renewables sub group of the planning forum on 1st May 2013.

DE: Hospitality Expenses

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment what was the total spend on hospitality by his Department in 2011/12.

(AQW 19626/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The table below provides the expenditure on hospitality by the Department for 2011/12 as well as the two previous years 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Business Area	2009/10 £	2010/11 £	2011/12 £
Department (excluding agencies)	61,365	21,951	6,881
Northern Ireland Environment Agency	31,635	10,652	17,376
Driver and Vehicle Agency	9,009	2,353	1,720
Total	102,009	34,956	25,977

The Department has critically reviewed, and continues to explore, all opportunities for minimising areas of discretionary spend. As a consequence, expenditure on hospitality has decreased by almost 75% between 2009-10 and 2011-12.

The reason for the increase of £6,724 in NIEA hospitality costs from 2010-11 to 2011-12 is due mainly to the transfer of the budget and expenditure for the Statutory Advisory Councils (CNCC, HBC and HMC) from the Environmental Policy Division to NIEA. The expenditure would have previously been shown within the Departmental line, excluding agencies. There was also a small number of one off events in 2011-12, e.g. Invasive Species Forum, which contributed to the increase.

Foyle Estuary

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of the Environment why the Foyle Estuary was designated as coastal rather than estuarine waters.

(AQW 19686/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Foyle estuary limit in Lough Foyle was established in 1994 according to the definition set out in the Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995, regulation 2 which followed the UK Guidance on this issue. A copy of the relevant section of the Guidance Note Issued by DOE on implementation of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive has been placed in the Assembly Library. The delineation was confirmed through the Water Framework Directive characterisation process carried out in 2004-2005 following which followed the Guidance issued by the UK Technical Advisory Group. A copy of this guidance entitled, 'Guidance on Typology for Coastal & Transitional Waters of the UK and Republic of Ireland' has also been placed in the Assembly Library.

There was no requirement to consult on the delineation of the estuary in 1994 under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, nor on the initial characterisation of water bodies under the Water

Framework Directive (WFD). However, the WFD characterisation was reviewed in 2005 and the 'WFD Summary Report of the Characterisation and Impact Analysis Required by Article 5 Northern Ireland' was posted on the NIEA website in March 2005. This document along with the draft River Basin Management Plan published in December 2008 was opened for 6 months consultation, following which no issues were raised about the delineation of the Foyle estuary or the Faughan and Roe estuaries, nor the characterisation of the northern end of Lough Foyle as a coastal water.

Shale Gas

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment on which issues relating to shale gas has he sought legal advice.

(AQW 19907/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I would first wish to advise of the general policy that applies in relation to legal advice to Ministers. The concept of legal professional privilege safeguards the rights of a person or organisation, including the Department, to obtain legal advice on a confidential basis and to refuse to disclose such information in the interests of the wider administration of justice. It has been the settled view that in this context, legal advice is not disclosed.

I can confirm that any legal advice which I believe has been necessary – or may become necessary - has or shall be sought. This is to ensure that all planning and environmental and other requirements are fulfilled. That is and will remain the case.

Supplier Invoices

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of invoices his Department paid within (i) 10 working days; (ii) 20 working days; and (iii) 30 working days of receipt of the supplier's invoice, broken down by council area, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20060/11-15)

Mr Attwood: My Department is committed to the prompt payment of valid invoices and monitors performance against prompt payment targets of 30 calendar days and 10 working days.

In the last five years, the total number of invoices actually paid, the number of invoices which were paid within the Department's 30 day and 10 day prompt payment targets are detailed below.

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Total Number of Invoices Paid	49,480	51,559	54,504	42,148	37,386
Number paid within 30 Days	47,904	49,891	48,426	39,913	36,164
Number paid within 10 Days	N/A	N/A	35,014	34,767	33,677

Whilst there is no central system for recording the Department's prompt payment statistics by council area, the Department monitors prompt payment performance for all suppliers irrespective of locations and is acutely aware of the importance of cashflow to suppliers, particularly in the current economic climate.

I have asked officials to create a challenging month to month target to have the amount of invoices paid in 10 days increased and to provide a 2 monthly update on progress.

DOE: Unpaid Invoices

Mr Ross asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of invoices his Department did not pay within 30 working days of receipt of the supplier's invoice, broken down by council area, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20061/11-15)

Mr Attwood: In the last five years, the total number of invoices actually paid, and the number of invoices which were not paid within 30 working days of receipt are detailed below.

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Total Number of Invoices Paid	49,480	51,559	54,50	42,148	37,386
Number of invoices not paid within 30 Days	1,576	1,66	6,078	2,235	1,222

Late payments increased in 2009-10 following the implementation of a new accounting system (Account NI). Thereafter, the Department had deployed a number of mechanisms and practices to monitor and improve payment performance including:

- Provision of training;
- Dissemination of monthly prompt payment performance statistics; and
- Quarterly reporting to senior management.

Whilst there is no central system for recording the Department's prompt payment statistics by council area, the Department monitors prompt payment performance for all suppliers irrespective of location and is acutely aware of the importance of cashflow for suppliers, particularly in the current economic climate.

I have requested a senior official to create a month to month target to have the amount of invoices not paid in 30 days reduced to 2.5% in 6 months and to provide a 2 monthly report in the interim.

National Parks

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 17841/11-15, to list all the groups, including councils, with which he has met with in relation to National Parks; and the dates of these meetings.

(AQW 20342/11-15)

Mr Attwood: According to my records, I have met with groups to discuss national parks as follows: the Ulster Farmers' Union on 30th January, 20th August and 4th December 2012; the Ulster Society for the Protection of the Countryside on 17th August 2011 and 13th November 2012; Mourne Heritage Trust on 26th July 2011 and 9th October 2012; the Northern Ireland Tourist Board on 19th January 2012 and 6th February 2013; the National Beef Association on 16th February and 11th September 2012; the Institute of Directors on 9th October 2012; the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside on 15th November 2011; Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust on 29th November 2012; and Newcastle Chamber of Commerce on 8th February 2013. I have attended a great many meetings in my tenure as Minister, and there are others, not listed above, at which the issue of national parks was discussed.

Non-Article 31 Planning Applications

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 19029/11-15, to detail in which non-Article 31 planning applications he has intervened since May 2011.

(AQW 20353/11-15)

Mr Attwood: As I have stated previously, during the processing of planning applications I regularly correspond with MLAs who have written on behalf of constituents and objectors in connection with certain planning applications. I have also met multiple delegations involving members of all political parties in the Assembly and made inquiries in relation to a number of applications. That is the legitimate exercise of my functions and, as members of all parties will know is exercised judiciously and properly

To provide details would require an unreasonable period of staff time, combing through planning files manually etc.

Scrap Metal Trade

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of the Environment whether he intends to introduce legislation to regulate the scrap metal trade further.

(AQW 20442/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Regulation of the scrap metal trade as an industry falls outwith the powers of the Department of the Environment, although this is being further checked with DOJ.

An imminent Private Member's Bill, which will strengthen legislation in England and Wales alone, is currently going through Parliament. Mr Roy Beggs, MLA, is considering proposing a similar Private Member's Bill here in NI.

The England and Wales Private Member's Bill deals, primarily, with metal theft and how the industry itself operates. The Home Office is the department responsible for this legislation and, on this basis, it would be for the Department of Justice (DOJ) to comment on any similar legislative proposals here. However, both Departments are working together to try to tackle this issue.

What the DOE does do is regulate the waste/environmental activities carried out by scrap metal dealers. While environmental measures will not address fully the problem of metal theft, it is considered that they will be useful to assist in dealing with the problem, since it has been identified that environmental legislation has a role to play in tackling the issue of metal theft, as metal thieves often also commit environmental offences.

Consequently, I am already taking steps to introduce stronger legislation to regulate against environmental crime, which will have the knock-on effect of helping to address metal theft. The Department is proposing to amend some existing environmental legislation to ensure that statutory provision is as effective as possible and in particular facilitates the investigation and successful prosecution of offenders against environmental law.

Specifically, a number of Articles contained within the Waste (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 and the Waste and Contaminated Land (Amendment) Act (NI) 2011 were commenced on 11 and 12 March 2013 respectively. These provisions give further powers which will assist in combating environmental crime.

A number of these Primary provisions will require further subordinate legislation and work on this has already commenced.

In addition, other proposals include amending the Duty of Care Regulations to remove the 7-days grace for waste carriers/holders to produce documentation to the Department upon request. The intention of this amendment is to make it a requirement to carry/hold the appropriate documentation with the waste to which it refers and make it an offence not to do so. This will allow authorised officers or the police to 'weed out' illegal transfer of wastes, including metal. Consultation on these proposed changes commenced on 4 February 2013. The consultation closes on 26 April 2013.

I support, in principle, further legislation. But in any case, escalation of enforcement and imposition of robust penalties by the courts is essential. This is one of the reasons why the Environmental Crime Unit is expanding and why DOE provided an extensive matrix to the Judicial Studies Board covering penalties laid down by the courts further to prosecutions.

Scrap Metal Dealers Bill

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of the Environment whether there are elements in the Scrap Metal Dealers Bill at Westminster that could be implemented in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 20443/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The powers and controls being brought forward in England and Wales are not aimed at the environmental effects of metal theft but on how to manage the industry. They will put in place controls for how the industry should manage its business. This falls to another Department, although this issue of competence is being rechecked.

I believe in the need for further legislation and regulation. That is why I have brought forward new powers on the issue of scrap metal and shall bring forward more in the future.

Mr Roy Beggs, MLA, is considering proposing a similar Private Member's Bill here in NI. The Department of Justice is the lead Department in relation to these proposals.

I have been in touch with the Minister for Justice and his officials and mine are working together through various working groups, and in liaison with industry and those affected by metal theft, to ensure that any legislation brought forward by the Department of Justice is assisted, where possible, by the environmental controls for which this Department is responsible.

Cost of Translating Departmental Letters and Documents

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the cost of translating departmental letters and documents into (i) Irish; and (ii) each other language, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20504/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The table below details the Irish and other translation costs for the last 5 years 2007/08 to 2011/12. The large costs associated with 2008-09 are in relation to the Department developing a road safety Foreign Language Pack and the production of the Highway Code in various foreign languages.

Language	2007/08 £	2008/09 £	2009/10 £	2010/11 £	2011/12 £
Irish	1,313	4,798	276	766	100
Cantonese	275	370	-	-	-
French	-	370	-	-	-
Italian	-	370	-	-	-
Lithuanian	-	31,552	-	-	150
Mandarin	-	34,076	-	-	-
Polish	-	32,141	-	-	150
Portuguese	-	31,178	-	-	150
Russian	-	9,060	-	-	-
Spanish	-	370	-	-	-
Ulster Scots	-	370	-	-	-
Total Costs	1,588	144,655	276	766	550

Allotments

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration his Department has given to imposing a statutory obligation on councils to provide allotments.

(AQW 20840/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I have looked at the possibility of using a range of further mechanisms including legislative ones which could encourage and support councils in providing allotments.

The process to develop and agree legislative proposals for the introduction of a specific duty on councils to provide allotments cannot be completed in a timeframe that would allow for its inclusion in current environmental legislation in process. However, I am keeping the matter under review.

Allotment Provision

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives to encourage local councils to improve allotment provision.

(AQW 20842/11-15)

Mr Attwood: To date, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association nor the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives has requested a meeting with me to discuss this subject.

I will consider how to take this forward as part of an ongoing assessment of the future opportunities for allotments.

Unanswered Question: AQW 16871/11-15

Mr Frew asked the Minister of the Environment why AQW 16871/11-15, which was tabled on 16 November 2012, has not yet been answered.

(AQW 20860/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The response to AQW 16871/11-15 issued on 14 March 2013.

Minerals Applications

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 17534/11-15, to outline the measures he can take to rectify any shortcomings uncovered as a result of the review of the 120 current and recently approved minerals applications.

(AQW 20988/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The legal challenge to recent permissions at Cavanacaw Gold Mine identified shortcomings in the determination process of under the EIA Regulations. In light of this I asked for recent approvals and current cases to be checked to ensure compliance with the EIA Regulations. As I stated in my response to AQW 20450/11-15, this was an exercise by staff in the Minerals Team with assistance from the Development Management Guidance Team, where required, to check that EIA screening was done properly and was not a formal review.

Measures such as advice and guidance for staff are in place as standard practice. However, an additional measure now includes a programme of additional EIA training being drawn up by senior officials in the Strategic Planning Division. This will be delivered to all DOE operational planning staff and is due to commence shortly.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Peace III Funding

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQWs 10359/11-15, 11227/11-15, and 11475/11-15, to detail precisely how much Peace III funding went to (i) ex-prisoner groups; and (ii) groups made up exclusively of innocent victims.

(AQW 19199/11-15)

Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The PEACE III Operational Programme names several target beneficiary groups, including both (i) ex-prisoners and their families and (ii) victims of the conflict.

The programme adheres to the legislative definition of a victim, and does not record data against the term “innocent victims”. Neither does the programme categorise grant recipients under the terms “victims groups” or “ex-prisoners groups”. For this reason, comprehensive details of funding awarded to target beneficiary groups cannot be readily provided.

It is possible, however, to estimate funding awarded based on the focus of projects discerned from the organisation name, project title and project description fields recorded on the Systems 2007 EU funding database. The figures presented in the following paragraphs are based on this methodology.

PEACE III funding of £14,258,305.43 has been awarded to groups targeting ex-prisoners and their families.

PEACE III Theme 1.2, Acknowledging and Dealing with the Past, has a particular focus on addressing the issues of the past, including the needs of victims and survivors. To date under this Theme projects specifically targeting victims have been awarded funding of £19,067,354.17. In addition, under Theme 1.1, Building Positive Relations, funding of £520,316.36 has been awarded to projects which identify themselves as targeting victims and survivors.

Northern Ireland Civil Service: Vacancies in the North West

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the current Staff Officer vacancies within the Northern Ireland Civil Service based in the North West.

(AQW 20052/11-15)

Mr Wilson: At 20 February 2013, the Northern Ireland Civil Service had 3 vacancies at Staff Officer level in the North West Area. For the purpose of this response, the North West is defined as the District Council Areas of Derry, Strabane and Limavady.

Rate Relief

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much each of the bodies listed on Article 41A of the Rates (NI) Order 1977 has saved in rate relief, in each year since 2006.

(AQW 20525/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The table below details how much each of the bodies listed on Article 41A of the Rates (NI) Order 1977 is estimated to have saved in rate relief since the Article’s introduction from April 2006. A further £104,790 has been awarded in rate relief which cannot be assigned to a specific group.

ESTIMATED SAVINGS THROUGH EXEMPTION UNDER ARTICLE 41A

Financial Year	Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland	Grand Lodge of Free-masons of Ireland	The Ancient Order of Hibernians	Royal Black Institution	Apprentice Boys of Derry	Independent Loyal Orange Institution	Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes
2006/07	£575,361	£180,757	£21,647	£6,791	£10,458	£4,656	£2,214
2007/08	£595,979	£187,328	£22,515	£7,006	£10,901	£4,874	£2,337
2008/09	£618,843	£194,534	£23,323	£7,257	£11,377	£5,058	£2,440
2009/10	£632,617	£212,468	£23,624	£7,424	£11,514	£5,217	£2,500
2010/11	£678,346	£229,270	£24,398	£9,135	£12,025	£5,452	£0
2011/12	£716,937	£247,388	£24,865	£9,339	£12,199	£5,591	£0
2012/13	£720,478	£231,301	£24,625	£9,051	£12,456	£5,731	£0
Total*	£4,538,559	£1,483,046	£164,998	£56,004	£80,930	£36,579	£9,491

* Total may not add due to rounding

Underused European Funding Streams

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) what his Department is doing to encourage the increased uptake of underused European funding streams; and (ii) what support structures are being established to (a) improve the capability of businesses to draw down such funding; and (b) maximise collaboration opportunities between suitable small and medium-sized enterprises.
(AQW 20567/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Following the establishment of the European Commission Task Force for Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed to increase Northern Ireland's Transnational and Interregional participation.

Northern Ireland is eligible for funding under INTERREG IVB transnational programmes (Atlantic Area, Northern Periphery and North West Europe) as well as the EU – wide INTERREG IVC interregional programme. Eligible regions receive no automatic allocation of funding under these programmes as funding is allocated competitively based on the quality of applications submitted.

In the current 2007- 2013 EU programming period, DFP has worked to increase Northern Ireland's participation in these programmes. Some of the actions undertaken include greater participation in the programme management structures including directly in the management of the Atlantic Area and Northern Periphery programmes and also representing the regional perspective at UK level.

DFP also appointed the Special EU Programmes Body to co-ordinate project development and promotion of the transnational and interregional Programmes on a North-South basis. This necessitates the Body to work closely with the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland potential applicants in their project development role.

As a result of this, 59 projects, with a value of £8.8 million, involving Northern Ireland partners have been approved to date, meaning that we have tripled the number of successful projects achieved during the 2000-06 programme period (17).

Treasury Total Expenditure on Services Framework

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the proportion of finance attached through the Treasury Total Expenditure on Services Framework, that is employed by his departmental officials in the Net Fiscal Balance Report, published in November 2012, and which is administered through local structures.
(AQW 20579/11-15)

Mr Wilson: As outlined in my response to AQW 18708/11-15, 89% of identifiable expenditure is managed by the NI Executive.

Northern Ireland Prison Service Code of Conduct and Discipline

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel on what date his Department indicated to the Prison Service that it was not content with the proposal to introduce a separate disciplinary system for prison staff; and on what date his Department first received correspondence from the Prison Service regarding the new proposed Code of Conduct and Discipline.
(AQW 20614/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Corporate HR (CHR), the directorate within the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) responsible for developing HR policy on behalf of NI Civil Service Departments, first received correspondence regarding the NIPS draft Code of Conduct and Discipline from prison service officials on 19 October 2012.

NIPS and Department of Justice (DOJ) officials consulted CHR at a meeting on the 23 November when NIPS officials set out their reasons for issuing a Code of Conduct including prison legislation, the Ower's review of the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the NIPS Strategic Efficiency and Effectiveness change programme in which a revised code of conduct was taken forward as one of the key strands.

On 27 November, Corporate HR wrote to NIPS highlighting that NIPS, as part of the NICS should ensure consistency with NICS corporate policies. It was agreed however that there may be situations where NIPS wishes to develop its own protocols or procedures to complement the NICS policies.

Fraud Awareness Training

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel which Departments or arm's-length bodies have used the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy to provide Fraud Awareness Training.
(AQW 20694/11-15)

Mr Wilson: CIPFA was awarded the contract in September 2011 and since that date has delivered a total of 16 training courses. To date only NICS staff have availed of the training and all Departments have been represented on courses.

Peace III Funding

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what role his Department has in monitoring Peace III funding through the Special EU Programmes Body.
(AQW 20728/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) is the Northern Ireland sponsor department for the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and fulfils the UK Member State role in respect of the PEACE III Programme. Several formal mechanisms enable the department to monitor the programme's progress and performance.

SEUPB reports to Ministers via the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) in Special EU Programmes sectoral format. I attend these meetings, which consider detailed reports on programme progress. Following each, I make a statement to the Assembly.

The Programme Monitoring Committee, whose membership includes representation from DFP, was set up to ensure the effectiveness and quality of the PEACE III Programme's implementation. SEUPB provides extensive progress reports on all aspects of the programme's delivery to the Monitoring Committee for scrutiny. The Committee meets twice per year.

DFP also participates on the Monitoring Committee's Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group, on the Steering Committees responsible for project selection, and is represented on SEUPB's Audit Committee.

Programme expenditure against the European Commission's annual "N+2" spending targets is monitored by the department via regular reports from SEUPB.

Agricultural Property Relief

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many properties have lost their entitlement to agricultural property relief in each of the last five years.
(AQW 20741/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Agricultural Property Relief is a matter for Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) under Inheritance Tax legislation. Land and Property Services has a role in establishing the use and characteristics of a property but entitlement to the relief is determined by HMRC.

Agricultural Property Relief

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many properties have been awarded agricultural property relief in each of the last five years.
(AQW 20742/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Agricultural Property Relief is a matter for Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) under Inheritance Tax legislation. Land and Property Services has a role in establishing the use and characteristics of a property but entitlement to the relief is determined by HMRC.

First Trust Bank

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consultation he has had with the First Trust Bank following its decision to close several branches.

(AQW 20754/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I have not have had any direct contact with the First Trust since it announced in February that it would close a number of branches in Northern Ireland. However, the ETI Minister and I recently met with all the main banks, including the First Trust in December 2012.

While the focus of these discussions centred on access to finance and business lending, general issues around bank restructuring and its impact were raised. And while I fully recognise the challenges banks are facing as they seek to recapitalise and restructure, I am concerned about the impact branch closures will have on the network in Northern Ireland, staff and the wider community.

I also met with Mr Larry Broderick (General Secretary, Irish Bank Officials Association) earlier this month to discuss the potential impact of branch closures. While, it has to be recognised that these are ultimately commercial decisions, I will be monitoring this situation closely and plan to meet with each of the main banks again in the coming months.

Rate Debt in Ards and North Down Borough Council

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the rate debt in the (i) Ards; and (ii) North Down Borough Council areas, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20898/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Information on the amount of rate debt in the Ards and North Down Borough Council Areas in each of the last five years is not available. Information is available for the last three financial years.

The table overleaf shows the rate debt in the Ards and North Down Borough Council Areas at the end of each rating year from 2009/10 to 2011/12. The figures for the year ended 31st March 2012 include debt arising from empty homes which became liable for rates on 1st October 2011. They are therefore not directly comparable with previous years.

RATING DEBT AT END OF YEAR

Financial Year Ending:	Ards Borough Council	North Down Borough Council
31st March 2010	£5,534,913	£7,199,681
31st March 2011	£5,496,584	£6,905,538
31st March 2012	£5,390,018	£7,158,087

Savings Delivery Plans

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he can provide assurances that the shortcomings identified in the Audit Office report on the Efficiency Programme are not being replicated in the Savings Delivery Plans for the current budget period.

(AQO 3672/11-15)

Mr Wilson: In line with the Efficiency Delivery Programme operated during the last budget period, the Savings Delivery Programme in the current budget period places responsibility for identification, publication and delivery of savings measures with individual Ministers. Of course a key element of

both programmes is that there should be transparency to allow Assembly Committees and the public to scrutinise plans and ensure that savings are being delivered without having a detrimental impact on priority frontline public services. Transparency in this area is something that I have called for on many occasions.

Despite my department having provided guidance in this area, I continue to have concerns regarding the level of transparency offered to this Assembly and the public in relation to how some departments are delivering their savings.

New Initiatives and Capital Works Projects

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what new initiatives and capital works projects, that could assist the construction industry, are currently being pursued.

(AQW 20906/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Following the last meeting of the Procurement Board in October 2012, I announced a range of initiatives to assist the construction industry, and subcontractors in particular. I wrote to my Executive colleagues to highlight these initiatives and asked for their support in implementing them across Departments and Centres of Procurement Expertise (CoPEs).

The initiatives are as follows:

- ensuring that contractors are paid within 10 days of the date of their invoice;
- ensuring that all contractors are signed up to the Construction Industry Forum for Northern Ireland (CIFNI) Fair Payment Charter;
- ensuring that Project Managers check that subcontractors and suppliers are being paid promptly;
- ensuring that government contracts are not awarded to contractors who are in administration;
- ensuring that government contracts are not awarded to contractors who habitually fail to pay their subcontractors and suppliers promptly;
- ensuring that government contracts are not awarded to contractors who submit abnormally low tenders or sub-economic tenders; and
- ensuring that all new construction contracts tendered by Central Procurement Directorate that have an estimated value of over £1million and a significant subcontracting element are to use a Project Bank Account.

Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) has engaged with CoPEs to put a process in place which enables the Departments and CoPEs to apply these initiatives consistently and to report on compliance and outcomes. CPD will continue to monitor their implementation.

Capital works projects currently being pursued by Properties Division within my Department for 2013/14 and 2014/15 include the following:

- refurbishment of office accommodation at Castle Court;
- refurbishment of office accommodation at Adelaide House, Belfast;
- refurbishment of office accommodation for DSD, Downpatrick;
- refurbishment of office accommodation at the Library Building, County Hall, Coleraine;
- refurbishment of office accommodation at DARD Direct, Academy House, Ballymena;
- refurbishment of office accommodation for LPS, The Sidings, Lisburn;
- refurbishment of office accommodation for LPS, Boaz House, Omagh;
- replacement lifts at Clarence Court, Belfast;
- replacement windows at Foyle Jobs and Benefits Office;
- new office accommodation for DARD North West office; and
- new office accommodation for DSD North Belfast office.

The above projects for DSD and DARD for new office accommodation will be dependant on finding suitable locations/buildings.

Civil Service Equal Pay Settlement

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why his Department will not be initiating a process to claim back the money that was paid mistakenly under the agreed 2009 Civil Service Equal Pay Settlement.

(AQW 21047/11-15)

Mr Wilson: It was not possible to reclaim equal pay lump sum payments which were made in error to a small number of staff as the individuals concerned and the Department had signed legally binding conciliated agreements.

Rates: Town Centre Businesses

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what efforts his Department has made to assist businesses in town centres with rates, in an attempt to rejuvenate town centres.

(AQO 3673/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Over the past couple of years my Department has introduced a series of measures to assist local businesses through the rating system and many of these will play a part in helping to sustain and rejuvenate town centres.

The empty shops rates concession which I introduced in April 2012 with the objective of getting empty retail premises back onto use and to revitalise our town centres has been recently extended for a further two year period. We are on track for almost 100 new businesses across Northern Ireland receiving this concession for the important first year of trading. A policy copied by the Scottish Government and included in the recommendations of the Mary Portas Report.

I have also introduced a 'rates disregard' for the use of empty shop windows for non commercial purposes so that full rates are not charged and this helps brighten these areas up.

Additionally, and perhaps most significantly, the Executive has recently agreed to a further expansion of the small business rate relief to include properties with an NAV of up to £15,000. This measure will ensure that over 24,000 business ratepayers will now receive relief as part of the scheme. Many more shops will be brought into the scheme this year through increasing the limits and targeting the scheme better.

As you will recall the expansion of this scheme has been part funded from the large shops levy. Although that includes some of the very largest city centre stores, the burden falls mainly on edge of town and out of town retail centres and superstores. This has helped to rebalance the rating system in favour of town centres.

All in all, the Executive currently provides extensive help to businesses across Northern Ireland. Over 50% of non-domestic properties in Northern Ireland will receive some form of support from a variety of rating reliefs and exemptions. They are not confined to town centres – support is needed outside our urban areas too - but as you will have gathered, it is town centres that are benefitting the most.

Rates are not a magic solution, if we are to arrest the decline in the heart of many of our towns. It will require joined up, creative thinking and action from a number of Departments, working alongside the business community.

Public Service Pensions Bill: Trade Unions

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what arrangements have been made to engage all Departments in negotiations with Trade Unions on the Pensions Bill.

(AQO 3674/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I assume the member is referring to the proposed Public Service Pensions Bill. My Department is co-ordinating consultation (not negotiation) between each of the Northern Ireland Ministerial Departments with sponsor responsibilities for devolved public service pension schemes and a collective trade union grouping representing public service employees in those schemes. Sponsoring Departments include Environment, Education, Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Justice, and Finance and Personnel.

DFP Officials in follow up sessions to the Committee have already pointed out that “consultation” is the appropriate term. “Negotiation” is used in the context of pay. “Consultation” is the term that is used in pension legislation and is the appropriate term for us to continue to use. It is the term that is used throughout public sector pension legislation. The Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC-ICTU) is providing central representation for the trade unions and also some non-affiliated bodies.

I would remind members that this Bill gives legislative effect to core provisions for pension reform in line with the changes which will apply for the equivalent public service schemes in Great Britain. This policy was agreed by the Executive in March 2012. For this reason the Bill is being drafted to reflect the final policy content of the Westminster Public Service Pensions Bill. We must press ahead with this as failure to implement by the HMT deadline of April 2015 will, as I have already advised members, cost around £260 m for each year's delay.

Savings Delivery Plans

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in light of the Audit Office report on the effectiveness of efficiency savings, to outline the level of cooperation between his Department and other Departments to ensure the effective scrutiny of departmental savings proposals.

(AQO 3682/11-15)

Mr Wilson: In line with the Efficiency Delivery Programme operated during the last budget period, the Savings Delivery Programme in the current budget period places responsibility for identification, publication and delivery of savings measures with individual Ministers. Of course a key element of both programmes is that there should be transparency to allow Assembly Committees and the public to scrutinise plans and ensure that savings are being delivered without having a detrimental impact on priority frontline public services. Transparency in this area is something that I have called for on many occasions.

In terms of engagement with departments, there is regular engagement at official level to identify risks relating to the delivery of departmental savings plans. My department also seeks a formal update from departments twice a year in order that I can provide a report to the Executive on implementation of Savings Delivery Plans. However as I have highlighted previously to this Assembly, the Minister for Education has advised that his department will not be participating in this monitoring process.

Despite my department having provided guidance in this area, I continue to have concerns regarding the level of transparency offered to this Assembly and the public in relation to how some departments are delivering their savings.

Budget: Overcommitment

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the latest estimate of over commitment in the current budget.

(AQO 3683/11-15)

Mr Wilson: At the end of the Monitoring exercise and the Budget technical exercise in January 2013 the overcommitment position was as follows:

In 2012-13 we have an effective non-ring-fenced Resource overcommitment of £8 million and a zero Capital overcommitment.

In 2013-14 we will start the year with an overcommitment in Resource of £51.4 million and uncommitted Capital of £70.9 million.

In 2014-15 we have an overcommitment of £83 million in Resource and an overcommitment of £22.5 million in Capital.

This position was reported to both the Executive and the Finance Committee.

It is of course to be noted that there will be changes to these numbers if the Chancellor's Budget changes allocations for Northern Ireland or as new issues emerge and are dealt with by the Executive.

Budget: Barnett Formula

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline why the UK budget allocation of capital under the Barnett Formula is particularly welcome.

(AQO 3685/11-15)

Mr Wilson: As the Member will be aware the Executive got additional Capital DEL allocations of £53.7 million in 2013-14 and £76.9 million in 2014-15 as part of the 2012 UK Autumn Statement.

This significant injection of capital funding is very welcome and can help to provide a short term stimulus to the local economy. The Executive will consider allocation of this funding as part of the monitoring round process in the respective years and in the context of the overall Block position. Any additional capital projects that may be taken forward will not only benefit the local economy but also provide a much needed boost for the local construction industry.

VAT and Duty Levels

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the rationale for estimating the amount of VAT, tobacco, alcohol and betting and gaming duty based on a survey which obtained a response from 147 households.

(AQO 3686/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Net Fiscal Balance Report 2009-10 and 2010-11 was developed applying the methodology originally designed to produce the "Government Expenditure and Revenue in Scotland" (GERS) publication which uses the results of the Living Costs and Food Survey - also referred to as the Family Spending Survey - to estimate the revenues identified by the Member.

This is a UK-wide survey and the current annual sample size in Northern Ireland is proportionate to its population relative to the UK. Furthermore, the Member should note that while 147 households responded in 2010, the regional expenditure figures reported in the annual 'Family Spending' publication are based on the average of the three most recent survey years i.e. 2008, 2009, and 2010. The Member should also be aware, that the sample size for this survey was 'boosted' in Northern Ireland up to, and including 2009, to allow separate more detailed regional analysis to be carried out. Consequently the regional expenditure figures for Northern Ireland in the 2011 edition of the report are based on a total sample of 1323 households over those three survey years.

I would re-iterate to the Member that the purpose of the Net Fiscal Balance Report 2009-10 and 2010-11 is to provide an overview of public sector finances. It is not intended to provide an accurate estimate of individual expenditure or revenue items. Rather the report provides an overall assessment of Northern Ireland's aggregate fiscal position, and as such, the report indicates that individual estimates should be interpreted with caution.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Waiting Times for Individual Procedures

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 19307/11-15, whether he would make a copy of the waiting times for individual procedures available in the Assembly Library.

(AQW 19946/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): My Department publishes inpatient waiting time figures on a quarterly basis in the Northern Ireland Inpatient Waiting Times publication on the basis of clinical specialty, available at the following link:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/hospital-stats/waiting_times_main/stats-waiting-times.htm

Data is not routinely published on the basis of individual procedure type, given the volume of procedure types that patients may be waiting for. However, in response to this request, the waiting times at 30th September 2012, for individual procedures with a waiting list greater than eight weeks, have been placed in the Assembly Library.

GP Practices: Minimum Practice Income Guarantee

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what analysis his Department has conducted on the impact that the proposed removal of the Minimum Practice Income Guarantee would have on the sustainability of GP practices.

(AQW 20507/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is currently a wide variation in the Global Sum payments Practices receive under the GMS Contract. In Northern Ireland General Medical Services (GMS) Practices, this income varies from £51 price per weighted patient (PPwP) to £79 PPwP at 2011/12.

One of the proposals out for consultation currently on changes to the GMS Contract relates to the aim of equitable funding for all GP Practices with the phased withdrawal of Minimum Practice Income Guarantee (MPIG) over a seven year period from 2014/15 to 2020/21. This proposal aims to ensure funding is targeted to those areas of greatest need. On the basis of a distribution of current levels of GMS Global Sum, withdrawing MPIG as proposed would lead to approximately 59% of practices seeing an increase in their PPwP over the seven year period. The maximum decrease to the PPwP of a practice in any one year would be around 6%, but for 95% of practices who have a decrease in PPwP, the decrease would be less than 3%. The intention is to ensure that finite resources are targeted to meet need as effectively as possible, via the same price per weighted patient for every Practice.

New GP Contract

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the concerns of the Chairman of the British Medical Association in Northern Ireland about the new GP Contract.

(AQW 20570/11-15)

Mr Poots: Dr Paul Darragh, Chairman of the BMA in Northern Ireland, has not raised any specific concerns about the proposed changes to the 2013/14 GMS contract with my Department.

Although an agreed settlement with the General Practitioners Committee (GPC) of the BMA NI to the contract has not been forthcoming at this point, the concerns of the Chairman will be considered as part of the consultation process on proposed revisions to the General Medical Services Contract for 2013/14. The consultation is due to close on 22nd March. My Department remains ready to continue dialogue with the BMA Northern Ireland about proposed changes in an effort to reach an acceptable agreement.

GP Contract

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the implications of the new GP Contract will be assessed against the health and safety needs of the general public.

(AQW 20572/11-15)

Mr Poots: Within the context of the drivers for change the challenge is to enhance the health of the Northern Ireland population and deliver high quality and sustainable care whilst ensuring that resources are used as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The proposed changes to the GMS Contract include new evidence-based indicators, recommended by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), aimed at delivering more patients to benefit, therefore improving health outcomes and saving more lives.

Provision of safe, sustainable healthcare for patients is my primary focus.

Sleep Apnoea

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) what assistance his Department offers people diagnosed with sleep apnoea; (ii) how many sleep clinics are currently operational; (iii) what assistance is available for patients who are travelling to sleep clinics; (iv) how many people have been diagnosed with sleep apnoea in each of the last five years; and (v) what discussions his Department has had with the British Lung Foundation on sleep apnoea and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

(AQW 20574/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) Patients with suspected obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) are usually referred to a consultant in a respiratory out-patients clinic or the main Regional Respiratory Clinic at Belfast City Hospital. Once a diagnosis of OSA has been confirmed the patient may be referred for Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) treatment.

The Regional Respiratory Clinic provides diagnostic testing and reporting for OSA, including Oximetry and Limited Polysomnography (sleep study), as well as CPAP treatment and subsequent monitoring and review for complex and non-complex patients.

- (ii) The Belfast Trust provides 3 Consultant-led sleep clinics per week with a further 10 clinics that have sleep patients and other Respiratory conditions; 14 clinics per week are currently operational throughout the Southern Trust and the Western Trust operates two clinics per week in Altnagelvin Hospital and two clinics per month in South West Acute Hospital. The Northern and South Eastern Trusts do not provide dedicated Sleep Clinics.
- (iii) The Hospital Travel Costs Scheme provides help with travel costs to hospital for health service treatment for people and their dependants who are in receipt of Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance (Income-related), Jobseeker's allowance (Income Based), Guarantee Pension Credit, Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit; or who are on a low income. Details about who can claim and how to claim are set out in leaflet HC11 Help with health costs, available from hospitals, Social Security Offices and Jobs and Benefits Offices and on my Department's website at: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hc11_help_with_health_costs.pdf.
- (iv) Information on the number of people diagnosed with sleep apnoea is not available. It is however possible to identify the number of admissions to hospital in each of the last five years where sleep apnoea was recorded as the primary diagnosis and this is shown in the table below.

	Number of Admissions				
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Northern Ireland	408	361	311	392	81

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

Figures do not include patients who attended an Accident and Emergency Department and were not subsequently admitted. Deaths and discharges have been used to approximate admissions.

- (v) My Department has not had any direct discussions with the British Lung Foundation regarding Sleep Apnoea or COPD services however they are currently working with the Health and Social Care Board and Public Health Agency as part of the respiratory framework.

Lagan Valley Hospital Accident and Emergency Unit

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that local residents have to travel to Belfast, Dundonald or Craigavon to access Accident and Emergency services after 9.00pm, whether the Lagan Valley Hospital will be returning to 24 hour Accident and Emergency services; and when this will happen.

(AQW 20580/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Emergency Department at Lagan Valley Hospital currently operates from 9am to 8pm daily. For medical emergencies outside these hours, people can phone 999 or contact the GP Out of Hours service.

Following a public consultation in 2012, the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has proposed moving to a model of care which would see the Lagan Valley Hospital Emergency Department opening from 8am to 8pm daily, with an enhanced GP Out of Hours service including direct admissions to the hospital from 8pm to 8am. My Department has conveyed to the Trust my agreement to proceed with these changes.

Son-Rise Homebased Autism Programme

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many families are funded directly for the Son-Rise Homebased Autism programme, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 20581/11-15)

Mr Poots: Health and Social Care Trusts do not currently provide individual funding to any families for home-based autism programmes such as the Son-Rise programme.

Dental Provision

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the changes in dental provision over the last five years; and to detail the steps which he has taken, and plans to take, to improve oral health, especially amongst young children.

(AQW 20582/11-15)

Mr Poots: Over the last five years, my Department has successfully introduced additional dental services for 57, 000 patients throughout Northern Ireland who were previously unable to access health service treatment and care. Minimum Standards for Dental Care and Treatment were published in March 2011. The standards along with the Oral Health Strategy which was published in June 2007, sets out the Department's direction for assuring high quality dental services and improving the oral health of our population. There has also been year on year growth in the General Dental Services budget in recent years.

My Department has also been proactive in introducing evidence based programmes to improve the oral health of the population. For maximum effect these are mainly directed at children but schemes are also targeted at adults from deprived areas and elderly patients in residential homes. These programmes include:

- fluoride toothpaste schemes for young children in the most deprived areas;
- preventive fissure sealant scheme delivered through the General Dental Services for young people;
- enhanced capitation and continuing care payments for dentists providing care to children and adults from certain deprived areas;
- supporting a large research trial to investigate the clinical and cost-effectiveness of using fluoride varnish and fluoride toothpaste to prevent decay in young children;
- focusing the work of the Community Dental Service on improving the oral health of those with special care needs such as children from socially disadvantaged areas, the learning disabled, housebound patients and residents in nursing and residential homes; and
- providing a number of healthy eating initiatives, smoking cessation and alcohol reduction programmes through the Public Health Agency to improve both general and dental health.

These programmes have led to a significant improvement in oral health with large reductions in the number of extractions under general anaesthetic and fillings carried out in children. My Department will continue to use these evidence based programmes to improve the oral health of the population of Northern Ireland.

The 2007 Oral Health Strategy stated that the greatest oral health gain is likely to be achieved through community water fluoridation. Water fluoridation ensures delivery of fluoride to 'hard-to-reach' groups such as those of lower socioeconomic status who are more likely to experience dental disease. I am giving consideration to fluoridation of the water supplies at present.

Finance Procurement and Logistics System

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the functionality to date of the Finance Procurement and Logistics System within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 20608/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Finance Procurement and Logistics (FPL) IT system was introduced in Belfast HSC Trust in November 2012, as part of the Business Services Transformation Programme. While many elements of the system are working satisfactorily, the Trust is encountering some implementation difficulties. The project team is working in partnership with the FPL system supplier, and is currently developing a robust 'replan' to deal with the outstanding issues.

Such problems are not, of course, unheard of in the implementation of large ICT projects, and I am confident that the remaining problems will be resolved. I am confident, too, that the FPL system will make a lasting contribution to the shared service network which will yield major savings for redeployment to frontline health and social care.

Slievemore Nursing Unit

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the recent Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority's inspection of Slievemore Nursing Unit, to detail the concerns raised regarding (i) the model of service provision; (ii) registration status; and (iii) the facility's environmental requirements.

(AQW 20610/11-15)

Mr Poots: Following inspection in January 2013, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) concluded that the model of service provision at Slievemore Nursing Unit does not differ

substantially from that of a nursing home. This is based on the inspector's observations of services provided, daily routines and the fact that nursing care is provided to patients by registered nurses outside of a hospital setting.

The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) Order 2003 requires nursing homes to register with the RQIA. The Unit is not currently registered with RQIA.

During inspection, whilst there were no issues with the quality of care provided, RQIA identified concerns regarding the quality of the environment at Slievemore Nursing Unit. These included concerns in relation to absence of risk assessments of fire safety, legionella, and asbestos and ligature risks throughout the premises. Concerns were also noted in relation to the poor condition of plasterwork and paintwork within the Unit. Bedroom sizes do not meet the current minimum standards.

Children Minded by a Childminder

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has considered increasing the maximum number of children that can be minded by a childminder with an assistant at the discretion of the appropriate Health and Social Care Trust (i) in rural areas where childcare provision is limited; or (ii) where the Trust is satisfied with the provision offered.

(AQW 20616/11-15)

Mr Poots: The minimum standards for childminding and day care for children under age 12 were published in July 2012 and state that a childminder who employs an assistant may look after a maximum of eight children. There are no plans to increase this number at present, although standards provide (in exceptional cases and with the agreement of the registering Trust) for a higher number of children to ensure continuity of care for example for siblings.

A sub-group of the Early Years Implementation Group has been set up to deal with issues arising from the introduction of the HSC Board guidance developed to support the standards and is currently considering matters relating to childminders who employ an assistant, including the total numbers of children under and above statutory school age that can be looked after in such settings.

Prisoner Health Care

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 19979/11-15, how many prisoners (i) were treated in prison health facilities; (ii) required treatment in an outside hospital; (iii) suffered long-term health damage; and (iv) did not recover.

(AQW 20630/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information to answer this question is set out in the table below.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No of prisoners treated in prison health facilities for the effects of taking illegal drugs	1	2	5	2	9
No of prisoners who required treatment in an outside hospital for the effects of taking illegal drugs	2	3	0	7	11
No of prisoners who have suffered long term health damage as a result of taking illegal drugs	0	0	0	0	0
No of prisoners who did not recover from the effects of taking illegal drugs	0	0	0	0	0

Cycling

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department has spent encouraging people to become healthier through cycling, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20633/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department recognises the importance of participating in quality physical activity and the beneficial impacts it can have on the overall health and wellbeing of an individual and the population as a whole.

The Public Health Agency promotes the uptake of cycling through a range of initiatives, which the Agency supports, and/or directly funds. Many of these initiatives are taken forward by other partners working in conjunction with the PHA such as Trusts, Councils, Schools, community and voluntary sector organisations and lead bodies such as Sustrans.

The following provides a summary of the direct resources allocated to support cycling (not including the resources to the Physical Activity Coordinators in Trust areas) by the PHA in 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13. (Information on resources spent on cycling is only available in the last three years.)

Year	Resource £
2010/11	6,000
2011/12	66,576
2012/13	175,211

Average Age of Retirement

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the average age of retirement for (i) male; and (ii) female firefighters; and how many ill health retirements there have been in each of the last five years, broken down by age.

(AQW 20637/11-15)

Mr Poots: The tables below detail average retirement ages for Firefighters over the last six tax years and the numbers of ill health retirements since 1 April 2008:

FIREFIGHTER RETIREMENTS

Tax Year	Average Age
2007-2008	52.64
2008-2009	51.98
2009-2010	52.63
2010-2011	52.24
2011-2012	52.60
2012-2013	53.06

Note: all retirements were male: no female firefighters retired other than through ill health. The figures exclude ill health retirements.

Year	No. Ill Health Retirements	Age Range
2008	10	30-55 years
2009	6	35-55 years

Year	No. Ill Health Retirements	Age Range
2010	6	40-65 years
2011	7	45-60 years
2012	24	30-60 years

Note: individual ages have not been presented due to the risk of personal disclosure, where it may be possible to identify an individual from the data provided.

Bexsero Vaccine for Meningococcal B Meningitis and Septicaemia

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the Bexsero vaccine for meningococcal B meningitis and septicaemia; and whether his Department has any plans to introduce the vaccine.

(AQW 20652/11-15)

Mr Poots: I refer the member to my previous answer to AQW 19220/11-15 which was published on 14 February.

As I said then, vaccination policy in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK is guided by the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), an independent expert advisory committee that advises the four UK Health Ministers on matters relating to the provision of vaccination and immunisation services. JCVI considers all the available medical and scientific evidence before recommending which vaccines should be offered.

The JCVI has begun an evaluation of the impact and cost-effectiveness of possible meningitis B vaccination strategies. This evaluation requires a complex analysis and final JCVI advice is not expected until later in the year. I will consider the JCVI recommendation when I have received it.

Speech Therapy Services

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are any differences in the provision of speech therapy services given to patients in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 20668/11-15)

Mr Poots: Whilst speech and language therapy services are commissioned in the same way across Northern Ireland, the 5 Trusts may deliver services using various service delivery models delivered within regionally agreed clinical care pathways. This approach aims to maximise access and secure the same outcomes for patients.

Each year the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency produce a joint Commissioning Plan which details commissioning intentions for the year. This is developed in response to the Commissioning Directions of DHSSPS which detail specific targets to be achieved one of which refers to the delivery of AHP services. Within the current financial year and from April 2013, this specifies that “no patient should wait longer than nine weeks from referral to commencement of AHP treatment.”

Regarding the provision of speech and language therapy services offered to patients in each Health and Social Care Trust, this is provided on an individual basis related to the assessed needs of each patient. Services are also delivered on the basis of regionally agreed care pathways, based on best practice endorsed by the professional body the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists and if relevant within guidelines set by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence.

Physiotherapy Services

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are any differences in the provision of physiotherapy services given to patients in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 20669/11-15)

Mr Poots: Whilst Physiotherapy services are commissioned in the same way across Northern Ireland, the 5 Trusts may deliver services using various service delivery models delivered within regionally agreed clinical care pathways. This approach aims to maximise access and secure the same outcomes for patients.

Each year the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency produce a joint Commissioning Plan which details commissioning intentions for the year. This is developed in response to the Commissioning Directions of DHSSPS which detail specific targets to be achieved one of which refers to the delivery of AHP services. Within the current financial year and from April 2013, this specifies that “no patient should wait longer than nine weeks from referral to commencement of AHP treatment.”

Regarding the provision of physiotherapy services offered to patients in each Health and Social Care Trust, this is provided on an individual basis related to the assessed needs of each patient. Services are also delivered on the basis of regionally agreed care pathways, based on best practice endorsed by the professional body the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists and if relevant within guidelines set by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence.

Business Services Organisation

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety under which circumstances the Business Services Organisation pays for services in advance.

(AQW 20674/11-15)

Mr Poots: In line with practice elsewhere in the public sector, the Business Services Organisation (BSO) pays for some services in advance. Routine examples of this include rental of accommodation, charges for maintenance of equipment and membership/subscription fees.

The practice obtains relatively frequently in ICT. Thus the technical support terms and conditions for certain worldwide industry standard software products are governed by the manufacturer and may include prepayment.

Similarly, the BSO utilises UK-wide public sector arrangements in ICT set up by the Cabinet Office; drawing on these discounted pricing regimes may entail prepayment.

Miscellaneous instances of advance payment include the rental component of data communications circuits supplied by telecoms' providers, maintenance of specialist software for HSC pensions software and maintenance of Family Practitioner Services scanners for scanning claim forms from practitioners.

Tenders Awarded for Surgical Gloves

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 20098/11-15, to detail the (i) supplier; and (ii) unit price for Lot 1, the Latex General Surgery - Latex Under Glove awarded under tender NP569/11.

(AQW 20799/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is shown in the table below. It should be noted that, until it is known which gloves in each lot will be used by each Health & Social Care Trust, the exact prices payable cannot be determined.

LOT 1 – LATEX UNDERGLOVES

Supplier	Glove	Unit Price £
ANSELL	Encore Under Glove	0.45
PH MEDISAVERS	Profeel Sensitive	0.38
MEDLINE	Aleo Touch Green	0.52

Major New Addictions Service Based in Downpatrick

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the rationale for a major new addictions service based in Downpatrick; and for an update on the progress of such a proposal.

(AQW 20807/11-15)

Mr Poots: While my Department has overall responsibility for the cross-sectoral strategy to address the harm related to alcohol and drug misuse in Northern Ireland, responsibility for commissioning alcohol and drug related services rests with the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and the Public Health Agency (PHA). The HSCB and the PHA have informed me that they are not aware of a major new addiction service being developed in Downpatrick. The existing range of specialist community substance misuse services and in-patient treatment/rehabilitation service currently available across the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust area is being maintained.

With regard to future service provision across the whole of Northern Ireland, the HSCB and the PHA have recently issued a draft Alcohol and Drug Commissioning Framework for consultation. The draft Framework sets out the wider range of service provision elements comprising prevention/health promotion, early intervention and specialist treatment services that should be available throughout Northern Ireland. HSCB/PHA is currently seeking comment and feedback regarding the Framework which is available at the following link:

<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/directorate-operations/alcohol-and-drug-commissioning-framework-northern-ireland-2013-16>

The draft framework has taken due account of all the latest evidence in respect of commissioning and delivering addiction services to provide the best outcomes for individuals. I believe that this work will ultimately increase consistency across Northern Ireland, and will deliver the best possible outcomes for those suffering from addiction.

European Working Directive: General Practitioners

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the European Working Directive applies to General Practitioners.

(AQW 20847/11-15)

Mr Poots: The European Working Time Directive seeks to place obligations on employers and gives right to employees by laying down minimum conditions relating to weekly working time, rest entitlements and annual leave. General Practitioners (GPs) do not normally fall within the remit of the Directive as they tend to be self-employed GP Partners. Only 5% are employed as salaried GPs and the Directive applies to them.

Samaritans

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration his Department has given to providing either project funding or core funding to the Samaritans.

(AQW 20852/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department currently provides annual core funding to the Samaritans, which in 2012/13 amounted to £16,538.

Multi-Agency Support Teams for Schools

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of multi-agency support teams for schools that (i) are supported; (ii) have applied to join; and (iii) have not applied to join, broken down by (a) Education and Library Board; and (b) District Council area.

(AQW 20856/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Department does not hold the information in the precise form requested however, data currently held on the number of schools supported by Multi-Agency Support Teams for Schools (or equivalent) in each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust is detailed below, with additional information on the equivalent Education and Library Boards (ELB), and those District Councils who come within the HSC Trust and ELB boundaries:

	South Eastern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	Belfast HSC Trust
Schools currently supported	122	177 18: number of referrals for children not attending a school nursery	148	All mainstream schools and 5 Special Schools in Trust area	184
Schools that have applied to join	2	Available to 458 schools within the area	50	As above	96
Schools that have not applied to join	9	Information not available	53	Zero - Open to all schools	Information not available
Education & Library Board	South Eastern ELB	Western ELB	North Eastern ELB	Southern ELB	Belfast ELB
District Council	Down, North Down, Lisburn, Ards & Castlereagh	Limavady, Derry, Strabane, Omagh & Fermanagh NB. Figures as at July 2012	Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Larne, Magherafelt, Moyle & Newtownabbey	Armagh, Dungannon, Newry & Mourne, Craigavon, Banbridge & Cookstown	Belfast

Electrophysiological Treatment

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 20033/11-15 and AQW 17786/11-15, what plans are in place to address the lengthening waiting times for the patients affected; and for his assessment of the timescale for all patients to receive electrophysiological treatment.

(AQW 20902/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is unacceptable that any patient should wait longer than is necessary for treatment. That is why I have set a target from April 2012, that at least 50% of inpatients and daycases, which includes

electrophysiological (EP) procedures, are treated within 13 weeks with no one waiting longer than 36 weeks, increasing to 60% by March 2013, and no patient waiting longer than 30 weeks for treatment.

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) recognises that the current waiting time for EP studies is too long in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust. To address this issue the HSCB has been funding additional sessions in the Southern Trust and additional capacity has also been secured from the Independent Sector. The Trust is working with the Health and Social Care Board to retain and further expand this capacity during 2013/14.

Bamford Action Plan

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the 76 actions that are mentioned in his Written Ministerial Statement of 12 March 2013 on the Bamford Action Plan. **(AQW 20987/11-15)**

Mr Poots: The Bamford Action Plan 2012-15 was published on the DHSSPS website on 12 March 2013. This can be accessed at the following:

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/2012-2015-bamford-action-plan.pdf>

The 76 actions are listed in Section B of the Bamford Action Plan, pages 30-62.

Arrangements have also been made to place copies of the Bamford Action Plan in the Assembly library.

Capital Builds in Fire and Rescue Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 20867/11-15, to list, in order of priority, the capital builds within the Fire and Rescue Service for the current budget period and the next budget period. **(AQW 21093/11-15)**

Mr Poots: The capital allocation for Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) must cover a range of areas including:

- Red fleet
- ICT
- Estate (both maintenance and new build)

In terms of new build facilities NIFRS has a range of priorities. However the focus is on those currently underway such as Omagh and “must do” priorities such as the One Stop Shop and Dunmurry – the latter scheme is subject to the outcome of a feasibility study.

The longer term priorities for NIFRS going into the next budget period will continue to be reviewed taking cognisance of the challenging situation with regard to funding.

Eye Care

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to promote high quality eye care. **(AQO 3695/11-15)**

Mr Poots: In October 2012 I launched a new strategy “Developing Eye Care Partnerships; improving the commissioning and provision of eye care in Northern Ireland”. This strategy set out the direction of travel for eye care provision in Northern Ireland over the next five years.

This policy contains 12 Objectives, each designed to improve the promotion of, the provision of, and the access to, eye care at both primary and secondary care level and, importantly, across the interface. The HSC Board and the Public Health Agency have been asked to lead on the implementation of these objectives, with annual appraisals on progress over the 5 year lifespan of the strategy.

A Project Board is being established and work streams identified to address these objectives. This Project Board and the task groups will involve stakeholders, including the voluntary and community sectors, to deliver the objectives. Early manifestations are the development of regional Macular and Glaucoma Services, and the piloting of Acute Eye programmes, allowing eye care to be accessed readily, with improved pathways leading to better outcomes, and enhanced patient journeys.

Supported Housing

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with the Minister for Social Development on the recommendations in the Bamford Report on supported housing.

(AQO 3696/11-15)

Mr Poots: In March 2012, I met with the Minister for Social Development to discuss supported housing, the joint DSD/DHSSPS “Bamford” Resettlement Budget, Regulation and Inspection of Supported Living Schemes and the delivery of future accommodation and associated services for the elderly.

Supporting people to live independent lives is a key theme within the Executive's Bamford Action Plan which I launched on 13 March 2013. Whilst the lead for taking Supported Housing forward, as part of that Action Plan, lies with the Department for Social Development, my Department and HSC collaborate fully in the process to enhance access to suitable, safe and supported housing for some of the most vulnerable in our society. In addition, and on behalf of the Executive, both Departments launched a consultation document on housing adaptation services in February 2013.

Cross departmental implementation of the most recent Bamford Action Plan will continue to be facilitated through an Inter-ministerial Group, and departmental officials will continue to meet.

The most recent meeting between DSD and DHSSPS officials on supported living took place in February 2013.

Transforming Your Care

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the implementation of Transforming Your Care.

(AQO 3697/11-15)

Mr Poots: The consultation ‘Transforming Your Care: Vision to Action’ closed on 15 January 2013, having received a total of 2,242 written responses. I am very pleased that so many people across Northern Ireland have taken this opportunity to ensure that their voices are heard on these important proposals for the future of Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland.

The consultation responses showed clear support for the need to change our health and social care services in order to meet the needs of the community and promote health and well being through prevention and early intervention.

My Statement to the Assembly this morning set out the details of the consultation findings and provided a full update on the implementation of ‘Transforming Your Care’. As implementation proceeds, significant service changes, such as the change of use for a facility or a change to the way services are delivered locally will be subject to separate public consultation focussed on that specific change.

Given that consultees have endorsed the need for change, it will now be important to make sure that this change takes place. We all need to work together now to take forward implementation to ensure the provision of safe, sustainable and resilient services for the population of Northern Ireland into the future.

Surgical Services: Outsourcing

Mrs McKevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the total costs of outsourcing surgical services to the private sector since the beginning of 2012.

(AQO 3698/11-15)

Mr Poots: This information is not available as it is not possible to separate out the costs of surgery from assessment and non-surgical treatment. The Health Service in Northern Ireland refers patients to the Independent Sector: either as an Extra Contractual Referral (ECR) where a clinician can demonstrate an exceptional clinical need to do so; or where it is not possible (for clinical reasons) to deliver a local service; or under the Elective Reform Initiative (Waiting List Initiatives) where there is a gap between the demand for a service and the capacity a Health and Social Care Trust can offer.

Under the Elective Reform Initiative, funding for transfers to Independent Sector providers in 2011/12 was £52.6m.

The anticipated spend with independent sector providers in 2012/13 is £53.6million. This will procure around 71,000 assessments and treatments in the independent sector.

Downe Hospital, Downpatrick

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his plans for the future use of the former Downe Hospital site in Downpatrick.

(AQO 3699/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is envisaged that the property will be put on the open market by May 2013.

On 30 July 2012 planning approval was granted for mixed use development including residential, offices, retail, guest house and restaurant, on the site of the old Downe Hospital in Downpatrick.

In November 2012, BTW Shiells was appointed as the selling agent for the site and a disposal group was established to assist the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust with the disposal of old Downe Hospital site.

Out-of-Hours GP Services

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps are being taken to promote out of hours GP services as an alternative to Accident and Emergency departments.

(AQO 3700/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is a continuing process of increasing public awareness of GP Out-of-Hours through various forms of media.

The use of OOH GPs services across Northern Ireland is extensive. Over 605,000 people contacted GP Out-of-Hours services in Northern Ireland in 2012.

The phone numbers for all GP Out-of-Hours services have been put in the Yellow Pages, on www.yell.com and in the front section of the BT Phonebook. A dedicated website for GP Out-of-Hours has also been setup.

GP practices inform their patients of the GP Out-of-Hours services in various ways e.g. for some it maybe on their telephone answering machine, practice leaflet or website.

It is important to emphasise that A&E services should only be used for emergency situations.

Department of Justice

Northern Ireland Prison Service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 19622/11-15, whether he will provide a revised and definitive cost of treatment for the prisoner and his wife.

(AQW 20498/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): An ongoing Prison Service review has established that the cost to provide joint treatment was £4800.

Northern Ireland Prison Service Staff

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 19546/11-15 and AQW 17980/11-15 and the recommendations at 13.5 and 13.6 in the Ackah and Deane Report, whether he intends to review his answer in order to clarify (i) when the PSNI will commence investigation technique training for staff that work in the Professional Standards Unit; (ii) the frequency of training sessions; (iii) whether training will be given for all levels of officers; and (iv) whether representatives from the Prison Officers' Association will be trained.

(AQW 20499/11-15)

Mr Ford: As stated in my response to AQW/17980/11-15, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) will provide training for staff working in the new Unit following their appointment. The training will be provided to those staff responsible for investigations and will be a five day Investigative Skills course based on the PSNI's existing Investigative Skills Course.

All officers who will need to have a working knowledge of the new disciplinary system will be trained internally in its use.

Prisoner Release

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to Kenneth Douglas and with the exception of release immediately prior to his arrest and charge dating from October 2012, to detail (i) any other date when he was released from custody; and (ii) the date and reasons why he was re-arrested and returned to custody.

(AQW 20500/11-15)

Mr Ford: Mr Douglas was also released from custody on 12 March 2009.

Mr Douglas was returned to custody on 12 November 2010 after being arrested by the PSNI on 11 November 2010. He was charged with nine offences including possession of an offensive weapon, common assault, possession of controlled drugs and driving unfit through drink or drugs

Cost of Translating Departmental Letters and Documents

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the cost of translating departmental letters and documents into (i) Irish; and (ii) each other language, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20506/11-15)

Mr Ford: The cost to the Department of Justice, since its formation in April 2010, including its Agencies but not its arm's length bodies, of translating departmental letters and documents into Irish and other languages in each of the last two financial years is shown in the table below:

	2010/11	2011/12
Irish	-	£1,321
Arabic	-	£77
Chinese	£1,457	£852
French	£80	-
German	£80	-
Hungarian	£110	£132
Latvian	£509	£51
Lithuanian	£2,157	£397
Polish	£685	£126

	2010/11	2011/12
Portuguese	£426	£102
Romanian	£408	£69
Russian	£193	£337
Slovak	£193	£126
Somali	-	£123
Spanish	£144	-
Ukrainian	£80	-

G4S

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to his Department's contract with G4S, to detail (i) the services supplied; (ii) the cost to date; and (iii) the estimated total cost for the duration of the contract.

(AQW 20522/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice currently has two contracts with G4S. The first, Security and Ancillary Services is part of the wider NICS contract and the second, Security and Electronic Tagging is specific to this Department.

The cost to date and estimated total cost for the duration of the contract for these services is detailed below:

	Cost to date	Total Cost
Security and Electronic Tagging	£4.14M	£5.4M
Security and Ancillary Services	£105.9K	£133.4K

Northern Ireland Prison Service: Disciplinary Action

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 19382/11-15, why the Northern Ireland Prison Service is unable to provide the exact number of senior officers who were disciplined.

(AQW 20523/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service is unable to provide the exact number of senior officers who were disciplined as disclosure would be likely to lead to the identification of individuals which would be contrary to the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Northern Ireland Prison Service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether the proposed Professional Standards Unit for the Northern Ireland Prison Service will be in uniformity with HM Prison Service in relation to establishing the Unit to receive, develop and analyse intelligence on wrongdoing in the Service; and whether there will be a telephone service within the Unit to enable staff to report any wrongdoing.

(AQW 20544/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Professional Standards Unit will have access to all relevant information relating to its work. It would be inappropriate for me to comment any further on intelligence related matters.

In terms of reporting wrongdoing, staff will be able to speak directly to the team in the Professional Standards Unit by telephone if they wish. However, there will not be a dedicated anonymous telephone line for this purpose.

Prisoner Costs

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice for a breakdown of costs in the case of Aidan Quinn since his arrest and conviction, including all subsequent appeals.

(AQW 20546/11-15)

Mr Ford: The estimated costs to date are given in the table below:

Cost Type	Estimated Cost £
PSNI ¹	5,793
PPS Prosecution ²	16,266
Defence (Legal Aid Costs) ³	12,249
Court (Judiciary and Staff Costs)	5,570
Facilities (e.g. Courtroom Accommodation)	570
Total	40,448

- 1 The PSNI figure is for additional costs. Other duty associated with this case was pre-detailed duty and no additional costs were incurred.
- 2 This figure represents the PPS costs paid to date in respect of fees for counsel. All costs in relation to individual cases are not identifiable.
- 3 This represents actual cost for Magistrates' Court fees and estimated costs for Crown Court fees provided by the Legal Services Commission. Claims have been received but are still to be assessed in this case.

Legal Aid

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how much has been paid from Legal Aid on very high cost cases, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20548/11-15)

Mr Ford: The total amount of expenditure on legal aid funding for very high cost cases in the past five years is:

- 2007/08 £6.5m
- 2008/09 £17.5m
- 2009/10 £28.4m
- 2010/11 £12.5m
- 2011/12 £6.3m

DOJ: Claims

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how much has been paid to settle claims against his Department, in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 20557/11-15)

Mr Ford: The cost of settling claims against the Department of Justice, since its formation in April 2010, is shown in the table below.

2010/11	2011/12
£774,502	£1,162,662

These costs include the Department's Agencies but not its arm's length bodies. However, they exclude:

- the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service as the cost of settling claims cannot be separated from total legal costs; and
- expenditure on statutory compensation schemes.

Northern Ireland Prison Service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 19324/11-15, why a copy has not yet been placed in the Assembly Library and when this will be available.

(AQW 20561/11-15)

Mr Ford: Due to an administrative error, a copy of the disposal schedule was not placed in the Assembly Library. This has now been rectified.

Northern Ireland Prison Service Vehicles

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail if any Northern Ireland Prison Service vehicles have been deployed during the flag protests and, if so, to detail (i) when and where they were used; and (ii) any precedent for their use.

(AQW 20564/11-15)

Mr Ford: No vehicles have been deployed by the Northern Ireland Prison Service during the flag protests, other than for normal operational requirements.

Northern Ireland Prison Service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) whether the Prison Service, in conjunction with the Civil Service, has issued trawl notices to recruit staff to the Prison Service Professional Standards Unit; (ii) how many staff have been recruited and at what grades; (iii) whether training dates have been confirmed with the PSNI; and (iv) when the unit will be operational.

(AQW 20578/11-15)

Mr Ford: Apart from the Head of the Professional Standards Unit, no staff have been recruited to date. Two investigator posts at Unit Manager and Staff Officer level will be filled by means of Vacancy Bulletins. These Vacancy Bulletins have issued to staff. While the Unit is expected to be established by June 2013, dates have not yet been established for training.

Newry Crown Court

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline why Person A's case was transferred to Newry Crown Court when the offence occurred and was originally heard in the county court division of Fermanagh and Tyrone.

(AQW 20593/11-15)

Mr Ford: Crown Court business may be conducted at any courthouse in Northern Ireland and is not restricted to where an offence was committed.

A recent case was transferred to Newry Crown Court to ensure the same judge could continue to deal with the case.

Northern Ireland Prison Service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 19601/11-15 and given the amount of legislation, policy and guidance available, including the Information Commissioner's office policy guidance issued to Government Departments, to detail (i) why he considers there to be no legislative basis or policy requiring the information to be held; (ii) whether the Northern Ireland Prison Service is making the best use of computer technology with regards to the retention and retrieval of information

and best practice; and (iii) whether senior management of the Northern Ireland Prison Service carries out reviews on staff members absent from work due to illness.

(AQW 20594/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) does hold the information requested however it is not held in a central database. The information is held on individual files to facilitate case management. Holding the information in this way fulfils NIPS' obligations under both employment law and data protection legislation and there is no requirement to hold it in any other format.
- (ii) NIPS is making the best use of computer technology in order to carry out its business needs and to comply with relevant legislation. As at (i) above, it is not possible to anticipate every request for information and it would be disproportionate to attempt to do so.
- (iii) NIPS staff who report sick are managed under the Northern Ireland Civil Service Sickness Absence Policy and management at various levels are involved as appropriate.

Northern Ireland Prison Service Code of Conduct and Discipline

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 19755/11-15, to explain the reason why it is inappropriate to comment on the Code of Conduct and Discipline operating within prison counterparts in Great Britain when he is expending a significant amount in bringing change managers from outside Northern Ireland.

(AQW 20595/11-15)

Mr Ford: I refer the Member to the answers I gave to AQW 19755/11-15 and AQW 18877/11-15. The Northern Ireland Prison Service Code of Conduct and Discipline is not related to the appointment of staff to work on the Change Programme.

Penalties for People who Assault Public Sector Workers

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice whether he has any plans to introduce tougher penalties for people who assault public sector workers in the course of their duties.

(AQW 20625/11-15)

Mr Ford: Assaults against public servants in the course of their duties are particularly reprehensible. In the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 I increased the maximum penalty available in magistrates' courts for common assault from three to six months' imprisonment. Judges can also treat the fact that the victim was providing a public service as an aggravating factor when sentencing. Given the recent increase in the penalty I have no plans at present to change the law further in this area though I do keep these matters under review.

Legal Costs

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in the case of the defendant as heard at Dungannon Magistrates Court on 22 February 2013, to detail (i) all costs, including Legal Aid; and (ii) the circumstances which led to the breach of probation charges and appeals in the lead up to the most recent disposal.

(AQW 20631/11-15)

Mr Ford: Following clarification of the cases referred to, the estimated costs to date are given in the table below:

Cost Type	Estimated Cost £
PSN11	Not Available

Cost Type	Estimated Cost £
PPS Prosecution ²	Not Available
PBNI ²	155
Defence (Legal Aid Costs) ³	2,291
Court (Judiciary and Staff Costs) ⁴	703
Facilities (e.g. Courtroom Accommodation) ⁴	85
Total	3,234

- 1 The PSNI have incurred no additional costs over those associated with detailed duties relating to the investigation.
- 2 The PPS Public Prosecutor dealt with the initial stages of the case and PPS are not able to determine what costs were incurred with regard to this as a percentage of their overall total workload. Probation prosecuted the breach of community based orders.
- 3 This figure provided by the Legal Services Commission represents actual cost for Magistrates' Court fees in respect of two cases and estimated costs in respect of the breach of community based order cases at the Magistrates' Court. No appeal court appearances have yet occurred.
- 4 Figures for NICTS relate only to Magistrates' Court appearances. No appeal court appearances have yet occurred.

There are appeal proceedings in this case in respect of the breach of community based orders. These are still pending before the court and it would not be appropriate to comment further on the circumstances of the case at this time.

Prison Service Internal Investigation

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 19550/11-15, and in terms of his response that the Prisoner Ombudsman may recommend that the Northern Ireland Prison Service considers conducting an internal discipline investigation into a staff member's actions where the outcome of investigation would warrant it, to detail (i) whether he plans to review his answer given that the Minister, the Prisoner Ombudsman and senior management of the Northern Ireland Prison Service may be seen to be prejudging the guilt of a staff member prior to that member being afforded his/her rights of fairness, natural justice and the opportunity to provide an explanation through due process and; (ii) whether in any case during the last five years that staff members have been similarly judged, dismissed from the Northern Ireland Prison Service and had an appeal against dismissal to the NI Civil Service Appeals Board overturned.

(AQW 20634/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) I do not plan to review my answer. The Code of Conduct and Discipline (prison grades) and Discipline chapter of the NICS HR Handbook (non-prison grades) provide for summary dismissal in cases of a very serious nature.
- (ii) There have been fewer than five disciplinary cases within the NIPS during the last five years where a member of staff has been summarily dismissed and the Civil Service Appeal Board has upheld the appeal.

Prison Staff Dismissed

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 19807/11-15, to detail (i) the total number of staff, broken down by gender, that were dismissed for disciplinary offences only under the Code of Conduct and Discipline; (ii) the number that appealed to the Northern Ireland Prison Service;

(iii) the number that included procedural failings by the Northern Ireland Prison Service in the statement of grounds of appeal and; (iv) in respect of the six appeals determined by the Northern Ireland Civil Service Appeals Board, in how many cases did the Board find that both dismissal was unfair and procedures were not followed by the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

(AQW 20636/11-15)

Mr Ford: Since 1 January 2005, 18 staff have been dismissed from the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) for disciplinary reasons. The breakdown by gender is 12 male and six female.

Of the 18 staff dismissed, 13 appealed to NIPS, 11 of whom alleged procedural failings. There were, however, no successful appeals.

Less than five of the six appeals determined by the Civil Service Appeal Board were found to have been unfair and that proper procedures had not been followed. The actual number has been withheld to protect the identity of the individuals concerned as disclosure would be contrary to the Data Protection Act 1998.

National Crime Agency

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice to outline his ongoing attempts to ensure that the National Crime Agency becomes fully operational.

(AQW 20647/11-15)

Mr Ford: Once established later this year, the National Crime Agency (NCA) will be operational in Northern Ireland in non-devolved areas (for example, tackling organised and complex immigration and customs crime). As it stands, the NCA will not have a role in Northern Ireland in the transferred field. That is despite my sustained efforts to secure agreement for its extension to support our organised crime fighting effort. Obviously its devolved role here would need to have been subject to appropriate safeguards.

Departmental officials are now working to manage the transition. The aim is to ensure that Northern Ireland will benefit as much as possible from the NCA, preserving the important operational relationship between the NCA and law enforcement agencies in Northern Ireland, for instance through the continued ability to share information, provide advice and expertise. At the same time officials are chairing a group with representatives from law enforcement agencies and others, to assess and address the gaps created by the inability of NCA to provide support operationally or as a result of the restrictions on its civil recovery activity. There are, for instance, legal and resources issues to consider.

On 13 March 2013 the Crime and Courts Bill was amended in the House of Commons to include a new Schedule (the NCA: Northern Ireland) setting out the provisions which will no longer apply to Northern Ireland and providing a series of order-making powers to legislate for the possible future extension of the NCA in the transferred field, subject to the agreement of the Northern Ireland Assembly. I will continue to advocate that the NCA should become fully operational in Northern Ireland.

National Crime Agency

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice to outline the increased budgetary requirements of the Police Service of Northern Ireland should the National Crime Agency not become fully operational in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 20648/11-15)

Mr Ford: Once established later this year, the National Crime Agency (NCA) will be operational in Northern Ireland in non-devolved areas (for example, tackling organised and complex immigration and customs crime). As it stands, the NCA will not have a role in Northern Ireland in the transferred field. That is despite my sustained efforts to secure agreement for its extension to support our organised crime fighting effort. Obviously its devolved role here would need to have been subject to appropriate safeguards.

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G8 Summit

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice for an estimate of the number of people that would be needed to process criminal activity during the G8 summit 2013.

(AQW 20650/11-15)

Mr Ford: Detailed consideration is being given to the processing of those responsible for any criminal activity during the G8 summit. That work is taking account of a range of scenarios and will require a flexible approach to respond to events. The potential impact falls on a number of organisations and they are engaged in the discussions. It is not possible to estimate the numbers of people needed to process criminal activity separately from other functions.

Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Justice who selected the organisations listed in Section 46 (1) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002.

(AQW 20654/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am unable to answer the question as the list of organisations in section 46 (1) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 was prepared prior to the devolution of policing and justice matters in April 2010.

I can advise that I plan to review the existing list of organisations as detailed in Section 46 (1) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002 with Executive colleagues.

Money Laundering Task Force

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice whether his Department has a dedicated Money Laundering Task Force to determine the strategy for combating organised crime, using such tools as the Proceeds of Crime legislation.

(AQW 20688/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am Chair of the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF) which comprises law enforcement agencies as well as statutory and non-statutory bodies. The Northern Ireland Organised Crime Strategy 2012-2014 outlines a framework for the work of the OCTF partners. This is to ensure that the resources, information and powers of the OCTF partners are used to maximum effect to disrupt and dismantle organised crime gangs, bring them before the courts, prosecute, remove their assets and support those affected by organised crime.

The OCTF has a number of sub groups including one on criminal finance. The remit of this sub group covers money laundering and issues relating to the operation of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 in Northern Ireland. The membership of the group includes representatives from the PSNI, the Serious Organised Crime Agency, the Public Prosecution Service, HM Revenue and Customs and my Department.

Total Capacity of Police Cells

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total capacity of police cells in the Fermanagh area. (AQW 20758/11-15)

Mr Ford: The capacity of police cells in the Fermanagh area is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board.

You may therefore wish to direct your question to the PSNI.

Total Number of Police Cells

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total number of police cells broken down by policing district. (AQW 20759/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number of police cells is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board.

You may therefore wish to direct your question to the PSNI.

G8 Summit

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice what provision he has made for additional police cell capacity in Fermanagh during the G8 summit 2013. (AQW 20760/11-15)

Mr Ford: The provision of additional police cell capacity is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board.

You may therefore wish to direct your question to the PSNI.

Organised Crime Task Force

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Justice whether the Organised Crime Task Force will discuss the possibility of insider information being passed to suspects prior to raids by HM Revenue and Customs as part of Operation Loft. (AQW 21152/11-15)

Mr Ford: The operation in question was led by the authorities in the Republic of Ireland who were supported by agencies in this jurisdiction and therefore, it will be for them to lead the review or debrief exercise as is normal practice. In this context, I understand that the Garda Síochána are arranging a meeting of senior representatives of all the agencies involved to consider all the circumstances.

The operation and attendant publicity was raised at a meeting of the Organised Crime Task Force Stakeholder Group on 20 March.

Department for Regional Development

Translink

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) all outstanding claims against Translink in relation to alleged underpayment of pensions; and (ii) whether he intends to make a statement on the anticipated cost of the claims. (AQW 19762/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): Translink has advised that there is a current legal challenge, which dates back a number of years regarding the historical calculation of a number of Ulsterbus employee pensions. As of yet there is no firm date for a court hearing but Translink, advise that it is scheduled for Court hearing in May 2013.

As this case is currently sub-judice, Translink is not in a position to comment on the detail pertaining to this matter ahead of the High Court hearing.

For the reasons set out above, I do not think it would be appropriate to make a statement on potential costs at this time.

Cycling

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on promoting cycling, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20547/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department through its Travelwise NI initiative has spent approximately £371k over the last five years hosting various sustainable events to encourage people to take up cycling as a realistic transport option. The total costs of the initiatives are set out in the table below:

Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Cycling promotion Expenditure by Travelwise	£10k	£40k	£42k	£123k	£156k

DRD also continues to fund a scheme to enable staff to hire cycles as part of the NICS to Work scheme.

Roads Service has spent approximately £4809k on cycling infrastructure measures over the past five financial years with a view to making traffic conditions more suitable for cyclists. A breakdown of annual costs is shown in the table below:

Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Expenditure on Cycling Measures	£1,056k	£1,360k	£981k	£311k	£1,101k

This includes the provision of 96km of cycle lanes.

Vandalised Road Signs

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he intends to commission a review of vandalised road signs to ensure that replacement signs are restored and put in place in such a way as to deter future vandalism.

(AQW 20555/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In the majority of cases damaged road signs are identified by my Department's Roads Service officials, as part of their routine inspections, and prioritised for replacement or repair, as necessary.

It is an offence under Article 33 of the Road Traffic (NI) Order 1981 for a person to unlawfully and intentionally interfere with or damage a traffic sign and anyone caught defacing road signs will be prosecuted.

In terms of other developments in relation to signs, there are a number of methods that can be used when dealing with vandalism of signs. Signs can be manufactured with an anti-graffiti coating, which helps prevent defacing, or can be made with a composite aluminium/polyethylene backing sheet, which is used to deter theft. When faced with persistent problems in relation to either graffiti or theft, Roads Service engineers have the facility through its current procurement contract to order signs that incorporate these additional countermeasures.

Roads Service officials consider the existing arrangements are adequate and on that basis do not consider there is a need to commission a review into the vandalism of signs at this time.

Road Gritting

Mr Ó hÓisín asked the Minister for Regional Development whether any new types of road grit have been acquired or used during the recent winter period.

(AQW 20596/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: For the purposes of this response, it has been assumed that your question relates to rock salt, which is the primary material used for de-icing the roads during the Winter Service programme.

Roads Service currently sources this rock salt from mines in Carrickfergus, Co Antrim. I can confirm that this material remains the primary material used for de-icing roads and that Roads Service has not acquired, or used, any new types of rock salt for this purpose during the recent winter period.

Donaghadee to Millisle Road Resurfacing

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are plans to resurface the road from Donaghadee to Millisle.

(AQW 20600/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: AQW 20600/11-15

My Department's Roads Service has advised that the road from Donaghadee to Millisle is in a safe condition and does not require resurfacing at this time. Officials will continue to inspect this road periodically and any defects identified will be dealt with on a prioritised basis in accordance with the Roads Service Maintenance Standards.

Roads Service Expenditure on Rural Roads

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the proposed Roads Service expenditure on rural roads in North Down in 2013/14.

(AQW 20618/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As the budget allocation process for 2013/14 is still ongoing, I am unable to confirm what the proposed Roads Service expenditure for the North Down Council area will be.

In general terms, the resources available for road maintenance during the 2013/14 financial year will be distributed to the four Roads Service Divisions on the basis of need, using a range of weighted indicators tailored to each maintenance activity, namely, resurfacing, patching, gully emptying and grass cutting. Officials use these indicators when apportioning budgets across Council areas to ensure, as far as possible, an equitable distribution of available funds across Northern Ireland.

Notwithstanding the above, Roads Service does not maintain financial information on the basis of an urban/rural split and therefore is unable to provide details of its planned spend on rural roads.

Junction Improvement Scheme: Craigtlet Crossroads

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the junction improvement scheme at the Craigtlet crossroads.

(AQW 20623/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As you will be aware, local residents have proposed a number of alternative scheme layouts and I have asked my Department's Roads Service to consider all of the proposals. This work will take into account the relative merits of each option, including the benefits in terms of traffic progression and road safety, as well as cost and the likely impact on the environment.

I can advise that the assessment of these alternative proposals is still ongoing. Whilst it was initially anticipated this study would have been completed by the end of January, additional field and design work was required to assess additional proposals put forward by the local residents during the intervening period.

It is now expected this study will be completed by the end of April 2013 and I can confirm that no decisions relating to the proposed scheme will be taken until the outcome of this study is known.

Budget for Cycling

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the percentage of his Department's budget that will be spend on cycling in 2013/14.

(AQW 20638/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: AQW 20638/11-15

At present 2.7% of the transport revenue expenditure budget (excluding payments to Translink and on roads) is scheduled to be spent on cycling promotion in 2013/14. 4.7% of the relevant capital expenditure budget (Local Transport and Safety Measures) is due to be spent on cycling infrastructure in 2013/14.

Public Paths in Belfast

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail what measures are in place to ensure that public paths in Belfast are kept clean and free from debris.

(AQW 20639/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Article 7 of the Litter (NI) Order 1994, as amended by the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, places a duty on councils in relation to the cleaning of roads.

You may wish to contact Belfast City Council regarding this issue.

Cycling Infrastructure

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the measures that are being taken to ensure that the cycling infrastructure in Belfast is of an equal standard to other cities, such as Bristol.

(AQW 20641/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's is committed to providing safer roads for vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists. This is facilitated by the use of a range of measures, which include road safety engineering and traffic calming, as well as the enhancement of the pedestrian and cycling network.

The main objective is to maximise the return from the resources which my Department has available for cycling provision. In fact, in the 10 year period, including last financial year, my Department has invested almost £9 million in the provision of 230km of cycle lanes.

In the greater Belfast area, Roads Service has provided, on average, over 12 km of cycle lanes and invested over £400,000 in each of the last five years. Last financial year, my Department invested £1.1 million across Northern Ireland for the provision of cycling measures, of which £606,000 was allocated to the greater Belfast area. Roads Service continues to implement, in so far as available resources permit, the outline cycling infrastructure as set out in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2015 (BMTP), details of which can be found in chapter four and viewed online at the following web address: <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/bmtp/reports.htm>.

In addition, proposals in the Belfast Traffic Masterplan, which includes the 'Belfast on the Move' project, also increase the priority for cyclists, pedestrians and public transport. This will provide an additional 2.6km of new bus lanes, which will also accommodate cyclists, 1km of new dedicated cycle

lanes and 20 new controlled pedestrian crossing points. This plan can be viewed at the following web address: http://www.drdni.gov.uk/botm_updated_final_leaflet.pdf.

Beechfield Estate, North Down: Pot Holes

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many potholes have been reported in Beechfield Estate, North Down in the last three years.

(AQW 20658/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has received only one report relating to potholes in the Beechfield Estate in Donaghadee during the last three years.

However, through Roads Service's routine cyclic inspection regime, 105 potholes have been noted and repaired during the same period.

Cannyreagh Road, Donaghadee: Traffic Flow Problems

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how his Department plans to resolve the traffic flow problems on the Cannyreagh Road, Donaghadee.

(AQW 20659/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Roads Service officials have recently carried out an assessment of the Cannyreagh Road and are aware that there may on occasions be traffic progression issues at this location.

I understand that concerns relating to traffic progression and congestion have been raised as far back as 2006, which were largely due to the restricted width and on-street parking patterns, along the nearby Northfield Road, which links the Cannyreagh Road to the Killaughey Road. In response to these concerns, Roads Service carried out technical assessments, surveys and studies to consider widening the entire Northfield Road. Unfortunately, due to prohibitive costs and its relatively low priority in comparison to other similar schemes within the Ards Council area, a scheme has not been included within the Minor Works programme. It should also be noted that due to the injurious affection on the local cricket club, there would be little prospect of securing the additional lands required to progress with a road widening scheme.

However, the adopted 2015 Ards and Down Area Plan includes a section of land between the Newtownards Road and the Cannyreagh Road, which is zoned for housing. One of the key design criteria for the development of this land is that any developer should construct a new distributor road linking the A48 Newtownards Road to the Cannyreagh Road. This major link, if constructed, would undoubtedly help with traffic flows to the local housing estates on the Cannyreagh Road, as it would represent a viable alternative route.

Road Infrastructure in Donaghadee

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much has been spent on the road infrastructure in Donaghadee, in the last three financial years.

(AQW 20660/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Mr Department's Roads Service's budget is allocated on a District Council basis and it does not maintain details of expenditure for individual towns within the Council area.

I would remind the Member that information on completed and proposed road schemes can be found in Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils.

These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address: <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-details.htm?docid=8571>

Chairman of NI Water

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide details of the more than twenty five years senior management experience in the private sector of the Chairman of NI Water, as claimed on the NI Water website.

(AQW 20673/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I understand this summary is referred to on the Northern Ireland Water website. If you are interested in greater detail of the person's experience you may wish to contact the individual directly.

Beechfield Estate, Donaghadee and Millisle, North Down: Road System

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will visit the Beechfield Estate, Donaghadee and Millisle, North Down to see at first hand the road system.

(AQW 20678/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would welcome the opportunity to visit these locations and discuss any roads related issues the Member may have.

Flood Protection Barriers

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will consider a pilot project to purchase flood protection barriers for external doors on properties in the Glens of Antrim, and in particular Cushendall, which are affected by regular flooding.

(AQW 20690/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Following a flooding event in October 2012, the flooding agencies, Roads Service, Rivers Agency and Northern Ireland Water (NIW) investigated and identified measures to improve resilience to flooding in Cushendall. My Department's Roads Service agreed to implement measures including the provision of additional road drainage on Layde Road to prevent surface water flowing down to Shore Street. In addition, and following negotiations with local landowners, Roads Service also agreed to provide a catchment and outfall for drainage to deal with water at the bottom of a private laneway. These works are now almost complete. The success of these measures will be closely monitored.

NIW has advised that the new proposed overflow pipe from Mill Street to the River Dall would add little benefit and is not now to be undertaken. However, it confirms it is looking at a storm separation project to extend the storm sewers on Mill Street and High Street. Modelling assessment of the combined sewer is also being undertaken.

As part of the implementation of the EU Floods Directive, the provision of property level flood protection measures has been under consideration. The PEDU report into the flooding, which occurred on 27 and 28 June 2012, highlighted this issue and recommended this work is completed and incorporated into a comprehensive strategy for consideration by the Executive. I understand the scoping work is at an advance stage and the findings are due to be discussed with Ministers shortly.

Door-2-Door Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what measures will be taken to ensure that there is no drop in the quality of the service in the Door-2-Door scheme when the current contract expires.

(AQW 20720/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I refer to my statement to the House. There will be no cut to the budget for the delivery of services under the interim arrangement planned and it would be my expectation that the quality of services will be improved and maintained.

Donaghadee Bus Station

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development what provision will be made for people who rely on the Donaghadee Bus Station.

(AQW 20753/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer to the answer to AQW 20752/11-15.

Coleraine to Derry Train Timetable

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development in relation to the proposed Coleraine to Derry train timetable (i) to detail the departure time of trains from Coleraine to Derry; and (ii) if the timetable properly accommodates commuters who work in Coleraine and finish at approximately 5.00pm.

(AQW 20776/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that trains from Belfast to Coleraine will connect onward to Londonderry at 07:43, 08:43 and at 2-hour intervals thereafter until 22:43 (07:43, 08:43, 10:43, 12:43, 14:43, 16:43, 18:43, 20:43, 22:43). No train service will operate from Coleraine from 17:00 to 17:30 however on weekdays Translink will operate Express bus services around these times, i.e. 17:30 ex Coleraine, arriving in Londonderry at 18:35. In addition, Translink are operating flexible ticketing arrangements on the relevant bus and rail services, where rail services will accept appropriate bus tickets and bus services will accept appropriate rail tickets.

Due to the single line nature of track between Coleraine-Castlerock and Londonderry only one train is permitted to operate at any time between Castlerock-Londonderry-Castlerock. It is not possible to delay the 16:43 train from Coleraine to Londonderry without implications for the 17:33 departing Londonderry and subsequent timetabling problems and delays on the 18:19 train from Coleraine to Belfast. However on completion of the Coleraine/Londonderry line upgrade, which includes the installation of a passing loop, an hourly frequency can be achieved. It is anticipated that Phase II should be completed during 2015.

Bus Station

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what assessment is made of user numbers is carried out when deciding whether a bus station should remain open.

(AQW 20811/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Decisions regarding the closure of bus stations are an operational matter for Translink but normally do require local consultation where possible. Translink has advised that user numbers form one part of the rationale for retention or otherwise of any Translink facility.

Other factors which may be considered include: financial implications, service delivery and customer needs (including the suitability of alternative boarding/alighting locations),

safety/security, environmental (compliance with relevant legislation), alignment/fit with Translink's Business Plan and with Regional Development Strategy/Regional Transportation Strategy, and stakeholder expectations.

This list is not exhaustive and the weighting of any given aspect will depend entirely on the nature and location of the facility under consideration.

Bus Station

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the factors, other than user numbers, considered when assessing whether a bus station should remain open and what weight is given to each of these factors.

(AQW 20815/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer you to the answer given to AQW 20811/11-15.

Roads Infrastructure in Millisle

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much has been spent on roads infrastructure in Millisle, in the last three financial years.

(AQW 20826/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service budget is allocated on a District Council basis and it does not maintain details of expenditure for individual towns within the Council area.

Information on completed and proposed road schemes can be found in Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils.

These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following address. <http://www.drndni.gov.uk/index/publications-details.htm?docid=8571>

Footpaths in Millisle

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much has been spent on footpath infrastructure in Millisle, over the last three financial years.

(AQW 20827/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to the answer I provided to AQW 20826/11-15.

Temporary Speed Limits at Roadworks

Mr Ross asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the discussions that Roads Service has had with the PSNI on the introduction of reduced or temporary speed limits in areas where roadworks are due to begin.

(AQW 20889/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Reduced speed limits are often used during roadworks to assist in providing a safe work environment to protect both the contractor's work force and the travelling public. Guidance on the circumstances when a reduced speed limit may be required and the degree of the reduction is contained within Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual.

Representatives from the PSNI Road Policing Unit are usually in attendance during discussions relating to reduced speed limits at proposed street and road works. In addition, written confirmation is required from the PSNI before a Temporary Traffic Regulation for a temporary speed limit is processed.

DRD: Postage

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on postage, in the last three financial years.

(AQW 20920/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In the last three years my Department has spent the following amounts on postage:

Year	Spend (£000's)
2009/10	196
2010/11	197
2011/12	176

Sewers in North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development which sewers in the North Down constituency will be adopted in the next six months.

(AQW 21021/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that since the adoption process for sewerage systems is developer driven, it is unable to identify or predict which sewers in the North Down constituency will be adopted in the next six months.

NIW continues to work with my Department's Roads Service to take forward several enforcement actions involving the adoption of sewers in developments, but it can take time to liaise with developer's successors and assignees, identify options, agree solutions and arrange for completion of the work required to bring sewerage systems to an adoptable standard. For these reasons it is difficult to provide a timescale for this work or to predict if sewers will be adopted within the next six months. Inspections are on-going at several development sites which may eventually result in a number of sewer adoptions within the North Down constituency.

Sewage Problems at Castlemara Drive, Carrickfergus

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the sewage problems at Castlemara Drive, Carrickfergus.

(AQW 21159/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that in January this year it undertook an investigation of the sewerage system in the Castlemara Drive area and no obvious problems or defects were found.

However in response to a further report last weekend, NIW cleared a blockage in the public sewer and although it is now operating normally, a possible defect was identified and further investigations will be undertaken within the next week to resolve this issue.

Belfast on the Move

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the second phase of Belfast on the Move.

(AQO 3663/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The second phase of Belfast on the Move works began on 28 January. The works are progressing well, in line with my Department's programme. Carriageway widening and lane alterations have been completed on College Avenue and College Square East. The new road layouts, including a new southbound bus lane, will be introduced following resurfacing which is due to take place in the next few weeks.

Today is a good opportunity for me to make people aware of these impending changes and to remind motorists to take extra care in the initial weeks of the new road layouts.

Initial works are progressing on Grosvenor Road and Great Victoria Street through to Wellington Place. The new road layouts, including a new northbound bus lane on Great Victoria Street through to Wellington Place, will be introduced following resurfacing which is due to be completed in early April.

After Easter work will commence on Wellington Place, Donegall Square North, Donegall Square East and Chichester Street. The phase 2 works are scheduled to be completed in June of this year.

Cycle Lanes

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans Roads Service has to develop a network of segregated cycle lanes.

(AQO 3664/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service provides cycle lanes in Northern Ireland through its programme of Local Transport and Safety Measures, in accordance with the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) and the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP). These transport plans build on the Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy and recognise that cycling is an ideal form of transport for short journeys.

For example, it has worked in conjunction with Sustrans, Northern Ireland Cycling Initiative and other interested stakeholders, to provide 2.12 kms of physical segregated cycle lane within the Belfast Metropolitan area, and other stretches such as the 11 kilometre section on the Comber Greenway. It has also invested over £9.4m over the last 10 years, to provide approximately 220 kms of cycle paths, that are shared between pedestrians and public transport.

Although it is recognised that dedicated and segregated cycle paths are more desirable for cyclists, complete physical segregation is not always possible or practicable in many situations. Unfortunately, there are many roads where there is simply not enough space to provide segregated cycle lanes without removing a general traffic running lane, which would precipitate a further increase in congestion and journey times. This is the primary reason why Roads Service officials are frequently unable to provide more extensive, dedicated and continuous cycle facilities, despite their best efforts.

Roads Service will, however, continue to consider segregated measures taking account of the local circumstances and the overall level of funding available for cycling measures.

Roads: Surface Dressing

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development how much has been spent on surface dressing roads in the last five years.

(AQO 3665/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Surface dressing comprises the laying of a thin film of bitumen upon which stone chippings are spread and is just one of a number of structural maintenance activities used to maintain the integrity of the road structure. It is an essential element of the overall structural maintenance programme and is seen as a good value planned maintenance activity.

Expenditure by my Department's Roads Service in respect of the surfacing dressing of roads in the last five financial years is as follows:

- 2007/08 - £8.7million;
- 2008/09 - £7.4million;
- 2009/10 - £9.4million;
- 2010/11 - £9.1million; and in
- 2011/12 - £11.1million
- (Final outturn figures for 2012/13 are not yet available)

In total, this equates to a total spend of some £45.7million over the last five financial years, which represents a significant investment by my Department in the road network across Northern Ireland and also provides a vital boost to the local construction industry.

Roads: North Antrim

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Regional Development what targets have been set for making progress on unadopted roads across North Antrim.

(AQO 3666/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has an annual target to reduce the backlog number of unadopted Private Street Sites across Northern Ireland by 240 each year. This currently equates to 60 for each of the four Roads Service Divisions. There is no specific target for North Antrim but the overall target of 60 for Northern Division, which covers eight Council areas, has been met this financial year.

Gransha Road Roundabout, Bangor

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on producing proposals to improve road safety at the Gransha Road roundabout, Bangor.

(AQO 3667/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As I advised the Member, in my response to his recent similar Assembly Question, AQW 20421/11-15, regarding road safety at the Gransha Road roundabout, my Department's Roads Service will be commissioning consultants to carry out a feasibility study on the provision of a controlled pedestrian crossing facility at this location.

In the interim, as discussed with the Member, other public representatives and Council officials during a site meeting on 20 February 2013, Roads Service has cut-back overgrowth at the junction of the Old Gransha Road with the East Circular Road to improve drivers' sightlines.

Railways: Belfast-Dublin Enterprise

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the rolling stock of the Enterprise Train sets.

(AQO 3668/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that Enterprise carriages are now in their 16th year of service. To date they have had two mechanical overhauls (brake equipment and wheel sets) and one refurbishment programme comprising replacement of interior seat upholstery and carpeting, as well as repainting of external bodywork. They are now approaching the need for a mid-life overhaul.

NI Railways are currently in consultation with service partners Irish Rail to agree the scope, timing and funding arrangements for this programme of work. Subject to budgets an overhaul programme will begin in 2013/14 with the first phase of this expected to cost £1.2m.

Public Transport: Segregated Communities

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will conduct an examination of the costs involved in providing public transport within the context of segregated communities.

(AQO 3669/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Public transport services in Northern Ireland are organised taking account of settlement and travel patterns. They are operated by Translink on a commercial basis and are not planned in a segregated way. Furthermore, expenditure per head on public transport in Northern Ireland is broadly in line with that in the other United Kingdom devolved regions.

As a consequence, there is no evidence of additional costs which would merit further examination by my Department.

Translink: Passenger Numbers

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Regional Development how passenger numbers for Translink in 2013 to date compare to the same period last year.

(AQO 3670/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink passenger journeys for the first 2 periods of 2013 (January and February) are up by 11,456 journeys when compared to the same period last year, (11,787,107 journeys this year compared to 11,775,651 in 2012).

Year on year Translink passenger journeys remain encouraging with 70.3 million journeys in this financial year so far compared to just over 69 million for the same period in 2011/12, a welcome increase of over 1 million journeys. This increase is not only in concessionary fare passengers, but also in fare paying passengers.

Translink has been involved in a number of promotions in support of the Backin' Belfast campaign including the Metro love Saturdays £2 day ticket, the Goldline 1/3 off day return on selected routes and free park & ride services in February. In addition, with the re-opening of the Londonderry to Coleraine railway line later this month and my recent announcement of extra funding for the Translink bus fleet replacement programme it is hoped that the trend of increased use of public transport will continue.

A37 Limavady to Coleraine

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the A37 Limavady to Coleraine road is on the schedule for resurfacing due to its rapidly deteriorating surface condition.

(AQO 3671/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Resurfacing works on the trunk road network are assessed on a Northern Ireland wide basis, using a range of information, including data from specialist road test machinery, to identify the schemes with the highest priority which are to be included in the trunk road resurfacing programme. As other schemes were considered to be of higher priority, the A37 Broad Road was not included within the 2013/14 works programme. However, this scheme will remain under consideration, along with others across Northern Ireland, for potential inclusion in future works programmes.

My Department's Roads Service will continue to inspect the carriageway and repair any actionable defects on a prioritised basis, in accordance with established maintenance standards.

Department for Social Development

Homelessness

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Social Development how many people are registered as homeless; and what steps his Department is taking to address this problem.

(AQW 20125/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): In the current financial year the Housing Executive has received 16,072 homeless applications. Of these 8,060 (50%) households have been accepted as meeting the statutory homelessness criteria. In 2,300 of the cases accepted as homeless the homelessness duty has been discharged. In other words the applicant has been re-housed or has refused reasonable offers of re-housing.

In May 2012 the Housing Executive launched its strategy to tackle homelessness in Northern Ireland. The new Homelessness Strategy for Northern Ireland 2012 – 2017 aims to eliminate long term homelessness and rough sleeping across Northern Ireland by 2020. The new integrated approach includes a range of initiatives from support services to prevent homelessness to the introduction of a province-wide private rented sector access scheme.

As regards the definition of homelessness it is important to remember the legislative context as to how it is defined. The statutory definition of homelessness and threatened homelessness is at Article 3 of the Housing (NI) Order 1988 (as amended) and reads as follows:

- 3 (1) A person is homeless if he has no accommodation available for his occupation in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.
- (2) A person shall be treated as having no accommodation if there is no accommodation which he, together with any other person who normally resides with him as a member of his family or in circumstances in which it is reasonable for that person to reside with him
- (a) is entitled to occupy by virtue of an interest in it or by virtue of an order of a court, or
- (b) has an expressed or implied licence to occupy, or
- (c) occupies as a residence by virtue of any enactment or rule of law giving him the right to remain in occupation or restricting the right of another person to recover possession.

- (3) A person shall not be treated as having accommodation unless it is accommodation which it would be reasonable for him to continue to occupy.
- (4) Regard may be had in determining whether it would be reasonable for a person to continue to occupy accommodation, to the general circumstances prevailing in relation to housing in Northern Ireland.
- (5) A person is also homeless if he has accommodation but –
- he cannot secure entry to it, or
 - it is probable that occupation of it will lead to violence from some other person residing in it or to threats of violence from some other person residing in it and likely to carry out the threats, or
 - it consists of a movable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is no place where he is entitled or permitted to place it and to reside in it.
- (6) A person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely that he will become homeless within 28 days from the day on which he gives written notice to the Executive that he is threatened with homelessness.

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Cost of Translating Departmental Letters and Documents

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the cost of translating departmental letters and documents into (i) Irish; and (ii) each other language, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20454/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Information is not available broken down into the categories requested. However the information that is available has been provided in the table below.

	(i) Costs for translation into Irish	(ii) Costs for translation into other languages	*Other Translation Costs
2007-08	Nil	£65.00	£23.50
2008-09	Nil	Nil	£163.75
2009-10	Nil	£46.00	£310.93
2010-11	£40.00	£1066.21	£6,930.76
2011-12	£42.00	£105.48	£1,843.31

* It has not been possible to break these other translation costs down further.

Independent Living Fund

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development when he will publish his response to the consultation on the Independent Living Fund.

(AQW 20527/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The consultation on the Independent Living Fund was conducted by Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) on a UK wide basis.

DWP published its response to this consultation on 18 December 2012, confirming that the ILF will close in 2015 with funding being devolved to Local Authorities in England and to the Devolved

Administrations. The announcement also made clear that it would be for the Assembly in Northern Ireland to decide how current ILF users would be supported from April 2015.

The Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety will be responsible for the support of current ILF users from April 2015.

Bedroom Tax

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development who will be responsible for the eviction of a person who cannot meet their housing costs following the introduction of the bedroom tax; and whether people faced with eviction as a consequence of the bedroom tax will be entitled to legal aid.

(AQW 20530/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The introduction of the bedroom tax will not change landlord and tenant law. Landlords will remain responsible for the collection of rent which will include collecting any arrears that may accrue as a result of the under-occupation charge.

The Housing Executive adopts an incremental approach to rent arrears which includes a series of warning letters, personal contact and the offer of independent specialist money advice. In some instances arrears are deducted from ongoing benefit entitlement where tenants do not enter into a voluntary agreement to repay arrears.

Housing Associations are working with government, the Housing Executive and tenants to help minimise and mitigate the impact of the bedroom tax. The Associations are committed to doing all they can to avoid an increase in evictions as a result of the benefit changes, such as through debt and money advice programmes.

My priority remains doing all I can to prevent evictions and tenants being declared homeless and I have asked social landlords to ensure that, as far as is possible, all options are explored to prevent social tenants from being evicted from their homes.

Advice and assistance on housing options will also be given to tenants, which will include details of how they can find accommodation which meets their household requirements.

With regard to legal aid, the granting of Civil Legal Aid is determined by the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission and is usually subject to a financial eligibility test and may require the applicant to pay some contribution.

New Social Houses

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of new social houses (i) built; and (ii) purchased by housing associations, in each of the last five financial years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 20584/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has detailed in the attached table the new social houses (i) built; and (ii) purchased by housing associations, in each of the last five financial years, and the current year 2012/13 broken down by constituency.

Parliamentary Constituency	2007/08		2008/09		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13 (year to date)	
	Built	Purchased	Built	Purchased	Built	Purchased	Built	Purchased	Built	Purchased	Built	Purchased
East Antrim		6	18	2	36		6		34			
North Antrim		3	5	5	53	4	16		68			47
South Antrim		1	4	1	5		133			56	18	

Parliamentary Constituency	2007/08		2008/09		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13 (year to date)	
	Built	Purchased	Built	Purchased	Built	Purchased	Built	Purchased	Built	Purchased	Built	Purchased
Upper Bann	7	20	25	32	42	79	61	56	3	15		
East Belfast	198	22	8	57	53	4	115	14	76	6		4
North Belfast	194	127	196	55	108	46	277	45	92	9	36	
South Belfast	53	53	12	2	70	62	248	58	95	22		
West Belfast	131	80	8	19	305	13	124	42	151	43	30	
North Down	72	7	71	20	111		10	15	50			
South Down	14	10	17	19	49	26	176	43	42	13	9	
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	23	41		30	83	89	83	21	56	12	14	
Foyle	31	110	94	66	141	56	214	48	137	74	6	11
Lagan Valley	96	42	48	131	13	26	230	25	56	59		3
East Londonderry	11	5		2		43	6	5	38	2		
Mid Ulster	3	4		1		73	30	35	18	4		
Newry & Armagh	29	34	16	70	44	7	86	55	53	45	88	2
Strangford	100	26	70	9	170	14	83	30	57	18	2	1
West Tyrone	20	22	22	1	12	1	27	1		6		
Total	982	613	614	522	1295	543	1925	493	1026	384	203	68
	1595		1136		1838		2418		1410		271	

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One Bedroom Properties

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many one bedroom properties there are in North Down.

(AQW 20586/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not routinely collate information on the basis of Parliamentary Constituency. However, they advise that they currently have 498 one bed properties within their Bangor District Office area.

Information from Housing Associations advises that they have a total of 73 one bed properties in their stock across the North Down Constituency. Two Housing Associations do not collate their stock by Parliamentary Constituency and therefore their information included in this figure refers to the North Down District Council area.

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Housing Executive Transfers

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive transfers with regions outside Northern Ireland have been arranged, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 20587/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive advises that there have been no transfers with regions outside Northern Ireland in each of the last five years. They advise that, under Rule 71 of the Housing Selection Scheme, a transfer only takes place when a tenant moves from one dwelling to another either within the Landlord's own stock or to a dwelling belonging to another Participating Landlord. As the Housing Selection Scheme Rules do not extend outside Northern Ireland, it is not possible for a tenant to transfer to another social housing provider outside Northern Ireland.

However, Rule 71 allows further provision for Direct Applications where a person living outside Northern Ireland can apply for social housing in Northern Ireland and, subject to them being eligible under the Rules of the Selection Scheme, be assessed and placed on the Waiting List.

Tenants who live in social housing in Northern Ireland and who want to move outside Northern Ireland would have to apply directly to the relevant council area or social housing provider. Their application would be subject to the eligibility criteria used by that provider in order to determine if they would accept the application.

Boiler Replacement Scheme

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the average time taken by the administration team on the Boiler Replacement Scheme to respond to initial letters of application from customers.

(AQW 20611/11-15)

Mr McCausland: To date the Housing Executive has issued more than 27,000 application forms for the Boiler replacement Scheme. As at the 8th March it is taking just over 6 days to issue an application form in response to an initial contact.

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Boiler Replacement Scheme

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the average time taken by the administration team on the Boiler Replacement Scheme to issue letters of approval.

(AQW 20612/11-15)

Mr McCausland: To date the Housing Executive has issued 6,170 approvals to commence boiler replacements works. As at the 8th March it is taking on average 11 days to issue an approval once the applicant has submitted all the necessary documents.

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Grants for Housing Adaptations

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of grants for housing adaptations that were (i) applied for; (ii) approved; and (iii) completed, in each of the last three years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 20626/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not routinely collate data by Parliamentary Constituency. However, the tables below detail the position regarding Disabled Facilities Grants by District Council Area, for each of the last three years: -

TABLE 1: DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS APPLICATIONS:

Council Area	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Antrim	47	37	45
Ards	123	85	83
Armagh	76	65	74
Ballymena	84	69	69
Ballymoney	29	38	35
Banbridge	48	45	31
Belfast	264	308	240
Carrickfergus	49	45	53
Castlereagh	95	73	76
Coleraine	61	55	68
Cookstown	79	58	52
Craigavon	145	95	95
Londonderry	185	137	139
Down	131	86	85
Dungannon	104	78	80
Fermanagh	136	116	81
Larne	38	32	34
Limavady	39	37	47
Lisburn	106	116	109
Magherafelt	55	58	40
Moyle	14	16	18
Newtownabbey	109	153	127
Newry & Mourne	232	121	94
North Down	103	66	85
Omagh	59	67	66
Strabane	78	75	78
Total	2,489	2,131	2,004

TABLE 2: DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS APPROVALS:

Council Area	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Antrim	22	19	18
Ards	53	32	54
Armagh	61	31	43
Ballymena	39	27	27

Council Area	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Ballymoney	26	13	17
Banbridge	27	22	23
Belfast	168	192	183
Carrickfergus	25	24	36
Castlereagh	30	25	31
Coleraine	34	34	27
Cookstown	58	42	44
Craigavon	90	62	79
Londonderry	136	73	110
Down	69	58	36
Dungannon	73	47	60
Fermanagh	106	58	91
Larne	35	14	23
Limavady	40	26	24
Lisburn	94	66	66
Magherafelt	53	26	37
Moyle	13	10	12
Newtownabbey	83	56	77
Newry & Mourne	151	105	79
North Down	68	23	33
Omagh	60	31	44
Strabane	61	27	63
Total	1,675	1,143	1,337

TABLE 3: DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS COMPLETED:

Council Area	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Antrim	40	28	23
Ards	58	39	38
Armagh	67	43	24
Ballymena	35	46	39
Ballymoney	26	31	14
Banbridge	22	21	30
Belfast	201	231	196
Carrickfergus	34	25	32

Council Area	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Castlereagh	33	39	18
Coleraine	32	54	33
Cookstown	57	60	42
Craigavon	113	66	67
Londonderry	152	123	82
Down	67	59	48
Dungannon	70	52	44
Fermanagh	108	78	69
Larne	36	32	12
Limavady	41	48	36
Lisburn	93	83	53
Magherafelt	47	36	35
Moyle	15	16	24
Newtownabbey	103	76	66
Newry & Mourne	155	105	94
North Down	58	47	27
Omagh	62	52	42
Strabane	76	57	43
Total	1,801	1,547	1,231

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Double Glazing Window Replacement Schemes

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the Housing Executive's planned double glazing window replacement schemes, including the start dates, for the next three years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 20676/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not routinely collate data by Parliamentary Constituency. However, the table below provides details of the Housing Executive's anticipated double glazing schemes by their District Office areas and, in line with the Programme for Government target, it is planned that this will be completed by 2015. However, as the new Low Rise Double Glazing contract has not yet been awarded it is not possible to provide start dates for individual schemes at this stage.

District Office Area	No of dwellings
North Belfast	1,280
South Belfast	2,683
East Belfast	350

District Office Area	No of dwellings
West Belfast	897
Shankill	252
Antrim	711
Ballymena	308
Ballymoney	104
Carrickfergus	546
Coleraine	300
Larne	303
Newtownabbey	387
Armagh	157
Banbridge	511
Dungannon	126
Fermanagh	623
Lurgan/Brownlow	1,180
Newry	150
Portadown	368
Bangor	142
Castlereagh	507
Downpatrick	647
Lisburn Antrim Street	452
Lisburn Dairy Farm	88
Newtownards	86
Collon Terrace	806
Limavady	266
Magherafelt	77
Omagh	77
Waterside	24
Total	14,408

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Window Replacement Schemes: Donegall Pass, South Belfast

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the reasons for the changes to the start dates for the window replacement scheme in Donegall Pass, south Belfast.

(AQW 20677/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive advises that it had originally programmed the double glazing scheme in Donegall Pass for March 2013. However, this timetable has been amended to allow for a new procurement for double glazing, which is now being advertised with an expected on site date of Autumn 2013. The scheme for Donegall Pass is likely to start after that date.

Warm Home Discount in England, Scotland and Wales

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the Warm Home Discount in England, Scotland and Wales; and whether he plans to introduce a similar discount for pensioners who are in receipt of Guaranteed Pension Credit, and not Savings Credit.

(AQW 20707/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Warm Home Discount Scheme is a four-year scheme operating in Great Britain which commenced in April 2011 and is scheduled to run to March 2015. The purpose of the scheme is to help low-income and vulnerable households with energy costs. The Scheme requires participating energy suppliers to give a rebate on their electricity bill to a specified group of their older customers on low incomes. The UK Government informs suppliers which households to support through sharing limited data between the Department for Work and Pensions and the energy suppliers.

The Warm Homes Discount Scheme is covered by legislation which does not apply in Northern Ireland. The introduction of such a scheme is akin to a social tariff as energy companies in Northern Ireland would almost certainly be entitled to pass the cost of such a scheme on to other customers (as they are in Great Britain). As such, the full implications of introducing such a scheme in Northern Ireland would need to be endorsed by the Northern Ireland Executive. Aside from requiring legislation, careful consideration would also have to be given to the proportion of customers to benefit from such a scheme and which customers would pay more as a result. There may also be issues around administration costs and data protection that would need to be explored.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has consulted on an Energy Bill which includes discussion on an energy efficiency obligation. Any decision about an energy efficiency obligation for suppliers in Northern Ireland will be a matter for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Housing Benefit Fraud

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development how many people in each constituency have been convicted of housing benefit fraud in each of the last three years.

(AQW 20743/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Social Security Agency cannot provide separate information in relation to individuals convicted solely of housing benefit fraud. However, it does hold details of the overall number of individuals convicted of benefit fraud by constituency in each of the last three years and this information is provided in the table below. Information is available for the 2011/2012 year showing how many of the individuals convicted in that year had an overpayment in respect of housing benefit. This information is not available for earlier years.

Constituency	Financial Year			Convictions which included a Housing Benefit overpayment in 2011/2012 year
	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	
Belfast East	31	21	24	12
Belfast North	78	100	77	26
Belfast South	34	39	41	16

Constituency	Financial Year			Convictions which included a Housing Benefit overpayment in 2011/2012 year
	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	
Belfast West	87	93	86	29
East Antrim	18	22	15	10
East Londonderry	12	16	23	10
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	11	16	14	3
Foyle	27	40	49	23
Lagan Valley	12	20	25	6
Mid Ulster	17	16	8	6
Newry And Armagh	21	28	17	8
North Antrim	20	22	11	6
North Down	5	8	17	8
South Antrim	6	23	17	9
South Down	11	12	26	6
Strangford	6	5	8	6
Upper Bann	22	27	42	17
West Tyrone	21	19	10	6
(Blank)*	16	15	9	1
Total	455	542	519	208

* These particular cases cannot be attributed to one particular constituency

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Housing Benefit Fraud

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the cost of housing benefit fraud in each of the last three years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 20744/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The most recently published information for the estimated cost of Housing Benefit fraud is set out in the table below. The estimated levels of benefit fraud are shown in terms of losses and also expressed as a percentage of benefit expenditure.

Housing Benefit: - estimated cost of Benefit Fraud

2009			2010			2011		
Benefit Expend £m	Estimated Benefit Fraud £m	Estimated Benefit Fraud %	Benefit Expend £m	Estimated Benefit Fraud £m	Estimated Benefit Fraud %	Benefit Expend £m	Estimated Benefit Fraud £m	Estimated Benefit Fraud %
£538.5	£5.0	0.9	£606.8	£1.7	0.3	£598.5	£3.2	0.5

The figures above are set out in calendar years; figures for 2012 are currently not available. Benefit Fraud figures are derived from statistical estimates and recorded at a Northern Ireland level. The figures are therefore not available at constituency level.

Benefit Fraud Hotline

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of telephone calls received by the Benefit Fraud Hotline which related to housing benefit fraud in each of the last three years. **(AQW 20745/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: The Social Security Agency is unable to provide a breakdown of the number of calls specifically involving Housing Benefit. However, the table below sets out the overall number of calls received to the Benefit Fraud Hotline in each of the last three years. These figures include calls where the allegation was solely in respect of Housing Benefit or a combination of Housing Benefit and another benefit(s).

Financial Year	Number of calls
2009-10	1,751
2010-11	2,302
2011-12	2,464

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Employment Support Allowance

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development how many people in each constituency had their Employment Support Allowance application disallowed in each of the last twelve months. **(AQW 20750/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: The information requested is not available by parliamentary constituency due to system limitations. The table below details the total number of Employment Support Allowance claims that have had a Work Capability Assessment disallowance in the last twelve months:

Month	WCA Disallowance
March 2012	1,213
April 2012	1,191
May 2012	1,991
June 2012	1,135
July 2012	1,283
August 2012	1,622

Month	WCA Disallowance
September 2012	807
October 2012	980
November 2012	935
December 2012	749
January 2013	1,246
February 2013	1,432
Total	14,584

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Employment Support Allowance

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development how many people in each constituency have appealed an Employment Support Allowance refusal in each of the last 12 months.

(AQW 20751/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information requested is not available by parliamentary constituency. The table below details the total number of Employment and Support Allowance appeals received in each of the last 12 months. This figure includes appeals from claimants who have applied for Employment and Support Allowance, and from those claimants previously in receipt of Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support (paid on grounds of incapacity for work) who have appealed following the reassessment process determining eligibility for Employment and Support Allowance.

Month	Appeals received
March 2012	1256
April 2012	1357
May 2012	1515
June 2012	1523
July 2012	1555
August 2012	2538
September 2012	2079
October 2012	1961
November 2012	1658
December 2012	918
January 2013	1306
February 2013	1287
Total	18953

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Caravans Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department is responsible for enforcing the Caravans Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

(AQW 20780/11-15)

Mr McCausland: No. My Department is responsible for the policy underpinning Parts 1 and 3 of The Caravan Act which deal specifically with the rights of a resident living in a caravan as their main home. My Department is also responsible for the monitoring of the effectiveness of the legislation in relation to the residential sector and has a legislative requirement to review the implied terms as laid down in Parts 1 and 2 of the Schedule to the Act within a five year period.

The Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment is responsible for the policy behind Part 2 of the Caravan Act which deals with the holiday sector.

The site owner or resident can agree to the use of an arbitrator where they cannot settle a dispute or to take court action via the county court.

Where there is evidence that the resident is being harassed or threatened with illegal eviction, a resident can approach the local Council which may instigate court proceedings against a site owner. The county court can impose fines and/or jail terms if it is proven that the site owner is guilty of such an offence.

Caravans Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development whether any owners of caravan sites have been prosecuted for breaches of the Caravans Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

(AQW 20781/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Since the Caravans Act came into effect on the 16 September 2011 no site owner has faced prosecution proceedings in relation to either harassment or illegal eviction.

Prosecution under the Act is principally a matter between the site owner, the resident and the local council.

My Department will continue to monitor the impact of Parts 1 and 3 of the Act.

Boiler Replacement Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many applications have been received for the Boiler Replacement Scheme in the last twelve months.

(AQW 20782/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Boiler Replacement Scheme has been operational since September 2012 and as of the 8th March 2013, 12,533 application forms have been received.

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Caravans Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the range of penalties that can be imposed on the owners of caravan sites for breaches of the Caravans Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

(AQW 20783/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Where there is evidence that the resident is being harassed or threatened with illegal eviction they can approach a district council which may instigate court proceedings against a site owner. The county court can impose fines and/or jail terms if it is proven that the site owner is guilty of such an offence. Specific provisions are set out in Sections 12, 13 and 14 of the Act.

Warm Homes Scheme

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have applied to the Warm Homes Scheme in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 20784/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There have been a total of 138,489 enquiries made to the Warm Homes Scheme managers from its inception on 1st July 2009 to 31st January 2013. This is broken down as follows:

- 2009/10 38,636 enquiries
- 2010/11 35,820 enquiries
- 2011/12 36,111 enquiries
- 2012/13 27,922 enquiries (at 31/01/13)

All enquiries are treated as applications by the Warm Homes Scheme managers.

Boiler Replacement Scheme

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development how much has been paid out on Boiler Replacement Scheme grants since the commencement of the new scheme.

(AQW 20788/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The amount of money paid out is not a true reflection of the progress of the scheme to date. To date the following figures are relevant to the Boiler replacement Scheme;

- Formal approvals to commence work issued 6,170. Approximate value of these approvals £4.32m
- Number of completions to date is 2,223, approximate value of these completions is £1.56m.
- Actual payments made to date 1,387, value of these payments £971k.

You need to be aware that between the completion of the works and payment being made, the householder needs to submit relevant documents including confirmation of Building Control Approval for the completed work.

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Housing Benefit or Pension Credit

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development, in circumstances in which a child turns 19, and their parent is in receipt of Housing Benefit or Pension Credit, whether that young person is then classed as a non-dependant; and what effect this has on the parent's benefits.

(AQW 20796/11-15)

Mr McCausland: For Housing Benefit purposes a non-dependant is someone who normally resides with the claimant on a non-commercial basis and typical examples include adult sons and daughters.

The assumption is made that non-dependants will contribute to the claimant's rent and/or rates and this contribution is known as the non-dependant deduction as it is deducted from the eligible rent in the calculation of maximum Housing Benefit.

Having a non-dependant in the house has no effect on the amount of Pension Credit payable unless the claimant is entitled to the severe disability premium addition. If there is a non-dependant in the house then the severe disability premium is no longer appropriate and the Pension Credit would be reassessed.

Winter Fuel Allowance

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Social Development when this year's winter fuel allowance will be paid to pensioners.

(AQW 20804/11-15)

Mr McCausland: A Winter Fuel Payment is paid to eligible claimants each winter to provide help with fuel bills. Payments commenced on the 3 November 2012 and continued through to the 18 November 2012, crediting to claimants accounts by 27 November 2012. The specific payment dates are determined by the benefit the claimant is entitled to.

For the small number of claimants applying for the payment for the first time, and who made their claim before the 21 September 2012, payments were made during the period the 17 November 2012 to the 9 December 2012. For applications received after the 21 September 2012 and before the closing date of the 31 March 2013, payments will be issued during the period the 9 February to the 2 May 2013.

Housing Association Complaints

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of complaints received about each Housing Association, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 20866/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department does not hold the information requested. Each Registered Housing Association is required to have a formal complaints procedure in place whereby tenants, and others, can have their concerns about the Association investigated. If, however, they are not satisfied with the outcome of this they can then ask the Northern Ireland Ombudsman to investigate.

Homeswapper.co.uk Website

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development what action his Department has taken to promote the use of the homeswapper.co.uk website.

(AQW 20914/11-15)

Mr McCausland: At my request both the Housing Executive and the Housing Association movement have brought forward detailed action plans providing a range of support measures to mitigate and support those households affected by welfare reforms. Homeswapper is one of these and is being used to help current tenants to access properties more suitable to their needs. Details of the Homeswapper scheme are included on the Housing Executive's website and the Housing Executive also promotes Homeswapper regularly through other social media such as Facebook and Twitter. There are currently 173 tenants registered, 59 logged onto the website this week and over 1,500 people have read news stories about Homeswapper this month.

The Housing Executive's staff in its local offices has been trained and they are promoting the scheme locally with posters and leaflets. In addition, Homeswapper has been widely promoted in print and broadcast media, with plans to publicise it in the Housing Executive's magazine which will issue to tenants in the coming weeks.

The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) advises that it has been working closely with its members and the Housing Executive to ensure that all Housing Associations participate in the Homeswapper pilot which should increase mobility across the social sector in Northern Ireland, especially among tenants affected by the under occupation size criteria.

NIFHA has supplied the Housing Executive with details of a named lead responsible for implementing this online portal in each Association and who have been trained in its use. They have also produced a leaflet about the changes to housing benefit which highlights the likely impacts for tenants and offers advice on the options available to them. The leaflet recommends that tenants get in touch with their Association about transferring to a smaller home and Homeswapper would be one of the available options for achieving this. They add that recent discussions with their member Associations indicates that a number of tenants have already registered on the system.

Development of Woodvale Park

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Social Development what progress is being made on the development of Woodvale Park; and what is the estimated completion date.

(AQW 20930/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Work commenced on the redevelopment of Woodvale Park in June 2012. The work is being completed by contractors Clive Richardson Limited under contract from Belfast City Council. The expected completion date is June 2013 with the park re-opening in early summer.

Grant-Aided Energy Efficiency Schemes

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development what grant-aided energy efficiency schemes are available to homeowners who are not in receipt of benefits.

(AQW 20933/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Boiler Replacement Scheme, which is administered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, is open to owner occupiers with a gross household income of less than £40,000 per year who have an inefficient boiler of at least 15 years old. A grant of up to £1,000 depending on household gross income is available to assist in replacing an inefficient boiler for a more energy efficient condensing oil or gas boiler, switching from oil to gas, or switching to a wood pellet boiler. The amount of grant payable will depend on total gross income. For those earning less than £20,000 the grant is £700 to replace the boiler but will rise to £1,000 grant if controls are also being installed or switching from oil to gas. For those earning £20,000 but less than £40,000 the grant is £400 for the boiler but will rise to £500 if controls are installed or switching from oil to gas. Householders who receive benefits can also apply to the Boiler Replacement Scheme.

The Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) is an annual energy saving programme that concentrates on energy efficiency and to a small extent some renewables. Energy Savings Trust evaluates proposals from bidders for schemes and makes recommendations to the Utility Regulator for approval. The 2013-14 NISEP, due to commence on 1st April 2013, will provide £6,542,226 in funding for priority energy efficiency schemes to help householders on low-incomes who are not eligible for the Department's Warm Homes Scheme. None of the NISEP schemes use 'in receipt of benefits' as a qualifying criteria. Since 2002, due to the high levels of fuel poverty, 80% of the NISEP funding has been directed towards vulnerable customers.

Under Occupancy Penalties

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development whether he will make exemptions for under occupancy penalties similar to those proposed in the rest of the UK; and whether this will have an impact on the level of resources available for Discretionary Housing Payments.

(AQW 21040/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I welcome Iain Duncan Smith's Written Ministerial Statement of 12 March 2013.

You will be aware that I have already expressed my own concerns as to how this particular measure might be implemented here in Northern Ireland. However, the 'parity' principle effectively dictates that an individual in Northern Ireland should receive the same level of social security benefit, subject to the same conditions as an individual elsewhere in GB and on that basis I would envisage that where exemptions are available elsewhere in the UK households in Northern Ireland would similarly be able to avail of such exemptions.

I have not yet had time to fully consider the detail of Iain Duncan Smith's proposals in respect of exemptions as to how they might impact here in Northern Ireland. I am conscious however that because of the potential difficulties this under occupancy measure could have here, that the additional resources for Discretionary Housing Payments previously announced will be a major factor in ensuring that the provisions could be implemented here. In my ongoing discussions on Welfare Reform with Lord Freud among others, I will be seeking to ensure that there are sufficient Discretionary Housing Payments available.

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