

# Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

**Friday 20 September 2013**

**Volume 87, No WA3**



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

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

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# Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 20 September 2013

## Written Answers to Questions

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

#### European Funding

**Ms Ruane** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what his Department is doing to encourage greater draw-down of European funding from funding streams that are currently being underutilised.

**(AQO 3490/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister):** We have set a specific Programme for Government target to increase our drawdown of competitive EU Funding by 20% over the four-year period 2011-15. Departments have each been charged with delivering an increase in funding, and progress is being monitored by the Budget Review Group and the Programme for Government monitoring team. We are on track to meet the 20% target.

Four Barroso Task Force Desk Officers, based in the Executive's Brussels Office, are working with departments to identify and encourage drawdown from a broader range of sources, including new programmes such as Horizon 2020 and the Connecting Europe Facility, and to further utilise funding programmes in which we are already successful.

Junior Minister Bell and Junior Minister McCann, as co-chairs of the Barroso Task Force Working Group (BTWG), continue to co-ordinate and monitor engagement in European funding streams. BTWG has developed and published the Executive's European Priorities, which outline departmental objectives to increase engagement in European policies, networks and funding programmes.

#### Economic Package

**Mr Dunne** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on any potential economic package.

**(AQO 4066/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** We met with the Prime Minister, David Cameron, on 26 March 2013 to discuss the devolution of Corporation Tax powers to the Executive. He said at the meeting that no decision on this issue will be made until Autumn 2014. We expressed our disappointment and agreed to adjourn the meeting to allow officials to explore how, if a positive decision was made, this could be given legislative effect before the end of the current parliament.

Since our meeting with the Prime Minister, we received correspondence from the Secretary of State detailing some proposed economic measures for the local economy. The economic package 'Building a Prosperous and United Community' was announced on 14 June 2013, and was ratified by the Executive on 27 June 2013.

## Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

### Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the average length of time taken by the Veterinary Sciences Division of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute to provide a report of its findings on the death of a wild bird.

**(AQW 25153/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development):** The average turnaround time for a first report on the post-mortem of wild birds during the financial year 2012/13 was two days.

### Cattle and Sheep Theft

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail how many (i) cattle; and (ii) sheep have been (a) stolen; or (b) reported missing, in each constituency, in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 25160/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Information on (a) stolen or (b) animals reported missing is kept on the Department's database the Animal and Public Health Information System (APHIS). APHIS does not differentiate between missing or stolen animals. These two categories are recorded collectively on APHIS (Table 1).

APHIS does not keep information by constituency.

We are currently developing a system for the recording of stolen or sheep reported missing. Table 1 provides the number of cattle reported as missing or stolen over the last three years by Divisional Veterinary Office area.

Divisional Veterinary Office	No. Cattle Reported Missing or Stolen		
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Armagh	497	342	389
Ballymena	142	192	143
Coleraine	169	196	210
Dungannon	788	506	625
Enniskillen	294	312	296
Londonderry	194	160	242
Mallusk	105	135	56
Newry	294	429	406
Newtownards	276	157	240
Omagh	311	378	407
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,070</b>	<b>2,807</b>	<b>3,014</b>
	<b>Total for all 3 years</b>		<b>8,891</b>

### Flood Risk Management Plans

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the development of flood risk management plans.

**(AQW 25186/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Management of flood risk is determined by the EU Directive (2007/60/EC), commonly known as the Floods Directive. To date my Department, in its role as Competent Authority, completed the preliminary flood risk assessment in 2011. Information from this work then enabled the significant flood risk areas to be determined. Currently, detailed flood hazard and risk maps are being developed for these areas, which are to be prepared by 22nd December 2013. The maps will provide detail on the nature and extent of flooding from different sources within each settlement and this information will be included in the Flood Risk Management Plans to be drafted. To inform the plans, Local Flood Forums have been established for each river basin district. Statutory Agencies, Community Leaders and Elected Representatives with an interest in flood risk management are members of these forums. The plans are to be in draft by December 2014 and finalised a year later. The enclosed leaflet describes how the Floods Directive is being implemented and highlights the key delivery stages and milestones (a copy of the leaflet has been placed in the Assembly library).

### **Flood Risk Management Plans**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to list the areas in Ballymoney that have been identified for further investigation as a result of the development of flood risk management plans.

**(AQW 25187/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The attached map shows the areas in Ballymoney which are subject to further study, as part of the implementation of the EU Floods Directive. Detailed flood hazard and risk maps for these areas are to be prepared by 22nd December 2013. The development of the Flood Risk Management Plan for the Neagh Bann River Basin District, which includes Ballymoney, has also commenced and it will be in draft by December 2014 and finalised a year later.

### **Rural Development Schemes**

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she is aware of unspent budgets in any rural development schemes, and if so, will surplus funds be transferred to other projects in rural areas to avoid underspend.

**(AQW 25227/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I am aware that the remaining unspent funds within the Rural Development Programme are allocated against projected expenditure to the end of the Programme. My officials will continue to monitor the programme expenditure and make any further adjustments, which are permitted within the programme rules, to ensure the drawdown of funds is maximised.

### **Derelict and Dilapidated Properties in Villages**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what assistance her Department can provide to deal with derelict and dilapidated properties in villages.

**(AQW 25281/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Measure 3.5 of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme, village Renewal and Development, funded by my Department, aims to support, encourage and enable residents of villages and surrounding areas to create a vision and an integrated action plan to ensure the full potential of the area is achieved. Flowing from these action plans are integrated village initiatives which may be supported by my Department or where appropriate, referred to another relevant Department.

Projects which could be supported by my Department include the establishment or upgrade of community facilities, tourism projects, creation of or expansion of small businesses and rural heritage initiatives.

Derelict and dilapidated properties in villages, where part of any of the above projects could be supported under the village Renewal measure.

## Programme for Government Commitments

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the progress made on each of her Department's Programme for Government commitments.

**(AQW 25288/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Progress on the delivery of Programme for Government commitments is closely monitored in accordance with the published programme arrangements and delivery framework and includes scrutiny by Departments, the Delivery Oversight Group and by the PfG Programme Board.

The latest available information on progress against Programme for Government Commitments can be accessed at: <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/work-of-the-executive/pfg-budget-economic-strategy/pfg/strategic-online-report-2011-2015.htm>

## Price of Farm Produce

**Mr McClarty** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she plans to introduce legislation to protect the price of farm produce in the open market.

**(AQW 25305/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I firmly believe that farmers should receive a fair price for their produce. As all links in the food chain are dependent on each other it is reasonable that all should share in the rewards. However, the price farmers receive for their produce is a commercial matter and it is not, therefore, within my remit to introduce legislation to determine prices for farm produce.

It is recognised that for a number of years there have been problems in the supply chain. As a first step to help address the situation, the Competition Commission introduced a new strengthened and extended Groceries Supply Code of Practice. As this action was only part of the solution, the British Government recently introduced legislation establishing a Grocery Code Adjudicator. I welcome this legislation and can advise that, in view of the importance of this matter for our producers and processors, I and the DETI Minister wrote to the British Government supporting this legislation and underscoring the need for an adjudicator with real power.

The Adjudicator has now been appointed and I plan to meet with her later this month when I will relay to her, on behalf of our industry, their concerns about how the food chain operates and highlight the problems being faced by our producers and processors. Whilst the Adjudicator's role is not to determine a fair price, her influence on preventing unfair practices should help safeguard the interests of producers and others in the food chain. My aim is to see a food industry where both farmers and other suppliers, who together make a very important contribution to the local economy, are getting a fair deal.

## Price of Farm Produce

**Mr McClarty** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she plans to work with her counterparts in other parts of the UK and Ireland to protect the price of farmed produce by introducing a minimum price based on the cost of production and margin of inflation linked to their produce.

**(AQW 25306/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I refer the Member to my answer to AQW 25305/11-15. The establishment of a pricing structure for farm produce is a commercial matter and outside my remit.

## People Employed by Recruitment Agencies

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of people employed by recruitment agencies in (i) her Department; and (ii) arms-length bodies, as of 1 April (a) 2011; (b) 2012; and (c) 2013.

**(AQW 25308/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The numbers of people employed by recruitment agencies used by my Department and its arms-length bodies as of April 2011, April 2012 and April 2013 are detailed below.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Agency staff</b>
<b>(i) In her Department</b>	
1 April 2011	25
1 April 2012	23
1 April 2013	26
<b>(ii) Arms-length bodies</b>	
1 April 2011	18
1 April 2012	37
1 April 2013	72

### **Veterinary Sciences Division**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether staff from the Veterinary Sciences Division who were transferred to the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute in April 2006, are to be compensated under the equal pay settlement for the period 2003-2006, and if not, why not.

**(AQW 25339/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I am very much aware of this issue and would assure you that both my Department and AFBI have sought legal advice to establish the full extent of our potential liability in respect of the equal pay settlement and have acted in strict accordance with that advice.

This confirms that AFBI's potential liability in respect of backdated equal pay is limited to the period 1 April 2006 (when AFBI was created) to 31 January 2009 (after which, pay scales were re-aligned). All eligible AFBI staff have been paid accordingly.

The legal advice received by my Department further confirmed that the time available in which to challenge the Department's potential liability in respect of the period before 1 April 2006 under the Equal Pay Act (NI) has expired.

I have considered this matter at some length and as I must act in accordance with legal advice received, no AFBI staff will receive compensation from DARD under the equal pay settlement for the period 2003-2006.

### **Oyster Farmers that use Carlingford Lough**

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if she will take action to compensate oyster farmers that use Carlingford Lough and have had their stocks destroyed by a combination of unusually warm weather and a virus, on similar lines to the assistance afforded to sheep farmers during the period of heavy snowfall at Easter and livestock farmers who received assistance to import fodder last spring.

**(AQW 25382/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** There are no measures available for compensation or restocking through DARD or under European funding.

This is not an unusual circumstance and there is a high likelihood of repeated mortalities in future years. Both DARD and producers are aware of the risks in farming Pacific oysters that may carry the OsHV1 virus and that are being farmed in affected waters.

However, DARD has assisted industry through the European Fisheries Fund for a project taken forward by CBAIT, the Cross-Border Aquaculture Initiative Team, in conjunction with Pacific oyster farmers. The project "Advance Through Disease Control", aims to compile baseline data for the Pacific oyster industry and investigate possible farming techniques to try to limit risk of spread of OshV1- $\mu$ var.

DARD officials met with affected Pacific oyster farmers on 2nd September and discussed possible areas eligible for funding. DARD has contacted Seafish who will liaise with the Cross Border Aquaculture Initiative Team in taking forward possible applications to assist the Pacific oyster sector.

## Departmental Headquarters

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the individuals and organisations that responded to the consultation on

the proposal to her departmental Headquarters to Ballykelly.

### (AQW 25403/11-15)

**Mrs O'Neill:** The following individuals and organisations responded to the Equality Impact Assessment on the proposal to relocate the departmental headquarters to Ballykelly:

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| ■ Alderman George Robinson, MLA              | ■ Gregory Campbell, MP, MLA           |
| ■ Aquaculture Initiative                     | ■ Joe Byrne, MLA & Patsy Kelly, MLA   |
| ■ Autism NI                                  | ■ Lagan Rural Partnership             |
| ■ British Veterinary Association             | ■ Livestock and Meat Commission       |
| ■ Committee on the Administration of Justice | ■ Marine Management Organisation      |
| ■ Councillor Alan Robinson                   | ■ NI Grain Trade Association          |
| ■ Councillor David Gilmour                   | ■ NI Judicial Appointments Commission |
| ■ Councillor James McCorkell                 | ■ Omagh District Council              |
| ■ Councillor Mark Fielding                   | ■ SDLP                                |
| ■ DARD Disability Forum                      | ■ Strabane District Council           |
| ■ Disability Action                          | ■ The Law Society                     |
| ■ Equality Commission                        | ■ Ulster Farmers Union                |

## Forest Service

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the total number of (i) industrial; and (ii) non-industrial staff employed by the Forest Service in each of the last ten years; and to outline the reason for change.

### (AQW 25405/11-15)

**Mrs O'Neill:** The details of the total number of (i) industrial; and (ii) non-industrial staff employed by the Forest Service in each of the last ten years are detailed at Annex A.

The main reason for a reduction in Forest Service staff numbers over this period was the need to improve efficiency. This was achieved by:-

- (a) Implementing NICS-wide systems for e-HR and e-financial management, so that fewer administrative centres were needed to pay industrial wages, to procure goods and services, and to manage forest operations;
- (b) increased use of standing sales of timber, where the customer is in control of all aspects of tree harvesting;

- (c) natural wastage, typically through age retirement, and replacing capacity through advancements in industry mechanisation and increased use of contracted services for operations including site preparation and tree planting;
- (d) involvement in the recreational management of forests by operational partners including local government.

## ANNEX A

### AQW 25405 11-15

To ask the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the total number of (i) industrial; and (ii) non-industrial staff employed by the Forest Service in each of the last ten years; and to outline the reason for change.

Date	Headcount (non-Industrial)	Headcount (Industrial)
April 2013	91	125
April 2012	95	128
April 2011	97	136
April 2010	94	135
April 2009	103	140
April 2008	104	147
April 2007	112	162
April 2006	122	179
April 2005	130	201
April 2004	132	198

### Forest Service Headquarters

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the relocation of the Forest Service Headquarters to Enniskillen.

**(AQW 25407/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** My officials are preparing an economic appraisal that will identify a preferred location for my consideration.

Forest Service relocation should be accomplished before June 2015.

### Forest Service Headquarters

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the approximate number of jobs which will be relocated to the proposed new Forest Service Headquarters in Enniskillen.

**(AQW 25409/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Forest Service has identified approximately 60 Headquarters posts for relocation to Co. Fermanagh excluding arrangements for the recently announced incorporation of Plant Health responsibilities within the Forest Service.

### Rivers Agency Headquarters

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the relocation of the Rivers Agency Headquarters.

**(AQW 25410/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I announced my intention to relocate the Rivers Agency to Loughry College on Thursday 16th May 2013. DFP's Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) is currently carrying out an assessment of the various options available to accommodate the Rivers Agency Headquarters at the Loughry Campus. A report from CPD is expected by end of September.

In addition, an Equality Impact Assessment is underway and when complete a full EQIA report on relocation will be produced.

I expect that this relocation will be completed by June 2015.

### **Relocation of Departmental Headquarters**

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the relocation of her departmental Headquarters.

**(AQW 25412/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The work to identify, cost and analyse the options to accommodate our headquarters on the Ballykelly site is now complete. That work was informed by input from the accommodation options study produced by DFP's Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), an Equality Impact Assessment and a number of staff surveys involving not only the staff in my Department but the staff across the whole of the NICS.

The outcomes of this work have been incorporated into a business case which is currently being quality assured and I expect this aspect of the process to be completed by the end of October.

### **Staff Suspensions**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the (i) number of departmental staff that have been suspended on full pay; and (ii) the duration of the suspension in each case.

**(AQW 25443/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Two members of staff are currently suspended on full pay. The duration as at 13 September 2013 is eleven months (officer 1) and two months (officer 2). Bovine Tuberculosis

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail any instances where beef from cattle infected with Bovine Tuberculosis has entered the food chain.

**(AQW 25452/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** All animals entering the human food chain are subject to a rigorous public health examination.

This public health inspection is required throughout all of Europe under EU legislation, and is performed in the North of Ireland by DARD Veterinary Service meat inspection staff on behalf of the Food Standards Agency (FSA).

Beef from cattle infected with Bovine TB can enter the food chain here and everywhere in the European Union, but only after a more thorough post mortem examination carried out by government Meat Inspectors. Where this inspection reveals any lesions caused by TB in more than one organ or region of a carcass, the whole carcass and offal are declared unfit for human consumption and destroyed, because this indicates more generalised infection. When a localised TB lesion has been found in the lymph nodes of only one organ or part of the carcass, that organ or part of the carcass and the associated lymph nodes are removed and destroyed. The remaining carcass is considered safe to enter the food chain.

In the light of recent public discussion of this issue, the Food Standards Agency has re-examined the risk to human health from meat originating from TB reactors and other possibly infected animals, and confirmed that they are content with this approach. Further details are provided on the Food Standards Agency and DARD websites.

## Bovine Tuberculosis

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the mechanisms in place to ensure that beef from cattle infected with Bovine Tuberculosis does not enter the food chain. **(AQW 25453/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Beef from cattle infected with Bovine TB can enter the food chain here and everywhere in the European Union, but only after a thorough post mortem examination by government Meat Inspectors who inspect animals before slaughter and the carcasses afterwards for visible TB lesions.

In the light of recent media articles around this issue, the Food Standards Agency has re-examined the risk to human health from TB reactors and other possibly infected animals. The FSA has confirmed that they are content that beef from TB reactor animals presents a very low risk to public health. There is no documented evidence of humans acquiring TB from eating beef.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has also looked at the risks and concluded that the risk of transmission of *M. bovis* to humans through eating meat is 'negligible', because the bacteria is not usually found in the meat, even in infected cattle.

In cases where routine public health examination detects visible lesions of TB in the lymph glands of any animals that have not reacted to a TB skin test, these are then treated in exactly the same way as if they were reactors.

Further details are provided on the Food Standards Agency and DARD websites.

## Central Investigation Service

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 25282/11-15, whether it was due to the advice by the Central Investigation Service to the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), that "SEUPB subsequently referred the auditor's report to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to take forward an investigation". **(AQW 25473/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** It would be for the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) to confirm the extent to which the Central Investigation Service advice led to their decision to refer the auditor's report to the Police Service of NI (PSNI) to take forward an investigation.

## Investigation Taken Forward by the Special EU Programmes Body

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 25282/11-15, to outline the resultant outcome of the investigation taken forward by the Special EU Programmes Body. **(AQW 25474/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The outcome of the Police Service of NI (PSNI) investigation was reported to the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and not to my Department. I am not, therefore, in a position to outline the outcome of the investigation taken forward by SEUPB.

## Badger Sett Surveys

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail, in each of the two survey areas earmarked for the badger sett surveys in County Down, what percentage of the total land area is covered by those who (i) responded yes; (ii) responded no; (iii) did not respond; and (iv) where applications were returned as undeliverable. **(AQW 25475/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** For the Banbridge area, the percentage of the total land area eligible for surveying which is covered by the various groups is detailed in the table below.

Local Farmer / Landowner Response	Percentage of land area eligible for surveying *
Responded Yes	74.1%
Responded No	11%
Did Not Respond	14.3%
Returned Undeliverable	0.4%

For the Castlewellan area, the percentage of the total land area eligible for surveying which is covered by the various groups is detailed in the table below.

Local Farmer / Landowner Response	Percentage of land area eligible for surveying *
Responded Yes	61.4%
Responded No	7.2%
Did Not Respond	30.7%
Returned Undeliverable	0.57%

### Angling in the Foyle River System

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the number of people that are employed as full time bailiffs to patrol the Foyle river system; and (ii) the number of fines which have been issued in the last twelve months as a result of illegal angling or breaches of an angling licence in this area.

**(AQW 25612/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:**

- (i) The description and term bailiff is no longer used and may be considered misleading. Staff carrying out a range of scientific, development and enforcement functions across fin fisheries and aquaculture, including shellfisheries, are referred to as Fishery Officers.

The Loughs Agency has the following staff employed as Fishery Officers in the Foyle system; 13 Fishery Officers supervised by 4 Fishery Inspectors, covering the Foyle catchment and Lough Foyle.

- (ii) The Loughs Agency relies on the courts for sanctions on those who breach the Regulations. There were a total of 31 fines imposed by the courts in the last 12 months, for the following offences:
- 18 Angling offences
  - 3 Pollution offences
  - 1 oyster offence
  - 9 illegal netting offences

## Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

### Trial Biking

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what facilities exist for trial biking; and if she plans to improve the facilities.

**(AQW 25340/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** I am not aware of any permanent facilities that currently exist for trial biking in the north of Ireland. That said, I understand that trial biking is

prohibited in many of the north's 'open spaces' and, as a result, competitions take place on temporary facilities constructed on private land.

Neither my Department, nor Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, have received any requests to improve facilities, or indeed, provide facilities for the sport.

## Department of Education

### Catholic Maintained, Controlled, Integrated and Irish Language Sectors

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 24819/11-15, for a breakdown of the figures in each council area.

**(AQW 25263/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education):** The Education and Library Boards have advised that the number of pupils in each council area not admitted to their first preference primary school is as set out in the tables below:

#### BELFAST EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARD

District Council Area	Controlled	Catholic Maintained	Grant Maintained Integrated	Controlled Integrated	Irish Medium
East Belfast	68	7			
North Belfast	23	11	5		
South Belfast	39	50	4	2	
West Belfast	20	4			

#### WESTERN EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARD

District Council Area	Controlled	Catholic Maintained	Grant Maintained Integrated	Controlled Integrated	Irish Medium
Derry City	1	10	1		
Fermanagh	4	3			
Limavady		1			
Omagh		4			1
Strabane	7				

#### NORTH EASTERN EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARD

District Council Area	Controlled	Catholic Maintained	Grant Maintained Integrated	Controlled Integrated	Irish Medium
Antrim	15				
Ballymena	2				
Ballymoney	6				

District Council Area	Controlled	Catholic Maintained	Grant Maintained Integrated	Controlled Integrated	Irish Medium
Carrickfergus	8	9			
Coleraine	8	2			
Magherafelt	3	11			
Newtownabbey	51	3			

#### SOUTH EASTERN EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARD

District Council Area	Controlled	Catholic Maintained	Grant Maintained Integrated	Controlled Integrated	Irish Medium
Ards	34				
Castlereagh	15	25	5		
Down		17	4	5	
Lisburn	48	52	5		2
North Down	77	14		17	

#### SOUTHERN EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARD

District Council Area	Controlled	Catholic Maintained	Grant Maintained Integrated	Controlled Integrated	Irish Medium
Armagh	10	2			
Banbridge	8	15	18		
Cookstown			4		
Craigavon	38	13			
Dungannon	9	5			
Newry & Mourne		30			

**Note:** admissions to schools is a fluid situation, therefore, figures may differ slightly from those provided in answer to previously asked questions.

#### Free School Meals

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the educational benefits associated with the provision of free school meals.

**(AQW 25283/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Research indicates that nutrition has a key influence on cognitive development and academic performance in children and adolescents and that poor diet is detrimental to children's learning, concentration and behaviour, in addition to its wider health impacts.

Evaluations of the free school meal pilot initiative undertaken in three local authorities in England between 2009 to 2011, Kingston Upon Hull's "Eat Well, Do Well" initiative in 2008 and the "Feed Me Better" campaign by Jamie Oliver in 2004/05 highlight the improvements in concentration, behaviour

and in some cases in educational attainment which were achieved as a result of the provision of healthy school food, including free school meals.

The school meal can contribute to around one third of a child's daily food intake. For children and young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, who are more likely to be at greater risk of having a poor diet, free school meals can make a vitally important contribution to their nutritional requirements.

I consider that the provision of healthy free school meals is necessary to address the particular challenges that these children face in accessing and participating fully in school life, in improving their learning outcomes and ultimately lifetime opportunities. This also contributes to the statutory target, which falls on each Department, to take action to eradicate child poverty here by 2020 and to the wider Programme for Government Commitment to tackle disadvantage.

Consequently, I indicated in June my intention to apply the same eligibility criteria for free school meals for both primary and post-primary pupils from September 2014. This means that post-primary pupils from the lowest income families will be supported with access to free school meals in the same way as primary pupils. It is estimated that this will benefit 15,000 children.

## Project Board

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the establishment of the Project Board to agree a service level agreement between the Education and Skills Authority and the Central Procurement Directorate, including the membership of the Project Board and the number of meetings held to date.

**(AQW 25284/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The first meeting of the Project Board, constituted for the purpose of establishing a service level agreement between the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) and the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) to enable the latter to act as ESA's Centre of Procurement Expertise for the procurement of supplies and services, will take place in October 2013.

Members of ESA Implementation Team will act as Senior Reporting Officer and Project Manager. Membership of the Project Board will include representation from the Department of Education, CPD, the Education and Library Boards (both an ELB Chief Executive and an ELB Procurement Officer) and Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

## School Holidays

**Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of Education how he plans to achieve standardisation of school holidays across all primary and secondary education sectors.

**(AQW 25342/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Chief Executives' Working Group on the harmonisation of services consists of representatives from all Education and Library Boards, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Council for Integrated Education and the Governing Bodies Association. It is responsible for co-ordinating non-operational days for school transport and catering services for the purpose of achieving efficiencies. Therefore, school holidays are aligned with the agreed days of non-operation of transport and catering.

In December 2012, the Department asked the Association of Chief Executives to explore the possibility for better co-ordination of school days and opening and closing times in a bid to further reduce transport costs. The Association concluded that there is as much harmonisation of school days as possible at the present time.

The flexibility in place regarding staff training and school development days allows schools to use these days in the most appropriate way to accommodate their school management and training requirements. It would not be possible to align training days as specialist training providers are limited in number and could not service all schools on the same dates.

## New School Builds

**Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the priority new school builds (i) Gaelscoil Uí Dhocartaigh; and (ii) Strabane Academy.

**(AQW 25348/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** In my statement to the Assembly on 22 January 2013 I announced a programme of 22 new build projects that would advance in planning. My officials are working with the relevant school authorities to bring these projects forward as swiftly as possible with an initial focus on confirming the enrolment / class base at each school with the planning and managing authorities

Gaelscoil Uí Dhocartaigh and Strabane Academy were included in my January 2013 announcement and both at an early stage of the planning process.

The draft Economic Appraisal for Strabane Academy is currently being examined by my Department and the Economic Appraisal for Gaelscoil Uí Dhocartaigh is currently being drafted by the School's consultants.

It is my intention that these projects will be taken through to construction. However, authorisation to proceed with construction will be based on the level of capital funding available at that time and all necessary approvals being obtained.

## Transport to School for Pupils

**Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Education what consideration is given to the effect that a change in the method of transport to school will have on children, especially those with special needs, when tendering for new transporters and when making a decision on any change of transport to school.

**(AQW 25378/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Pupils with a statement of special educational needs are assessed by Health Care Professionals to identify whether they require a particular form of transport to school. If a specific form of transport is recommended, the Education and Library Boards are responsible for making the appropriate provision which can range from a specialised Board bus to a taxi or other contract service. For other pupils with a statement of special educational needs, the appropriate transport provision can be a standard Board bus service or, in certain circumstances, a Translink service.

In terms of the consideration given to the impact on children with special educational needs when tendering for operators to carry out school runs, the Education and Library Boards have assured me that each pupil's individual circumstances are taken into account and that, in some instances, where indicated on a pupil's statement that they have particular specialist needs and requirements, continuity may be maintained year on year.

## Pre-school Enrolment Process

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education to list the schools which were oversubscribed at stage 1 of the pre-school enrolment process in each of the last three years, broken down by (i) Education and Library Board; and (ii) constituency.

**(AQW 25395/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Information on the location of pre-school settings is not held in the format requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Education and Library Boards are, however, able to provide information broken down by District Council.

I will arrange for a list of those settings which had filled all of their allocation of funded places by the end of Stage 1 of the pre-school admissions process for 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14, broken down by Education and Library Board and District Council, to be placed in the Assembly Library.

The pre-school admissions process is preference based: therefore children not offered a place by their 1st preference setting may be offered a place in another setting listed by their parents as a preference on their application.

By the end of stage 1 of the 2013/14 pre-school admissions process over 95% of children had been offered a place in a preferred setting and, overall, sufficient funded places remained available to meet the needs of those who had not been placed. By the end of stage 2 of the process 99.9% of those children whose parents remained with the process received an offer of a place for their child.

### **Early Years Funding**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 24633/11-15, when he will publish the outcome of his review of Early Years funding.

**(AQW 25396/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** As advised in previous correspondence, I am currently reviewing this funding and its delivery to ensure that it aligns with DE's current aims and objectives. I will set out the way forward in due course.

### **Travel to St Joseph's High School Autism Unit**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Education, in relation to children who qualify for Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) funded taxi travel to St Joseph's High School Autism Unit, Coalisland, (i) for his assessment of the concerns raised by parents and staff over children arriving late for school, and late back home after school, due to multiple pick-ups and drop-offs, thus interfering with the child's existing challenges and necessary routines symptomatic of autism; and (ii) what action will he take to address this issue particularly in respect of a lack of co-operation from the relevant department of the SELB.

**(AQW 25427/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) have advised me that their Transport Officer was contacted by a parent on 5th September with concerns regarding journey times and late arrivals at St Joseph's College, Coalisland. The parent was advised that it would take several days for new arrangements to be put in place. Similar concerns were raised on 9th September by the teacher in charge of the Learning Support Centre at the school.

The SELB responded to these concerns by arranging for two taxis to provide this service with effect from 10th September. I understand that the Transport Officer contacted the teacher in charge of the Learning Support Unit on 10th September and she confirmed that she was satisfied with the new arrangements.

In this case, the Board provided alternative transport arrangements within three working days of the initial contact from the concerned parent which resolved the matter. I am therefore content that no further action is required.

### **Ben Robinson Case**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education what action he proposes to take as a result of the findings by the coroner in the Ben Robinson case.

**(AQW 25439/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I have now received a copy of the Coroner's report into the tragic death of Ben Robinson following injuries sustained during a school rugby match in 2011.

In considering the Coroner's report, I intend to seek professional advice and will also liaise with my colleague, the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, who has responsibility for sport in the north of Ireland. These consultations, based on the findings in the Coroner's report as to the reason for Ben's death, will determine what, if any, specific guidance the Department should provide for schools.

The Department of Education does support schools in meeting their responsibilities regarding the health and safety of their pupils and has, for a number of years, provided all schools with a copy of the 'Association for Physical Education's Safe Practice in PE and Sport publication'. Schools are expected to adhere to this guidance when pupils are involved in curricular PE or extra-curricular provision.

I will be meeting Ben's father to discuss the issues raised by this tragic occurrence when I have fully considered the professional advice I receive and have liaised with the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure.

### **Children who Cannot Attend School**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education whether he intends to issue guidance similar to that issued by the Department for Education in England in January 2013 in relation to children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

**(AQW 25553/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Department is currently developing guidance on Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS). EOTAS provision includes support for children who cannot attend school because of health needs and my officials will consider the DfE guidance in taking forward this work.

### **Illuminate**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education how many children have benefitted from the use of Illuminate since its introduction in 2011.

**(AQW 25556/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Department of Education does not hold information on the number of children who have benefitted from the use of Illuminate.

Illuminate is a web-based video-conferencing and collaboration tool which enables pupils and staff in all schools in the north of Ireland to participate in a variety of online e-learning opportunities. For example, it enables schools to hold collaborative lessons and to participate in video-conference events and lectures. It can also be used to allow pupils to participate remotely in lessons or revision groups or for pupils at home to keep in touch with their teacher/class(es).

It is a matter for individual schools to decide on how they will make use of the Illuminate video-conferencing software, however, I recently wrote to all schools to raise awareness of this facility and to encourage schools to ensure it is used to best effect.

### **Illuminate**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education what plans he has to use Illuminate for children who are unable to attend school for health reasons.

**(AQW 25559/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** It is a matter for individual schools to decide on how they will make use of Illuminate. However, I recently wrote to all schools to raise awareness of this facility and to encourage schools to ensure it is used to best effect. In addition, further opportunities to participate in training on Illuminate have been offered to all schools and Education and Library Boards.

Children who are unable to attend school for health reasons will have differing needs and may require different solutions. There are a range of products, including the Illuminate video-conferencing facility, that could help pupils keep up to date with their school work. For example, some schools use the Virtual Learning Environment facility to enable pupils to access school resources from home and to upload assignments. E-mail is also used by some schools to maintain links with their pupils and to set and receive work assignments.

Home tuition is intended to help keep a pupil who is unable to attend school, due to illness or a health related problem, in touch with learning. It is not intended to be a replacement for regular attendance at

school. Each Education and Library Board has a responsibility to determine how to meet this need and may adopt different approaches. Home tuition can be augmented by lessons from the pupil's school or e-learning opportunities, including Elluminate. Much depends on the young person and how learning might be integrated into their treatment or recovery plan.

My aim would be to help pupils who are unable to attend school to continue with their education, however, decisions on the best means to achieve this must be made on the basis of each child's individual needs.

### Projected Capital Spend

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW22718/11-15, how much finance has been expended to date in each of the projects listed.

**(AQW 25560/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Finances expended against the 18 capital build projects announced in June 2012 up to 31 March 2013 are shown in the table below.

School Scheme	Type of School	All Expenditure up to 31/03/2013 £000's	2013/14 Expenditure up to 31/07/2013 £000's	Total Spend to Date £000's
Coláiste Feirste, Belfast	Post-Primary	2,645	21	2,666
St Clare's Convent Primary School	Primary	840	26	866
St Colman's Abbey Primary School, Newry				
St Joseph's Convent PS, Newry	Primary	159	125	284
Dromore Central Primary School	Primary	324	89	413
Eglinton Primary School	Primary	160	45	205
Tannaghmore Primary School, Lurgan	Primary	209	70	279
Ebrington Controlled PS, Derry	Primary	164	0	164
Foyle & Londonderry College	Post-Primary	15073	225	15298
St Teresa's Primary School, Lurgan	Primary	160	43	203
Victoria Park Primary School, Belfast	Primary	720	0	720
Enniskillen Model Primary School	Primary	142	5	147
St Mary's Primary School, Banbridge	Primary	69	28	97
Bheann Mhadagain, Belfast	Primary	52	15	67

<b>School Scheme</b>	<b>Type of School</b>	<b>All Expenditure up to 31/03/2013 £000's</b>	<b>2013/14 Expenditure up to 31/07/2013 £000's</b>	<b>Total Spend to Date £000's</b>
Belmont House Special School, Derry	Special	10	0	10
Rossmar Special School, Limavady	Special	19	4	23
Castletower Ballymena	Special	10	9	19
Arvalee School & Resource Centre, Omagh	Special	0	0	0
St Gerards Education Resource Centre	Special	2	272	274
		<b>20,758</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>21,735</b>

The expenditure up to 31 March 2013 is based on expenditure reported at 2012/13 Final Outturn.

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

Expenditure for the current financial year reflects payments against invoices presented as at 31 July 2013.

### **Flexible School Starting Age**

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the introduction of a flexible school starting age; and whether he has taken any action to introduce this locally.

**(AQW 25563/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I recognise that we have the youngest school starting in Europe and following a meeting with representatives from the Association of Teachers & Lecturers and associates, I agreed to look at options for introducing a degree of flexibility around the school starting age here.

Work on identifying potential options within this area is currently ongoing and will be completed as quickly as possible.

### **Guidance on Attendance Management Policies**

**Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 18725/11-15, for an update in relation to the guidance on attendance management policies.

**(AQW 25575/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** My Department issued this guidance in June 2013. DE Circular 2013/13 -Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools came into effect from the beginning of the 2013/14 school year. This provides schools with good practice, guidance and strategies to manage pupil attendance and includes an attendance policy template.

The inclusion of a summary and evaluation of the attendance strategy is a legal requirement as set out in the Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 (S.R. 2010/395).

My Department also issued 'School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide' to all schools for distribution to Year 1 and Year 8 pupils starting in September 2013.

## Physical Activity in Children

**Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to encourage physical activity in children, particularly girls.

**(AQW 25577/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Physical Education (PE) is a compulsory part of the curriculum for all pupils at every Key Stage from age 4 to 16 and schools are encouraged to provide at least 2 hours of PE per week. The statutory minimum content for each key stage is set out in the Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007.

Each year, £1.5 million is made available to enable the delivery of the Curriculum Sports Programme which encourages participation from boys and girls in over 540 primary schools throughout the north of Ireland. The programme aims to develop the generic physical literacy skills of our youngest pupils (Foundation and Key Stage 1) through participation in enjoyable physical activities. Key strengths of the programme are the extended opportunities it provides to build on children's basic movement skills and transfer these skills to other areas of PE. Currently just over 19,000 boys and over 18,000 girls are participating in the programme.

DE has also been working towards achieving the targets set out in DCAL's Sport Matters Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation. In March 2012, DE conducted an online questionnaire involving primary, post primary and special schools to establish a baseline for the number of children of compulsory school age participating in a minimum of two hours quality PE per week. A summary report has been published on the DE website and it is intended that follow-up visits to schools will be undertaken by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

## Schools in the Western Education and Library Board Area

**Mr Buchanan** asked the Minister of Education to list the primary and post-primary schools in the Western Education and Library Board area which closed in each of the last five years; and how many pupils attended each school at the time of closure.

**(AQW 25583/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Lists of the primary and post primary school closures in the WELB area over the last 5 years are included below. A list of the schools that have closed as a result of amalgamations is also included. As requested the lists include details of the enrolment in each school in the year of closure.

### PRIMARY SCHOOL CLOSURES

School Ref	School	ELB area	Management	Date closed	Enrolment in year of closure
203-2716	St Patrick's PS	WELB	Maintained	31/08/09	14
203-2679	St Columba's PS	WELB	Maintained	31/08/09	16
203-2681	St Patrick's PS	WELB	Maintained	31/08/10	12
203-2664	St Davog's PS	WELB	Maintained	31/08/12	13
203-1888	St Eugene's PS	WELB	Maintained	31/08/13	20
201-2674	Bridgehill PS	WELB	Controlled	31/08/13	28

**POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL CLOSURES**

School Ref	School	ELB area	Management	Date closed	Enrolment in year of closure
223-0181	St Peter's HS	WELB	Maintained	31/08/13	64
223-0111	St Eugene's HS	WELB	Maintained	31/08/13	58

**PRIMARY SCHOOL AMALGAMATIONS**

School ref	School names	ELB area	Management	Date amalgamated	Enrolment in year prior to amalgamation
203-1886	Corranny PS	WELB	Maintained	16/04/12	77
203-1892	Cornagague PS	WELB	Maintained		52
203-3537	Loreto Convent PS	WELB	Maintained	01/09/12	197
203-6053	St Colmcille's PS	WELB	Maintained		164
203-2689	St Mary's Boys' PS	WELB	Maintained	01/09/12	348
203-6096	St Mary's Girl's PS	WELB	Maintained		249
201-6376	Ardstraw PS	WELB	Controlled	01/09/12	48
201-2392	Drumlegagh PS	WELB	Controlled		36

**POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL AMALGAMATIONS**

School ref	School names	ELB area	Management	Date amalgamated	Enrolment in year prior to amalgamation
241-0096	Strabane GS	WELB	Controlled	01/09/11	406
221-0164	Strabane HS	WELB	Controlled		276
221-0305	Devenish College	WELB	Controlled	01/09/13	485
221-0080	Lisnaskea HS	WELB	Controlled		107

**Schools Opened for Community Usage**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Education how many schools have regularly opened their premises for community usage, in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 25586/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Information in the format requested is not routinely collected by the Department.

As part of the School Omnibus Survey conducted in June 2013, schools were asked if they made their facilities available for wider community use.

A total of 559 responses were received giving an overall response rate of 51%. Of the total respondents 80% reported that they made their facilities available for wider community use, 20% did not and less than 1% did not respond to the question.

At 95%, post-primary respondents were most likely to make their facilities available to the wider community, followed by 76% of primary schools and 72% of special school respondents.

### **Savings Delivery Plan**

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Education whether his Department will meet its savings delivery plan.

**(AQW 25591/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** My Department intends to deliver on its Savings Delivery Plan in full by 2014-15 and will take all reasonable steps to achieve this outcome. Details of the Department's current Savings Delivery Plan and the level of savings achieved in 2011-12 can be accessed via the following link:

[http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/about-the-department/8-admin-of-education-pg/departmental-budgets-and-accounts/budget\\_2011-2015\\_savings\\_delivery\\_plan.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/about-the-department/8-admin-of-education-pg/departmental-budgets-and-accounts/budget_2011-2015_savings_delivery_plan.htm)

### **Savings Delivery Plan**

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) his Department's savings delivery target for each year since 2011; and (ii) the actual savings made in each year (a) in real terms; and (b) as a percentage of the target set.

**(AQW 25592/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** My Department's Savings Delivery Plan requirements across the 4 year Budget period 2011-15 are £101.5m/£146.9m/£175.5m/£206.1m.

The actual savings achieved in 2011-12 were £95.6m, or just over 95% of the 2011-12 requirement. In real terms, the savings made would represent £99.3m at today's prices.

The actual savings delivered in 2012-13 are currently being assessed and will be published on the Department's website in due course. The latest version of the Savings Delivery Plan and details of 2011-12 actual savings can be found on the Department's website. These can be accessed via the following link:

[http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/about-the-department/8-admin-of-education-pg/departmental-budgets-and-accounts/budget\\_2011-2015\\_savings\\_delivery\\_plan.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/about-the-department/8-admin-of-education-pg/departmental-budgets-and-accounts/budget_2011-2015_savings_delivery_plan.htm)

### **Cycling**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education what level of cycling is contained within the school sports curriculum.

**(AQW 25638/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Department of Education does not hold this information.

Physical Education (PE) is a compulsory part of the revised curriculum for all pupils in Years 1 – 12. There are statutory requirements in relation to the delivery of Athletics, Dance, Games, Gymnastics and swimming; however, it would be a matter for individual schools to determine the activities and specific sports they offer their pupils when delivering PE.

There are a number of opportunities within the curriculum for teachers to discuss and encourage cycling as a healthy and sustainable mode of transport. Within the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding area of learning at primary level and Learning for Life and Work at post primary level,

pupils have the opportunities to explore the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and the importance of being physically active.

## Educational Attainment

**Ms S Ramsey** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of this year's GCSE and A-Level results, including how he plans to continue to improve educational attainment.

**(AQO 4558/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** In relation to GCSEs:

- 76.5% of entries achieved grades A\*-C.
- 68.8% of entries in English and 64.6% in mathematics showed increases of 0.6 and 1.7 percentage points respectively.
- The overall pass rate increased slightly with 99.2% of grades awarded at A\*-G.

In relation to A levels:

- 83.5% of entries at A-level here achieved grades A\*- C
- The overall pass rate remained unchanged, with 98.2% of grades awarded at A\*-E this year.

The fact that so many young people are achieving good examination grades is pleasing news; their achievements are due to a great deal of hard work over the past number of years. We should not forget the teachers and parents who have supported these children to reach this stage in their education.

Since coming to office I have continued to implement policies to raise standards and tackle underachievement. These policies are realising improvements at Key Stage 2, GCSE and A level. However we still have room for improvement, in particular to close the gaps in achievement that exist among our most and least disadvantaged young people.

The key now is to step up the pace of implementation and delivery of these policies. Alongside this, additional funding has been allocated to specific programmes to target educational underachievement in socially disadvantaged areas.

## St Joseph's High School Autism Unit

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Education how many pupils attend the St Joseph's High School autism unit; and how many of these pupils were new intake in the September 2013 term.

**(AQW 25700/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The 2013/14 school census is due to take place on the 11th October; therefore, figures relating to the September 2013 term are not currently available. Provisional figures will be available mid December. Figures collated from the 2012/13 school census indicated that there were 38 pupils enrolled in the learning support centre located in St Joseph's College, Coalisland.

## Schools: Community Use

**Ms Brown** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the guidance being drafted by his Department on schools opening their premises for community use.

**(AQO 4554/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I have recently approved the draft guidance on community use of school premises: a guidance toolkit for schools which has been developed as a web-based resource and will be disseminated to all schools via a link hosted on the DE website.

As previously agreed, I have forwarded a copy of the draft guidance to the Chairperson of the Education Committee. The Committee is currently considering the guidance and has sought oral briefing from my Officials. My intention is to publish the guidance following consideration of the Committee's comments.

## A Levels

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Education what steps he has taken to ensure the portability of Northern Ireland A Levels for English universities following the announcement by the Secretary of State for Education about the ending of coursework and the operation of a single final examination for A Levels in England.

**(AQO 4548/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** My current policy position on A levels is similar to Wales. We believe it is appropriate that an A level should continue to include both an AS and A2 element to provide a bridge between GCSE and A level; that the number of assessments should be reduced; and that there should be an assessment opportunity at the end of the 1st and 2nd years.

My Department consulted widely on A level policy following the changes to A levels in England announced by Michael Gove last year. Stakeholders have been supportive of my policy on A levels. I believe the decisions I have taken are in the best interests of our learners and will ensure the integrity of our A Levels going forward. These decisions will also ensure that our A Level qualifications remain equitable, robust and portable, and are credible in the eyes of Higher Education Institutions and employers.

Differences in policy between England and ourselves raise the possibility that our standards may not be seen as robust. I am determined that we meet that challenge head on and ensure that our qualifications are comparable to those offered across these islands and beyond. I have received CCEA's report of its fundamental review of GCSEs and A levels and will be making an announcement shortly on the way forward.

It contains a number of recommendations, both short and long term, which seek to address concerns around the comparability and portability of qualifications. I am confident that we will find a way of determining our own path which will support and augment our young people's future.

## CCMS: Certificate of Education

**Mr Ross** asked the Minister of Education whether he has discussed with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools the reasons for maintaining the Certificate of Education as an essential criterion for the positions to tackle literacy and numeracy problems at primary school level that were advertised in summer 2013.

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

**Mr O'Dowd:** I have not discussed with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools the reasons for maintaining the Certificate of Education as an essential criterion for the positions to tackle literacy and numeracy problems at primary school level that were advertised in summer 2013.

The teaching posts that were advertised over the summer are the additional teaching posts being created as part of the Delivering Social Change Signature Project which aims to improve Literacy and Numeracy and provide recruitment opportunities for recent graduate teachers.

The criteria for the recruitment process was developed by the Strategic Oversight Group led by the Western Education and Library Board (WELB) and agreed by employing authorities, sectoral organisations and the teaching unions.

The agreed criteria, to be applied by all schools, do not include a requirement for primary school teachers to hold a Teacher's Certificate in Religious Education. However, the recruitment process of classroom based teachers was undertaken by the relevant employing authority and, in the case of schools in the Catholic Maintained Sector, their normal Scheme of Management was applied with the appointments made by the Boards of Governors of each school.

The WELB is also undertaking a central recruitment for literacy and numeracy support teachers to be deployed into a number of schools. For these support posts, there is no requirement for primary teachers to hold a Teacher's Certificate in Religious Education.

## Common Funding Scheme

**Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact that cuts to school funding, through the revised Common Funding Scheme, will have on the provision of services such as Special Educational Needs teachers.

**(AQO 4556/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** It is important to state at the outset that I have not yet made any final decisions and have not cut the budget to schools as a result of the Common Funding Scheme Review. The opposite is the case. I am providing an additional £30m to the Aggregated Schools Budget over the next 2 years as a result of this review.

Although the Budget 2011-15 outcome for education has been extremely challenging I have also protected funding for Special Education across this 4 year period. Pupils in special schools and those with a statement of Special Educational Needs will continue to have their needs met. The funding for this is already separate from the funding that is allocated via the Common Funding Scheme and my proposals are that this should continue to be the position for 2014-15.

This review was not about saving money; it was about making better use of the funding we have to ensure that the needs and aspirations of all our children and young people are to the fore.

That is why, as well as protecting funding for children with Special Educational Needs, I am also proposing to increase the funding available to support schools in helping pupils from our most disadvantaged areas to overcome the barriers that too often lead to educational underachievement. I want to ensure that the pupils who stand to benefit most from education receive the support they need. I am determined to break the link between social disadvantage and poor educational outcomes.

I am open to new ideas that can help us meet that objective and I encourage the Member opposite and his constituents to participate in the consultation and let me have their views before the consultation deadline of 18 October.

## Schools: Community Use

**Mr McQuillan** asked the Minister of Education how a community group that wishes to take over the occupation of disused school buildings can enhance its application.

**(AQO 4557/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** My Department, in common with all Departments, must dispose of surplus properties in line with the Land and Property Service (LPS) Guidance.

For disused school buildings in the Controlled sector the final decision regarding disposal will rest with the relevant Education and Library Board in conjunction with LPS advice. Disused school buildings in the Maintained sector will be the property of Trustees and therefore the Department would have no input regarding their further use on closure.

Community Groups interested in purchasing a disused school should make the relevant ELB aware of their interest.

It would be advantageous for the Group to seek a sponsor eg their local council or DSD in making a case for community ownership. Their sponsors may agree to register an interest in the property when LPS trawl the public sector in advance of placing the property on the open market.

The Department will favour applications from third sector groups which support its Education or Youth policies. An application will be further enhanced if the group are able to produce evidence of available funding and the ability to move forward quickly on acquiring the premises.

## Pupil Performance: Rural/Urban

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the fact that pupil performance, at Key Stages 1 and 2 in English and Maths, in rural primary schools is significantly better than pupil performance at schools in an urban location.

**(AQO 4559/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Pupil performance at Key Stages 1 and 2 in English and Maths in rural primary schools is not significantly better than pupil performance at schools in an urban location.

In 2011/12 there was a one percentage point difference in English and a one point two percentage point difference in mathematics between those pupils attending urban and rural schools at the end of Key Stage One.

At Key Stage Two the difference was slightly more marked with a 5.2 percentage point difference in English and a 5.4 percentage point difference in mathematics.

Research suggests that social disadvantage is the strongest factor impacting on attainment and we know from our evidence that schools in urban areas have a greater concentration of pupils entitled to free school meals than schools in rural areas (36% of pupils attending primary schools in urban areas are FSME compared to 21% in rural areas). It is therefore my assessment that the difference in attainment at Key Stage Two reflects the distribution of disadvantage between urban and rural areas. Of the 50,000 primary school pupils entitled to FSM, just under 36,000 (72%) are enrolled in schools in urban areas.

I will continue to implement my policies to raise standards and tackle educational underachievement. These policies and programmes are realising improvements for all our young people. This is evidenced by improved outcomes at Key Stage 2, GCSE and A Level.

However, we still have room for improvement to raise achievement among all our young people and in particular to close the gaps in achievement that currently exist, particularly among our most and least disadvantaged young people.

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.

## Department for Employment and Learning

### People Employed by Recruitment Agencies

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of people employed by recruitment agencies in (i) his Department; and (ii) arms-length bodies, as of 1 April (a) 2011; (b) 2012; and (c) 2013.

**(AQW 25199/11-15)**

**Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):** The number of people employed by recruitment agencies within the Department for Employment and Learning, and its Arms-Length Bodies, as of 1 April in each of the last three years is as follows:

Year	Department	Arms-Length Bodies
2011	1	260
2012	9	206
2013	3	171.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>637.5</b>

## **Kilcooley Women's Centre, Bangor**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail how much funding his Department provides to Kilcooley Women's Centre, Bangor.

**(AQW 25229/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department does not have any statutory basis or remit to core fund voluntary or community organisations to deliver training or education, nor is it resourced to assist voluntary and community organisations to find funding. My Department is therefore unable to help find funding opportunities for the Kilcooley Women's Education Centre.

However, in a recent competition under the Collaboration and Innovation Fund to address issues associated with young people not in education, employment or training, the Training for Women Network (TWN) was successful in securing £770,067 for a project to help 440 young women in this category; Kilcooley Women's Education Centre is one of eight community centres collaborating to deliver this project and could potentially receive up to £25,945.00 in 2013/14 from TWN.

TWN has also secured funding from the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme 2007-2013 for their 'Advancement of Women' project, which delivers training to women across Northern Ireland via 12 regional partner organisations; Kilcooley Women's Centre is one of the 12 participant organisations benefiting from the funding, which includes £711,847 (European Social Fund) and £444,905 contribution by my Department over a two year period 2013/14 – 2014/15.

In addition, payments of £1,040 were made to Kilcooley Women's Centre and Development Group in respect of a Steps to Work Employer Subsidy.

## **Kilcooley Women's Centre, Bangor**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail how much funding the South Eastern Regional College provides to Kilcooley Women's Centre, Bangor.

**(AQW 25230/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department does not hold the information requested.

Therefore, I have asked the Director of South Eastern Regional College to respond to the Member directly on this matter.

## **Apprenticeship Places**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many apprenticeship places are currently funded by his Department.

**(AQW 25231/11-15)**

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

The latest statistical bulletin shows that the total number of participants on the programme at 30 April 2013 was 8,998. The full statistical bulletin can be viewed on the Department's website <http://www.delni.gov.uk/appsni-bulletin-aug-13.pdf>.

The latest statistical bulletin, published on 29 August 2013, refers to the position as at 30 April 2013. Further publications will be produced on a quarterly basis.

## North West Regional College

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the (i) number of applications; and (ii) number of participating students; (iii) pass rate; and (iv) fail rate for the Health and Social Care course at the North West Regional College, in each of the the last five years.

**(AQW 25292/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Professional and Technical Enrolment and Performance Data for Health and Social Care courses at the North West Regional College are set out in the table overleaf.

The (i) number of applications is not available centrally. The (ii) number of students enrolled, (iii) the 'Achievement' Rate and (iv) the 'No Achievement' Rate, are detailed.

Academic Year	(i) Number of Applications (Note 1)	(ii) Students Enrolled	(iii) Achievement Rate (Note 4)	(iv) No Achievement Rate (Note 4)
2007/08	N/A	4,148	N/A	N/A
2008/09	N/A	3,983	N/A	N/A
2009/10	N/A	5,039	N/A	N/A
2010/11	N/A	5,019	92%	8%
2011/12	N/A	7,775	89%	11%

**Sources:** Further Education Statistical Record (FESR) & Further Education Leavers Survey (FELS)

**Notes:**

- (1) Applications information for courses is not held centrally. It has not been possible to obtain figures from the college in the required timeframe.
- (2) 'Students Enrolled' is the number of individual students enrolled in Full Time and Part Time courses under Sector Subject Area 1.3 (Health and Social Care) across all levels of study.
- (3) Only professional and technical courses are included in this analysis (which excludes hobby and leisure courses).
- (4) Due to data quality, FE performance statistics are reliable only since 2010/11.
- (5) 'Achievement' Rate is the number of 'Achievements' (full and partial) divided by the number of Final Year Completers.
- (6) 'No Achievement' Rate is the number of 'No Achievements' divided by the number of Final Year Completers (excluding those continuing study).

## North West Regional College

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the (i) number of applications; (ii) number of participating students; (iii) pass rate; and (iv) fail rate for the beauty course at the North West Regional College, in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 25293/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Professional and Technical Enrolment and Performance Data for Beauty Therapy Courses at the North West Regional College are set out in the table overleaf.

The (i) number of applications is not available centrally. The (ii) number of students enrolled, (iii) the 'Achievement' Rate and (iv) the 'No Achievement' Rate, are detailed.

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>(i) Number of Applications (Note 1)</b>	<b>(ii) Students Enrolled</b>	<b>(iii) Achievement Rate (Note 4)</b>	<b>(iv) No Achievement Rate (Note 4)</b>
2007/08	N/A	3,704	N/A	N/A
2008/09	N/A	3,418	N/A	N/A
2009/10	N/A	3,477	N/A	N/A
2010/11	N/A	3,608	92%	8%
2011/12	N/A	3,586	92%	8%

**Sources:** Further Education Statistical Record (FESR) & Further Education Leavers Survey (FELS)

**Notes:**

- (1) Applications information for courses is not held centrally. It has not been possible to obtain figures from the college in the required timeframe.
- (2) 'Students Enrolled' is the number of individual students enrolled in Full Time and Part Time courses under subject code W800 (Beauty Therapy) across all levels of study.
- (3) Only professional and technical courses are included in this analysis (which excludes hobby and leisure courses).
- (4) Due to data quality, FE performance statistics are reliable only since 2010/11.
- (5) 'Achievement' Rate is the number of 'Achievements' (full and partial) divided by the number of Final Year Completers.
- (6) 'No Achievement' Rate is the number of 'No Achievements' divided by the number of Final Year Completers (excluding those continuing study).

## **Programme for Government Commitments**

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the progress made on each of his Department's Programme for Government commitments.

**(AQW 25297/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The 2011-15 Programme for Government contains five Key Commitments allocated to the Department, as follows:

- 1 increase uptake in economically relevant Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) places (target:700 additional places);
- 2 upskill the working age population by delivering over 200,000 qualifications;
- 3 develop and implement a Strategy to reduce economic activity through skills, training, incentives and job creation;
- 4 support people (with an emphasis on young people) in to employment by providing skills and training (target:114,000); and
- 5 ensure there are no increases in student fees beyond the rate of inflation for Northern Ireland students studying here.

The final commitment listed above, to ensure there are no increases in student fees beyond the rate of inflation for Northern Ireland students studying here, is a policy commitment whose delivery consists of maintaining the policy.

Of the other four commitments, three are on track (1, 2 and 4) and one is broadly on track (3) for achievement.

Further details on the progress of our PfG commitments can be found on the OFMDFM website at <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/work-of-the-executive/pfg-budget-economic-strategy/pfg/strategic-online-report-2011-2015.htm>.

### **Local Students Studying in Scotland**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail any progress made with the Scottish Government regarding fees paid by local students studying in Scotland.

**(AQW 25325/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** I can advise the member that for the incoming academic year 2013/14 the Scottish Government has changed its policy which exempted Northern Ireland domiciled students with Irish passports from paying tuition fees, if they enrolled in a Scottish higher education institution as an EU national. Under Scottish legislation Scottish domiciles do not pay tuition fees. EU legislation requires devolved administrations, within member states, to treat EU students as they treat their own domiciles when it comes to charging tuition fees.

Scottish Government has now added another criterion for Northern Ireland domiciles to support EU dual nationality applications. From academic year 2013/14 Northern Ireland domiciles with Irish passports applying as an EU student to a Scottish higher education institution will be obliged to demonstrate they have exercised their right of free movement within the EU and resided for at least three months in another EU member state. Scottish Government officials have advised the evidence Northern Ireland domiciles applying under dual nationality may provide to demonstrate residing in another member state could be bank statements, utility bills, confirmation from member state government officials. It is too early in the academic year to be able to report on how this policy change has affected Northern Ireland students applying to Scottish higher education institutions for 2013/14.

### **Employees Who Wish to Wear Poppies**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what legislation exists, or is planned, to protect employees who wish to wear poppies from being asked to remove them by their employer.

**(AQW 25366/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Legislation covering emblems and symbols does not fall within my Department's remit. However, the Equality Commission's position regarding the wearing of poppies is contained in the publication: Promoting a Good and Harmonious Working Environment, a guide for Employers and Employees which can be found at the following link:

<http://www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/Harmonyatwork.pdf>.

In summary, the Equality Commission recognises the sensitivity surrounding the use of emblems and symbols in Northern Ireland, and offers guidance on these issues based on the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, which is the responsibility of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

It is a part of the Commission's remit to give advice and guidance on Fair Employment legislation, and it is for the Fair Employment Tribunal and the courts to interpret the law.

### **Profoundly Deaf Children**

**Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the assistance that is provided to parents of profoundly deaf children when undertaking courses in sign language.

**(AQW 25401/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department provides a range of financial assistance to assist individuals to undertake accredited courses at further education colleges. This assistance is not, however, targeted directly at specific groups, such as parents or carers of children with disabilities. To ensure that funding is directed to those most in need of support, eligibility for assistance is restricted by a number of criteria,

including means-testing based on household income. As a result, the amount of assistance provided is dependent on individual circumstances.

The two main sources of support are the Further Education (FE) Awards and Hardship Funds. FE Awards provide a maintenance grant for eligible students undertaking full-time or part-time courses. Individuals experiencing exceptional financial difficulty may also be eligible for help through college Hardship Funds. Students with dependent children may also be eligible to receive assistance with childcare costs which is in addition to the other available financial support.

Further details regarding financial assistance can be obtained from the Student Finance Team in any of the Northern Ireland further education colleges.

### **Profoundly Deaf Children**

**Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether parents of profoundly deaf children are given priority when enrolling on sign language courses.

**(AQW 25402/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Further education colleges are responsible for their own enrolment procedures; therefore, my Department has no role in this process.

Nevertheless, I have asked the Directors of each of the six colleges to respond to the Member, directly, on this matter.

### **Further Education Colleges in Mid Ulster**

**Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail what training opportunities are available at Further Education Colleges in Mid Ulster for people wanting to obtain a qualification in welding.

**(AQW 25460/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** I can confirm that further education colleges in the Mid Ulster area offer welding qualifications from level 1 through to level 3. This provision is available through further education courses, or through the Department's Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes, and leads to qualifications that are on the Qualification Credit Framework which are, therefore, recognised nationally.

Enrolments in the Mid Ulster area in the 2011/12 academic year, the last year for which validated data is available, are outlined in the table below:

<b>College name</b>	<b>Further Education Provision enrolments.</b>	<b>Training Provision enrolments.</b>
Northern Regional College (NRC)	34	0
Southern Regional College (SRC)	12	79
South West College (SWC)	253	20
Total	299	99

In total, in 2011/12 including FE and Training, there were 398 enrolments in the Mid-Ulster area.

Finally, I can confirm that in the 2011/12 academic year there were 560 enrolments on 'welding' courses across the Northern Ireland FE Sector, including those outlined above in the Mid Ulster area.

## Red Sky Group

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the total number of employees who made use of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) Regulations after the dissolution of the Red Sky Group.

**(AQW 25516/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department does not hold this information. The Department's role is to establish and maintain Northern Ireland's employment relations legislative framework, including the TUPE Regulations.

Compliance with the governing legislation is entirely a matter for individual employees, employers, and any administrators that are appointed. There is no duty to inform the Department of the details of any TUPE arrangement.

## Regional Colleges

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what quality control checks his Department routinely carries out on Regional Colleges.

**(AQW 25517/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department has an oversight and scrutiny role on a number of key aspects of the quality of colleges' performance. For example, the Department monitors annually colleges' student enrolments, and their rates of student retention, achievement and success, and releases detailed annual statistical bulletins in these areas. Colleges produce annual college self assessments and quality improvement plans, and these are reviewed by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). The ETI also carries out a whole college inspection of each college every three years, and their reports are published. Where weaknesses are found by the ETI, colleges are obliged to produce improvement plans, and are subject to follow-up inspection.

More widely, the Department through its governance framework, routinely monitors colleges' financial and risk management processes and outcomes.

Finally, every year the Department holds two key meetings with the Chairs and Directors of each college. One of these is part of the College Development Planning process through which the Department monitors individual college's performance in the previous year and sets targets and budgets for the coming year. The second is an annual accountability review meeting with the Department's Permanent Secretary and senior staff with responsibility for further education.

## Regional Colleges

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what checks his Department routinely carries out on Regional Colleges in relation to the provision of equal educational opportunities for young people.

**(AQW 25520/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** All further education colleges in Northern Ireland are designated as public bodies. Under Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, they must submit an Equality Scheme to the Equality Commission stating how they promote equality of opportunity and good relations, between persons of different sexual orientation, religious belief, political opinion or racial group. My Department does not therefore carry out routine checks on this aspect of their duties.

## Zero-Hour Contracts

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the number of employees currently on zero hour contracts.

**(AQO 4565/11-15)**

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

The Northern Ireland sample of the UK Labour Force Survey is statistically too small to provide a reliable estimate of the numbers on zero-hours contracts here.

I have therefore asked my officials to urgently commission new research, to establish a more reliable estimate of the number of workers on zero-hours contracts here in Northern Ireland. The research will also seek to identify the merits and demerits of using these type of contracts. The purpose of the research is to provide the Department with a more informed understanding of whether there is a need to introduce protections for workers on zero-hours contracts. The Department will therefore welcome any evidence from stakeholders regarding the abuse of zero-hours contracts.

In the interim, I will continue to keep a close eye on the emerging position in Great Britain.

## Unemployment

**Mr Buchanan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline any proposed new initiatives to address ongoing long-term unemployment.

**(AQO 4566/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** As Minister, I have introduced a comprehensive range of initiatives to address unemployment in Northern Ireland. In direct response to the economic downturn and as part of the Northern Ireland Executive's Economy and Jobs Initiative my Department's Steps to Work programme has introduced two additional employment strands, known as First Start and Step Ahead 50+. These initiatives are targeted at long term unemployed young people aged 18 -24 and those aged 50 and over respectively.

My Department also plans to introduce a new employment programme in June 2014. Steps 2 Success will replace and build on the success of the existing Steps to Work Programme. It is designed to give Providers the flexibility to offer provision to meet the needs of participants and work to ensure they do not move into longer term unemployment.

I have established a very successful Youth Employment Scheme providing help and support to young people aged between 18 and 24 years old who are currently unemployed and seeking permanent work. In addition DEL has developed and leads on the Executive's cross-departmental strategy 'Pathways to Success' for addressing the needs of young people who are not in employment, education and training (NEET).

As part of the Strategy, I introduced the Collaboration and Innovation Fund to help unemployed 16 – 24 year old young people who have a diverse range of employability needs. I have extended the Local Employment Intermediary Service to all areas of Northern Ireland to support young people that are in the NEET category and have also scaled up the Community Family Support Programme.

My Department, in partnership with the Department for Enterprise Trade and Investment and other relevant Executive Departments, is currently developing a new strategy to tackle economic inactivity and I hope to gain Executive approval for the draft strategy later this year.

## Community Family Support Programme

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the roll-out of the Community Family Support Programme.

**(AQO 4567/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** A pilot of the family support programme involving 44 families has recently been completed. This has confirmed the effectiveness of the initiative. Despite the small scale of the pilot there have been a number of very positive outcomes. Some parents have moved into employment, some

young people have returned to school or entered training programmes and a number of mothers are volunteering in the community.

My Department is now poised to roll out the programme to at least 720 families across Northern Ireland. A tendering process has been conducted to identify the providers who will take the initiative forward and the successful organisations will be announced shortly.

My Department intends to have the programme operational by the first week in October 2013, enabling disadvantaged families from throughout Northern Ireland to avail of this service.

The programme will be delivered in five contract areas across Northern Ireland, based on the Health and Social Care Trust areas. The intervention will initially support 720 families from October 2013 to March 2015.

The initiative is designed to help families make life changing decisions to enhance their prospects and become full participants in society. The programme will also support families with a high level of need to develop their capacity to reach their full potential.

During the 26 week programme families will receive help to address the health, social, economic, educational, employment and training issues that impact on their daily lives.

Professional support workers will engage and consult with parents of children and young people to promote early intervention and high quality parenting, and to identify solutions to address their specific needs.

Issues such as education, essential skills, housing, money management, anger management, healthy living, childcare, alcohol and drugs misuse will be addressed by the initiative.

The CFSP will focus primarily on the needs of families with post primary school children to support parents with young people (16-24 years) not in education, employment or training (NEET) to re-engage with education, training or employment and help prevent younger family members falling into the NEET category.

The CFSP will also have a structured family learning component to enhance family life skills. This learning component will help address issues that families are faced with in their daily lives e.g. family values, changing behaviour, anger management, drug and alcohol misuse, speaking and listening etc.

CFSP providers will work in partnership with statutory agencies such as Health and Social Care Trusts and Youth Justice Agency to support families and deliver the programme.

## **Education Participation Age**

**Mr Irwin** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the implications to his Department of the increase in education participation age in the rest of the UK from 16 to 17 years old and the plans to increase this again to 18 years old in 2015.

**(AQO 4568/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department does not hold legislative responsibility for setting the minimum school leaving age. It is a matter for the Minister for Education and his department.

The changes referred to by the member relate to legislation applicable only to England where the new Compulsory School Leaving Act will raise the education leaving age to 17 in 2013 and to 18 from 2015.

That does not necessarily mean young people staying on at school, rather, it aims to raise the level of educational participation among young people aged 16 to 18 across a range of educational provisions including training and apprenticeships.

These proposals do not impact on Northern Ireland or on the work of my Department. Young people in Northern Ireland who have reached the minimum school leaving age and leave school have a range of options including access to a wide range of courses at further education colleges.

In addition, my Department offers a guaranteed training place to all school leavers aged 16 and 17 years of age through its Training for Success programme, as well as extended eligibility for those with a disability or from an in-care background. There are 2,160 young people on Training for Success; 4,739 on Programme Led Apprenticeships and 4,949 are employed as apprentices with training funded through the Department's ApprenticeshipsNI programme.

Participation in full-time education and training in Northern Ireland for 2010/11, the latest year for which figures are available, shows participation rates of 93.8% and 86.3% for 16 and 17 year olds respectively. Combined figures for both cohorts show a participation rate of 90.0%

In order to engage those not in education, employment or training my department developed and leads the cross-departmental strategy 'Pathways to Success' as the Executive's formal strategy for addressing the needs of these young people. To date 705 young people are accessing the Collaboration and Innovation Fund programme.

In addition: 272 young people are taking part in the Department's Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS); 2,298 NEET have been assisted through the NIESF Programme (an average of 400 per year).

## Steps 2 Success

**Mr Milne** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the mechanisms in place to ensure that the Steps to Success scheme does not become discredited.

**(AQO 4569/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Department intends to introduce the Steps 2 Success programme in June 2014 as the Department's main programme to assist unemployed people in receipt of benefits to find and sustain employment. Steps 2 Success will replace and build on the success of the Steps to Work programme. Stage 1 of the two stage procurement process is presently underway.

The Department has undertaken an extensive development and consultation process to ensure that the programme is designed to best meet the needs of participants and employers.

The following key elements have been put in place.

The Central Procurement Directorate of the Department of Finance and Personnel has been involved from the start of the development process to ensure that the design features of the programme meet best procurement practice.

The Departmental Solicitor's Office has been involved in assessing and assuring the procurement process and documentation to ensure that these meet all statutory requirements.

An extensive public consultation process has been undertaken which elicited over 80 written responses from a wide range of interested parties. Following analysis of responses the Department amended a number of the design features of the programme.

The Department has taken account of lessons learned from the introduction of the Work Programme in Great Britain and best practice elsewhere, to ensure Steps 2 Success is designed to best meet the needs of participants and employers throughout all parts of Northern Ireland.

The Department is introducing a Service Guarantee with the intention of using this to help define the level of service that all participants on the programme will receive from the provider.

It is my assessment that these measures will ensure that the new programme is 'fit for purpose', tailored to meet the needs of Northern Ireland, and will build upon on the very credible performance of Steps to Work.

## University Fees

**Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the above-inflation increase in postgraduate-taught course fees at Queen's University, Belfast for the incoming year.

**(AQO 4571/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Whilst my Department determines the upper limit for undergraduate fees, Universities are responsible for determining the level of fees charged for postgraduate-taught courses.

## Youth Employment Scheme: South Antrim

**Mr Girvan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the impact of the Youth Employment Scheme in South Antrim.

**(AQO 4572/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Youth Employment Scheme was launched in July last year and since then within the South Antrim area 284 opportunities for young people have been offered by employers. As at 6 September 129 young people in this area have participated in the scheme by availing of these opportunities, with 30 having entered permanent subsidised employment. In addition, 87 young people have secured six months' temporary employment under the First Start initiative.

A Post Implementation Review of the Youth Employment Scheme has been carried out which recommended some revisions to the scheme that should help to increase uptake by both young people and employers. I intend to implement these revisions later this month which includes the payment of a Benefit Based Training Allowance to participants on work experience, modifications to the restrictions on the eligible job growth sectors and involving Steps to Work Lead Contractors to source and deliver training within Skills Development placements.

The Youth Employment Scheme is not the only provision available for young people in South Antrim. The Department's full range of support, both from Employment Service frontline services and contracted provision like the Steps to Work programme, are in place. In the period April to date, the Employment Service has helped 591 young unemployed people aged 18 to 24 find employment in the South Antrim area.

I appreciate the member's interest in the Youth Employment Scheme and would ask all members to encourage employers and young people in their constituencies to become involved.

## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

### System Operator for Northern Ireland

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what input will she have on the branding review of the name System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI).

**(AQW 25202/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):** I have no role or input into branding reviews undertaken by commercial companies.

### System Operator for Northern Ireland

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given that Condition 12 of the System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI) Licence requires the licensee at all times to maintain "the full operational independence of the Transmission System Operator Business", why the Transmission System Operator Business is now fully under the control of the Eirgrid Executive Directors based in Dublin; and for her assessment of whether the Eirgrid Group Board has embarked on a strategy of full integration with the goal of a seamless all-Ireland Transmission System Operator Business.

**(AQW 25208/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** I am not party to internal discussions conducted by the EirGrid board.

SONI licence conditions, including Condition 12, are monitored by the Utility Regulator. SONI is required to provide an annual Compliance Plan which is reviewed by the Regulator, demonstrating how it ensures operational independence in line with its licence conditions. Moreover, any proposals to amend the SONI licence are subject to scrutiny by the Regulator and public consultation.

Certain provisions were also put in place as a condition of the arrangements for acquisition of SONI by EirGrid. These included the undertaking that two independent members of Northern Ireland background and appropriate standing be appointed to the EirGrid board. EirGrid's Memorandum and Articles of Association were also widened to provide an additional level of protection and to ensure ongoing financial security of SONI.

The requirement for SONI to have full managerial and operational independence of the Transmission System Operator Business applies in respect of any managerial and operational independence from any business/company that itself undertakes generation or supply activities. This reflects, and is in compliance with the requirements of applicable EU law.

### **System Operator for Northern Ireland**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the how the Regulator is monitoring whether Northern Ireland Electricity and the System Operator for Northern Ireland are complying with their licences, and in particular, how each have remained fully independent of ESB and Eirgrid by providing the premises, systems, equipment, facilities, property, personnel, data and management resources that are necessary for their efficient and effective managerial and operational independence as per Condition 12 of each licence.

**(AQW 25209/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Regulator acts independently of and is not accountable to my Department. It is responsible for keeping under review the activities undertaken by NIE and SONI and their compliance with their respective licence obligations. With regard to Condition 12 in particular, each licensee has a Compliance Plan (outlining the steps being taken or to be taken by the respective licensee to meet the requirements of that condition) and appoints a Compliance Officer to monitor and report (to the Utility Regulator) on compliance and any particular issues arising from or in respect of the obligations of that condition.

I am informed that in addition to its general monitoring and updates from the Compliance Officer, where it considers it appropriate and/or necessary to do so (including for example in response to consumer complaints and/or information from third parties) the Utility Regulator carries out more detailed investigations.

### **Electricity Network Business in Northern Ireland**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many meetings her Department has had with (i) ESB; (ii) Eirgrid; and (iii) the Utility Regulator to discuss the importance of securing existing jobs and maintaining the identity of the electricity network business in Northern Ireland following the sale of both Northern Ireland Electricity and System Operator for Northern Ireland to ESB and Eirgrid.

**(AQW 25210/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** I meet regularly with the Utility Regulator and companies in the energy sector to discuss a range of issues. On the specific issue of the sale of NIE to ESB, I met with senior representatives from NIE and ESB and with the Irish Energy Minister Eamon Ryan prior to the sale and obtained assurances on NIE jobs and maintenance of the identity of NIE. As a condition of acquisition of SONI by EirGrid, the Irish Energy Minister also put in place legislative amendments to expand the membership of the EirGrid board to allow appointment of independent members of Northern Ireland background and appropriate standing.

## Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) and System Operator Northern Ireland

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, as Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) and System Operator Northern Ireland are now owned by state owned companies in the Republic of Ireland, what measures are in place to ensure that NIE employees and consumers are not disadvantaged by investment decisions to the benefit of customers in the Republic of Ireland and the Irish Government, as the sole shareholder and monopolised controller of the electricity industry on the island of Ireland.

**(AQW 25211/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The NIE Transmission and Distribution licences and the SONI Transmission System Operator licence contain specific conditions relating to provision of undertakings by the ultimate owners to ensure the independence of decision making and availability of resource to conduct their business. Monitoring of compliance with the licence conditions is a matter for the Utility Regulator.

## People Employed by Recruitment Agencies

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of people employed by recruitment agencies in (i) her Department; and (ii) arms-length bodies, as of 1 April (a) 2011; (b) 2012; and (c) 2013.

**(AQW 25258/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:**

Dept/ NDPB	Number of People Employed by Recruitment Agencies		
	1 April 2011	1 April 2012	1 April 2013
DETI	1	0	0
HSENI	1	1	1
NITB	1	4	10
InvestNI	1	0	0
GCCNI	2	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>

## Programme for Government Commitments

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the progress made on each of her Department's Programme for Government commitments.

**(AQW 25290/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Progress on the delivery of DETI Programme for Government commitments is closely monitored in accordance with the programme arrangements and delivery framework published by OFMDFM.

The latest available information on progress against Programme for Government Commitments can be accessed at: <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/work-of-the-executive/pfg-budget-economic-strategy/pfg/strategic-online-report-2011-2015.htm>

## Rock Shopfitting International Ltd.

**Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action she will take to safeguard the 100 jobs currently under threat following Tesco's decision to cancel their contract with Rock Shopfitting International Ltd.

**(AQW 25490/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Mr McCafferty contacted me in July 2011 and, at his request, I personally intervened with Tesco senior management regarding an ongoing issue between the companies. At the same time Mr McCafferty met with the staff from Invest NI's North West regional team. I've now instructed Invest NI to contact Mr McCafferty to discuss his company's current situation.

## Department of the Environment

### Aerial Photographs

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 22334/11-15, whether aerial photographs confirmed the presence of a structure on the site.

**(AQW 25152/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment):** I can confirm that as part of the enforcement investigation, the Department obtained aerial photographs which confirmed the presence of a structure on the site.

### Compliance Improvement and Review Team

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment when an answer will be provided to AQW 22040/11-15, given that it was due for answer on 19 April 2013.

**(AQW 25243/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** Following consideration of the issues associated with AQW 22040/11-15 regarding the ongoing audit of minerals planning application files I intend to issue a response within the coming days.

### Moy Park

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of the Environment what steps his Department is taking regarding the planning process of the proposed extension plans by Moy Park.

**(AQW 25252/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** The Department has been in active pre application discussion with Moy Park and other key consultees in relation to the proposed expansion plans. In order to ensure the applications are processed as efficiently as possible the Department has created a dedicated project team based at the South Antrim Area Planning Office in Ballymena. This team will deal strategically with all Moy Park planning applications for poultry units across Northern Ireland.

The importance of this strategic project has been emphasised to staff, key consultees and all Councils likely to be affected by the applications have been advised to highlight the importance of this forthcoming project within their Districts.

I consider the agri-food sector to be a key economic driver and that is why I have ensured that my officials have taken proactive measures to ensure the planning process responds appropriately to the demands of the industry. Overall I see this as a core project for my Department where timely and robust planning decisions can be made that will assist economic recovery here in the North.

### People Employed by Recruitment Agencies

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of people employed by recruitment agencies in (i) his Department; and (ii) arms-length bodies, as of 1 April (a) 2011; (b) 2012; and (c) 2013.

**(AQW 25257/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** The Department has two arms-length bodies – Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) and Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC).

The number of people (headcount) employed by recruitment agencies in the Department and its arms-length bodies (NILGOSC & LGSC) is shown in the following table.

Date	Number of Agency Workers (headcount)			
	DOE	NILGOSC	LGSC	Total
1 April 2011	86	2	0	88
30 March 2012*	144	3	0	147
26 April 2013*	165	1	0	166

\* Closest figures available to 1 April.

## Statutory Transition Committees

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of the Environment what legal standing the guidance issued by his Department has in relation to the nomination process with regard to the Statutory Transition Committees.

**(AQW 25326/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** The current guidance has a legal position in relation to the functions of a statutory transition committee but has no basis in law in relation to the nomination process. The guidance was intended to help Councils make fair and balanced decisions, as expected by the electorate, when nominating members to the statutory transition committees.

In order to allow Councils maximum flexibility, no particular method of democratic selection was prescribed within the statutory transition committee regulations. However, my predecessor did recommend in the guidance that Councils use a recognised method of proportional representation namely d'Hondt, Sainte Lague and Single Transferable Vote. He advocated a light touch approach, believing that Councils should be trusted to demonstrate political maturity and make equitable decisions for the benefit of all citizens and rate payers. With some exceptions, most Councils have complied with the guidance.

I have written to those Councils who have still to comply asking them to re-run their nominations process. I am hopeful they will act accordingly. In the event of a failure to do so I intend to intervene to ensure local government reform proceeds for the benefit of citizens, ratepayers and local business.

## Cyclist Road Deaths

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of the Environment what actions or initiatives are in place to reduce the number of road deaths and serious injuries amongst cyclists.

**(AQW 25331/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** My Department has a statutory duty to promote road safety and, within the context of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy, does this through a wide range of road safety education activities, including road safety public information campaigns and education programmes.

I believe that reducing further all deaths and serious injuries on our roads, with the ultimate ambition of 'Vision Zero', where any death is unacceptable, is an important and achievable objective.

Between 2008 and 2012, six cyclists died on our roads. So far this year three cyclists have died. In 2012, 55 cyclists were seriously injured, an increase from 36 in 2003. The rate of Pedal Cyclist deaths and serious injuries per 100 million kilometers cycled in 2011, the latest figures available, was 77, an increase of 28% on the 2004-2008 baseline of 60.

Drivers are responsible for the majority of collisions, with the main causes being speeding, drink driving and inattention on our roads. Changing the attitudes and behaviours of drivers is therefore the most effective way of protecting all road users and our campaigns concentrate on changing such behaviours.

The Road Safety Strategy recognises cyclists as a vulnerable road user group and includes a range of actions that relate to cyclists' safety that are summarised below.

In October 2011, the Department launched the 'Be Cycle Aware' campaign to remind drivers and cyclists to pay attention when sharing the road. This campaign consists of two radio messages and bus back posters.

In May 2012, a campaign was launched to encourage road users to 'respect everyone's journey'. The important safety messages to drivers will benefit all vulnerable road user groups, including cyclists.

In September 2012, a campaign was launched, focusing on wider road user responsibility, urging all road users to take responsibility for their actions on the road. The television, press and online campaign includes an injured cyclist saying "I was cycling in the bike lane. The driver said the sun was in his eyes."

A further campaign, launched on 24 April 2013, invites everyone to 'Share the Road to Zero'. This is aimed at all road user groups – cyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists, drivers and passengers and, indeed, focuses heavily on cyclists in the opening scenes. The aim is to get every road user to take personal responsibility for helping to prevent deaths on Northern Ireland's roads. The social media aspect of this campaign provides appropriately targeted road safety messages to subscribers. This can be found at [www.sharetheroadtozero.com](http://www.sharetheroadtozero.com)

Rules 204 to 218 in the Highway Code provide advice on how drivers should treat vulnerable road users, including cyclists, with extra care and attention. Advice specifically for cyclists can be found in Rules 59-82. A 'Cycling Skills & Cycling Safety' guide, developed jointly by DOE and DRD, is available in hard copy and online and provides information on the benefits of cycling, on basic safety requirements and on the rules of the road.

The Cycling Proficiency Scheme is offered by the DOE Road Safety Education Officer Service to every primary school in Northern Ireland. Over 530 Primary Schools participate in the scheme each year, with approximately 8,365 children benefiting from the scheme annually.

Given a rise in cyclist casualties, the Department is currently analysing available data and has commissioned qualitative research to help inform consideration of potential new educational activity around cyclist safety.

I recognise the continuing challenges of reducing casualties on our roads, and will take forward further actions as appropriate from this analysis and research.

## **Illegal Dumping Sites**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the twenty five illegal dumping sites that his Department are reviewing.

**(AQW 25338/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** Unfortunately I cannot provide you with the details of the individuals, businesses or locations that the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Environmental Crime Unit is currently investigating in relation to alleged unauthorised dumping. Releasing the identities of those suspected of being involved in criminality would have the potential to damage ongoing investigations. I can however assure you that information will be released on the progress of investigations at an appropriate time.

NIEA is using intelligence coupled with all the legal powers contained in environmental law to identify and act against those believed to be committing criminal offences within the waste management sector – I will not allow authorisations to manage waste that are issued by my Department to be abused to the detriment of the environment, public health and the economy.

## Programme for Government Commitments

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the progress made on each of his Department's Programme for Government commitments.

**(AQW 25352/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** The Department of the Environment has 6 Programme for Government commitments. An update of progress on each commitment is outlined below.

Commitment number 8 – to ensure 90% of large scale investment planning decisions are made within 6 months and applications with job creation potential are given additional weight.

This commitment relates to all major applications designated under Article 31 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991 and other significant development proposals identified by Area Planning Managers. It is being phased in over three years – 2012/13 60%, 2013/14 75% and 2014/15 90%. Large scale investment decisions are monitored on a regular basis and the finalised figures for 2012/13 show 72% were processed within the 6 month target. The Department continues to focus its efforts and resources to ensure this business target of 75% large scale investment decisions are processed within 6 months. Applications will be prioritised and carefully managed throughout the business year.

Commitment number 49 - Implement a levy on single use carrier bags by 2013 and extend this to reusable bags from April 1st 2014.

The 5 pence levy on single use carrier bags launched on 8 April 2013 and has been broadly welcomed by the public and retailers alike.

Provisional returns for the first quarter suggest a substantial reduction in the number of single use bags dispensed by retailers. The Department will publish validated statistics for 2013/14 next year.

The Carrier Bags Bill is currently at Committee Stage in the Assembly. The Bill provides the Department with the powers to extend charging beyond single use bags. Assuming the Bill is passed, the Department plans to use these powers to make Regulations applying the levy to all new carrier bags costing less than 20p.

Commitment number 50 - Continue to work towards a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by at least 35% on 1990 levels by 2025.

The latest greenhouse gas emission figures for Northern Ireland, 1990-2011 were published on 7 June 2013. Northern Ireland's 2011 emissions are estimated at 19,827 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. This represents a decrease of over 5% compared to 2010. This is mainly due to a large reduction in the burning of oil in the residential and business sectors after the exceptionally cold weather in 2010, and a reduction in emissions from coal consumption at power stations. The 2011 emission levels also show a longer term decrease of over 17% since the base year, 1990. This new figure for emissions up to 2011 will now be used (with other information) to provide a fresh estimate of the likely greenhouse gas emissions for 2025. The new projection will be available in the autumn. The previous projection based on 2010 data was for a 28.7% reduction by 2025.

Commitment number 51 - Work towards halting the loss of biodiversity by 2020.

Progress to date includes:

- The launch of an Invasive Species Strategy.
- Consolidation of Conservation Regulations is progressing.
- Development of a revised Biodiversity Strategy is on-going and informal discussions with departments on objectives and actions currently taking place. It is intended that formal consultation will be in late autumn.
- The Marine Division has completed the Rathlin Island European Marine Site Management Scheme after consultation with statutory authorities, non-governmental organisations and private

individuals. The Management Scheme was launched by the Minister on 1 June 2013. It aims to secure compliance with the objectives of the European Habitats and Birds Directives.

Commitment number 52 - Achieve a household waste recycling or composting rate of 45% by end of March 2015.

Provisional results for 2012/13 show a household recycling and composting rate of 40%. The inclement weather in the January-March 2013 quarter did have a negative effect on the recycling rate, resulting in the annual increase being suppressed. Although increasing the recycling rates has been challenging, waste arisings continue to fall demonstrating that the actions in the delivery plan are producing positive results for resource efficiency within Northern Ireland.

Commitment number 75 – Establish the new 11 Council model for Local Government by 2015.

The Local Government Bill has been agreed by the Executive and will be introduced into the Assembly in late September 2013. The Local Government (Statutory Transition Committee) Regulations (NI) 2013 were approved by the Assembly on 1 July 2013 and became operational on 2 July 2013. This provided for the establishment of new statutory transition committees to drive the convergence process at local level. Regulations to provide for severance arrangements for councillors were made in July 2013 and the scheme became operational in August 2013.

## River Faughan

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 24955/11-15, to detail the specifics of the pollution that was detected in the tributary to the River Faughan; and what measures have been taken to prevent this pollution reaching and damaging the River Faughan.

**(AQW 25387/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** NIEA has collected a number of water and effluent samples from both the site and surrounding waterways, as part of the ongoing investigation and to establish impacts. As the results of these samples form a key part of the evidence in this pending prosecution the information is sub judice, and releasing or publicly commenting on them prior to any court hearing could endanger the case. However, I can confirm that the River Faughan does not appear to have been impacted and that sufficient monitoring is in place to detect any problems at an early stage.

Working with NIEA, NIW has facilitated the disposal of the waste effluent captured in a lagoon at the former waste management site at Culmore Waste Water Treatment Works. This waste effluent will be treated at Culmore WWTW over a number of weeks. The removal of this polluting liquid from the Mobuoy Road will further reduce the risk of it entering the watercourses in the area and causing pollution.

I can assure you that NIEA has in place a detailed, ongoing sampling and monitoring programme in the River Faughan and on this site, to ensure that both the river and the public are protected.

## River Faughan

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 24955/11-15, (i) what enforcement action has been taken; (ii) on what date this action was taken; (iii) what future enforcement action will be taken; and (iv) when this action will be taken.

**(AQW 25388/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** As you will appreciate, this is a wide ranging and complex investigation. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has carried out an extensive range of enforcement action to date. A number of days have been spent conducting intrusive inspections of the area gathering evidence of the criminality involved and the polluting potential of the waste being kept. The intrusive surveys took place between August 2012 and July 2013. In addition, a number of private and business premises have been searched under warrant between November 2012 and July 2013.

Two individuals were arrested in November 2012 and have been questioned on a number of occasions. Further individuals have been questioned.

The waste management licence for the waste treatment facility at Mobouy Road was revoked in June 2013 and a number of statutory notices were issued to landowners under both the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 and the Environmental Liability (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009.

The investigation continues and further action is planned. It is not possible to disclose details of planned actions as this might assist those who are subject of the investigation.

## **Mobouy Road**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 24485/11-15, how enforcement action by Strategic Planning Division could have prejudiced any Northern Ireland Environmental Agency criminal investigation into unauthorised mineral extraction at Mobouy Road.

**(AQW 25389/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** In addition to the ongoing investigations by DoE Planning and Local Government Group – Strategic Planning Division, there is a criminal investigation being pursued by NIEA Environmental Crime Unit in relation to alleged illegal landfill at this location.

I therefore cannot elaborate on the details of these investigations as it may result in criminal proceedings and I must ensure that there is no prejudice to this process.

## **Illegal Landfill Site at Mobouy Road, Derry**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment (i) whether the removal of illegal waste at Mobouy Road requires an Environmental Impact Assessment prior to work starting; (ii) how his Department is paying for the removal of this waste; and (iii) whether it will recuperate any of the costs prior to the work starting.

**(AQW 25391/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** At this point in time it is premature to speculate on the manner in which the illegal waste is to be dealt with.

Clearly if the waste was to be removed a great deal of work would be required to develop a method of carrying out the works in order not to cause environmental or health risks as a result. At present the NIEA is using some funding obtained during this financial year to remove waste that was left within the premises of the previously licensed waste management facility and remove leachate from a lagoon within the premises.

In spite of being served with statutory notices, the site was left in a state that was causing a risk of fire and was giving rise to a problem with flies in the area.

It would be the intention of the Department to pursue those suspected of the illegal activities in Operation Sycamore using the full force of the law to recover costs and criminal benefit. As the investigation is still ongoing it would not be appropriate for me to comment in any detail about those matters at this stage.

## **Mobouy Road**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 24485/11-15, why no enforcement action was taken over the unauthorised mineral extraction at Mobouy Road between 2000 and 2012.

**(AQW 25393/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** There have been a number of enforcement cases opened for investigation in relation to unauthorised mineral extraction at Mobouy Road and several remain open at this time. The Department

has also served an Enforcement Notice. The Department has also a number of retrospective planning applications in relation to the unauthorised mineral extraction.

There is also an ongoing NIEA criminal investigation into alleged illegal landfill at this location. It would be inappropriate at this time to provide further comment or detail as it may prejudice that investigation and any subsequent prosecution should this take place.

### **Activity Centre, Fair Road, Greencastle, Kilkeel, Co.Down**

**Ms Ruane** asked the Minister of the Environment when he will reply to my correspondence on a planning application for an Activity Centre, Fair Road, Greencastle, Kilkeel, Co.Down.

**(AQW 25398/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** Your letter of 5 July 2013 was addressed to the then DOE Minister Alex Attwood. Minister Attwood had expressed a wish to visit the site and to review the planning application.

I considered it appropriate to follow through with that commitment. I recently carried out the site visit with planning officials. I will now review the case and respond to your correspondence in the near future.

### **Bar on Co-options to the Existing 26 Local Councils**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has had any discussions with the Northern Ireland Office in relation to the bar on co-options to the existing 26 local councils in 2014; and what was the outcome of these discussions.

**(AQW 25399/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** On 22 July, the Secretary of State wrote to me confirming that she is content to make an amendment to the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 to clarify the co-option provisions in respect of a vacancy which occurs in one of the existing 26 councils from 1 January 2014.

I understand that an Order in Council including provision to extend the period for co-option until 1 January 2015 will be laid at Westminster in the near future.

### **Transition Committees on Local Councils**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he will ensure that the principle of proportionality, whether through the D'hondt allocation process or otherwise, is administered in an equitable way to the transition committees on local councils.

**(AQW 25406/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** I fully support the principle of proportionality and that is demonstrated by the fact that I have written to a number of councils that have not complied with the spirit and intent of the regulations and associated guidance. I have requested that these councils rerun their nomination process using the democratic method of proportional representation outlined in departmental guidance to ensure that the appointees to statutory transition committees are nominated in a fair and equitable manner.

I also believe there is a need for collective responsibility across all political parties represented in councils, which is the reason why I wrote to all party leaders recently asking them to engage with their local councillors about political maturity and impartial decisions that benefit all citizens.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how many Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued for dog fouling in each council, in each of the last two years; (ii) how much these accrued in fines; (iii) how many fines were unpaid; and (iv) how many required court action.

**(AQW 25431/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** The Department obtains statistical information on fixed penalty notices on an annual basis and this relates to financial years rather than calendar years. The Table attached reflects the information provided by all 26 Councils for the 2011/12 and 2012/13 financial years.

The figures for some councils show a smaller number of fines paid compared with fines issued. Apart from straightforward cases where the fine has simply not been paid there may be other factors which explain the difference between some of the figures. In an ideal world every fine would be paid. However, in reality, this will not be the case. On occasion, there will be reasons where to pursue payment would not be in the public interest, for example, where further information about the circumstances of an alleged offender comes to light or where someone that had been issued with a fine had moved and a forwarding address cannot reasonably be obtained.

Council	2011/12				2012/13			
	FPNs Issued 2011/12	FPNs Paid 2011/12	FPN Receipts	Number Of Cases Referred For Court Action For Fixed Penalty Non- Payment	FPNs Issued 2012/13	FPNs Paid 2012/13	FPN Receipts	Number Of Cases Referred For Court Action For Fixed Penalty Non- Payment
Antrim	0	0	0	0	2	2	£100	0
Ards	13	12	£600	0	15	13	£650	0
Armagh	5	2	£100	0	3	2	£100	0
Ballymena	9	9	£450	0	6	6	£300	0
Ballymoney	0	0	0	0	1	1	£50	0
Banbridge	1	0	0	0	3	3	£150	0
Belfast	92	54	£4,725	10	189	118	£6,550	53
Carrickfergus	3	3	£150	0	0	0	0	0
Castlereagh	0	0	0	0	14	13	£650	1
Coleraine	17	13	£650	1	8	5	£250	0
Cookstown	0	0	0	0	1	1	£50	0
Craigavon	38	37	£1,850	0	48	44	£2,200	1
Derry	3	3	£150	0	1	1	£50	0
Down	16	14	£967	0	9	6	£300	0
Dungannon & South Tyrone	0	0	0	0	3	1	£50	1
Fermanagh	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

Council	2011/12				2012/13			
	FPNs Issued 2011/12	FPNs Paid 2011/12	FPN Receipts	Number Of Cases Referred For Court Action For Fixed Penalty Non- Payment	FPNs Issued 2012/13	FPNs Paid 2012/13	FPN Receipts	Number Of Cases Referred For Court Action For Fixed Penalty Non- Payment
Larne	2	2	£100	0	8	7	£350	1
Limavady	0	0	0	0	1	1	£50	0
Lisburn	6	6	£300	0	15	9	£450	0
Magherafelt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Moyle	1	1	£50	0	2	2	£100	0
Newry & Mourne	4	4	£200	0	4	3	£150	0
Newtownabbey	17	13	£650	1	16	16	£870	0
North Down	1	1	£50	0	5	5	£250	0
Omagh	1	1	£50	0	2	1	£50	0
Strabane	2	2	£100	0	7	7	£350	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>£11,142</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>£14,070</b>	<b>57</b>

## Number of Suppliers Invoices

**Mr McClarty** asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of suppliers invoices paid within ten working days of receipt by each local council (i) between 1 April 2013 and 31 August 2013; and (ii) in the 2012/13 financial year.

**(AQW 25435/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** This information is not held by the Department. The details set out in the table below have been provided by individual councils.

<b>Council</b>	<b>(i) 01 April 2013 – 31 August 2013</b>	<b>(ii) 2012/ 2013 financial year</b>
Antrim	1665	2329
Ards	2859	6376
Armagh	1933	4272
Ballymena	2558	4908
Ballymoney	77	1007
Banbridge	647	1824
Belfast	6703	23881
Carrickfergus	635	1495
Castlereagh	2182	8360
*Coleraine	1122	1445
Cookstown	1716	3917
*Craigavon	411	2396
Derry	2818	8547
Down	1941	3919
Dungannon and South Tyrone	1405	3909
Fermanagh	1962	3532
Larne	419	1352
Limavady	1361	1561
Lisburn	1091	6147
Magherafelt	2160	4456
Moyle	471	1004
Newry & Mourne	713	1647
Newtownabbey	5853	10299
North Down	3391	7240
Omagh	1101	2489
Strabane	652	1536

\* Coleraine Borough Council advises that arrangements for the accurate recording of this information were initiated in October 2012, so the figures cover only the period October 2012 – March 2013.

\* Craigavon Borough Council advises that the figures for 2013/2014 cover only from April to June

## Number of Suppliers Invoices

**Mr McClarty** asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of suppliers invoices (i) paid; (ii) paid within 30 days; and (iii) paid later than 30 days by each local council (a) in the 2012/13 financial year; and (b) between 1 April 2013 and 31 August 2013.

**(AQW 25436/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** This information is not held by the Department. The details set out in the following table has been provided by the individual councils.

<b>Council</b>	<b>(i) total paid in period</b>	<b>(ii) paid within 30 days</b>	<b>(iii) paid after 30 days</b>
Antrim	a) 10191 b)4415	a) 5493 b)3019	a) 4698 b)1396
Ards	a) 12034 b)5871	a) 10462 b)4847	a) 1572 b)1024
Armagh	a) 10409 b)5040	a) 9861 b)4768	a) 548 b)272
Ballymena	a) 11700 b)4510	a) 10385 b)4214	a) 1315 b)296
Ballymoney	a) 5811 b)2396	a) 4712 b)1532	a) 1099 b)864
Banbridge	a) 6527 b)2625	a)4293 b)1987	a) 2234 b)638
Belfast	a) 53340 b)22250	a) 42413 b)18160	a) 10927 b)4090
Carrickfergus	a) 6104 b)2206	a) 4081 b)1835	a) 2023 b) 371
Castlereagh	a) 11797 b)3978	a) 11676 b)3838	a) 121 b)140
*Coleraine	a) 4986 b)4741	a) 3955 b)3783	a) 1031 b)958
Cookstown	a) 6231 b) 2567	a) 6101 b) 2514	a) 130 b) 53
*Craigavon	a) 12266 b)2209	a) 8404 b)1436	a) 3862 b)773
Derry	a) 23108 b)8205	a) 18204 b)6308	a) 4904 b)1897
Down	a) 13094 b)5619	a)10525 b)4577	a) 2569 b)1042

<b>Council</b>	<b>(i) total paid in period</b>	<b>(ii) paid within 30 days</b>	<b>(iii) paid after 30 days</b>
Dungannon and South Tyrone	a) 6205 b)2209	a) 5981 b)2174	a) 224 b)35
Fermanagh	a) 10304 b)5120	a) 7983 b)4347	a) 2321 b)770
Larne	a) 5012 b)1260	a) 3579 b)859	a) 1433 b)401
Limavady	a) 7238 b)3306	a) 6110 b)2799	a) 1128 b)507
Lisburn	a) 13371 b)6547	a) 7717 b)4085	a) 5654 b)2462
Magherafelt	a) 6355 b)2709	a) 6138 b)2609	a) 217 b)100
Moyle	a) 3401 b)1561	a) 2554 b)1274	a) 847 b)287
Newry & Mourne	a) 13724 b)5796	a) 8042 b)2709	a) 5682 b)3086
Newtownabbey	a) 17332 b)6475	a)15137 b)6380	a) 2195 b)95
North Down	a) 10571 b)4590	a) 8951 b)4392	a) 1620 b)198
Omagh	a) 5670 b)2457	a) 4408 b)2094	a)1262 b)363
Strabane	a) 4333 b)1611	a) 3659 b)1482	a) 674 b)129

\* Coleraine Borough Council advises that arrangements for the accurate recording of this information were initiated in October 2012, so the figures cover only the period October 2012 – March 2013

\* Craigavon Borough Council advises that the figures for 2013/2014 cover only from April to June.

### **Landowners who Undertake to Drain or Infill Quarries**

**Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 25055/11-15, what plans he has to ease the bureaucratic burden on landowners who voluntarily undertake to drain or infill quarries.  
**(AQW 25455/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** I have no immediate plans to make changes to the current regulatory regime at present. I have asked District Councils to undertake a risk assessment on all disused quarries and this is expected to be completed in the autumn. I will carefully consider the outcome of this risk assessment and seek to identify whether there are any appropriate opportunities to work with landowners to help prevent further tragedy.

## Windfarms

**Ms Lo** asked the Minister of the Environment whether there are any restrictions on developing windfarms in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**(AQW 25461/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** While my Department's policy for assessing windfarm proposals does not distinguish between Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other undesignated landscapes, it is a policy presumption that development will not be allowed where this will result in an unacceptable adverse impact on visual amenity or landscape character of that area.

## Windfarms

**Ms Lo** asked the Minister of the Environment whether there is any zoning of areas for the development of windfarms.

**(AQW 25462/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** There are no zones designated for the development of wind farms in Northern Ireland. The location of proposed developments will be assessed on a case by case basis in line with Planning Policy Statement 18 and associated documents, which aim to facilitate the siting of renewable energy generating facilities in appropriate locations within the built and natural environment, and other regional policy.

## Development of Windfarms

**Ms Lo** asked the Minister of the Environment whether there are any locational guidelines for planners on the development of windfarms.

**(AQW 25463/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** Planning Policy Statement 18 Renewable Energy (PPS 18) sets out the planning policy for development that generates energy from renewable resources, including wind energy. The application of PPS 18 is one of the material considerations that the Department shall have regard to in the determination of planning applications for wind turbines and wind farms.

The policy is accompanied by a 'Best Practice Guidance to Planning Policy Statement 18' document, which provides technical information and guidance on a range of renewable energy technologies.

It is also accompanied by a Supplementary Planning Guidance document entitled 'Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes'. This document, published by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, provides broad and strategic guidance in relation to the visual and landscape impacts of wind energy development.

The supplementary planning guidance document 'Wind Energy Development in Northern Ireland's Landscapes' identifies 130 Landscape Character Areas (LCA) and provides an assessment of the characteristics and values associated with each one. It provides guidance on a number of issues including the broad locations that would be the most suitable for wind energy development, in landscape and visual terms, for each LCA.

When assessing planning applications for wind farms, consideration will therefore be given to PPS18, Best Practice guidance, supplementary planning guidance and also to all other material factors. Although the guidance referred to does not provide site specific locational guidelines it is important to note that a detailed consideration of the particular landscape, visual impacts and locational matters associated with each wind farm planning application will take place on a case by case basis.

## Review of Old Mineral Permissions

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of times that reviews of old mineral permissions have been carried out since 2000; and the number of times since 2000 when an assessment of current minerals permissions have been carried out on special areas of conservation.  
**(AQW 25467/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** While the review of old minerals permissions has not yet commenced, I am exploring options and timelines for introducing this review which will enable my Department to apply up-to-date conditions of operation.

## Single-Use Plastic Bag Levy

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how much his Department now forecasts the single-use plastic bag levy will raise in each year until 2015; (ii) what environmental projects were allocated the £4m originally forecasted from the single-use plastic bag levy; and (iii) whether £4m will continue to be allocated to these projects.  
**(AQW 25468/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** The carrier bag levy is an environmental measure intended to substantially reduce the number of carrier bags issued in Northern Ireland and to encourage the reuse of all types of bags. The evidence from the first quarter of charging shows that the Department, working in conjunction with retailers and consumers, has delivered a step change in bag use.

Retailers provided their returns to the Department of the Environment for the first quarter (8 April to 30 June inclusive) in July 2013. The total amount of revenue collected for this period was £885,000. While a number of factors such as seasonal variation are likely to impact revenue in the remaining quarters of the financial year 2013/14, based on the first quarter returns, the Department anticipates that the single use bag levy will generate in the region of £3m this year (net of operational costs).

The amount of revenue generated by the levy is expected to increase in subsequent years, when the levy will be extended to new carrier bags costing less than 20 pence (both single use and low cost reusable bags). Since retailers do not currently report the number of reusable bags issued here, it is not possible to accurately forecast the amount of additional revenue this is likely to generate. However the general quantum of additional revenue, over and above the £3m from single use bags, is expected to be in the hundreds of thousands of pounds. This reflects the fact that the number of reusable bags issued by retailers is much lower than the number of single use bags.

When shoppers still choose to purchase a new carrier bag, the environmental impact will be offset by investing the levy proceeds in community based projects that deliver environmental improvement. None of the revenue generated from the carrier bag levy has been allocated to projects yet. I intend to make an announcement on this subject in the near future.

## Departmental Economists

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 18791/11-15, to detail the number of times planning service requested the services of departmental economists in 2012.  
**(AQW 25503/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** In 2012 DOE planning requested the services of departmental economists on 5 occasions in relation to assessing planning applications and on 3 occasions in relation to appeal hearings following the Department's decision on a planning application.

## George Best Belfast City Airport

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to Paragraph 1 of the Planning Agreement 2008 between his Department and the George Best Belfast City Airport, to detail the flights that have

taken off from, or arrived at, the airport outside of the agreed extended hours due to reasons other than exceptional circumstances; and what action was taken as a result.

**(AQW 25526/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** George Best Belfast City Airport provides the Department with Seats for Sale and Extensions (late flights after 9.30pm) Log Information on a bi-monthly basis. This information includes explanations for delayed flights which invoke a range of issues typical to a regional airport. The level of extensions at the airport has remained at approximately 1% of the total air traffic movements for the last few years.

I am satisfied that the explanations for late flights which have been provided to date are compliant with the Planning Agreement and that there have been no flights that have taken off from, or arrived at, the airport outside the agreed extended hours due to reasons other than exceptional circumstances.

### Planning Applications for Wind Farms

**Mr Buchanan** asked the Minister of the Environment how many current planning applications for wind farms in each constituency are awaiting a determination.

**(AQW 25580/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** There are currently 44 wind farm applications awaiting determination. The following table details these by constituency:

#### THE NUMBER OF WIND FARM APPLICATIONS THAT WERE PENDING, AS AT 31ST JULY 2013<sup>1</sup>

Constituency	Pending applications
East Antrim	3
East Londonderry	7
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	1
Mid Ulster	2
Newry and Armagh	2
North Antrim	8
South Antrim	1
South Down	2
West Tyrone	18
Total	44

**Notes:**

- 1 Up to 31st July 2013 is currently our latest Renewable Energy information.

### Planning Applications for Wind Farms

**Mr Buchanan** asked the Minister of the Environment how many wind farms, that received approval from the Planning Service in the last five years, had an Environmental Impact Assessment carried out prior to approval being granted.

**(AQW 25581/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** All planning applications for wind farms approved by the Department in the last five years have had an Environmental Impact Assessment carried out prior to approval.

## Planning Applications for Wind Farms

**Mr Buchanan** asked the Minister of the Environment how many wind farms have received planning permission in each of the last five years, broken down by constituency.

**(AQW 25584/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** The following table details windfarm approvals by constituency:

### THE NUMBER OF WIND FARM APPLICATIONS THAT WERE APPROVED, BETWEEN APRIL 2008 AND JULY 2013<sup>1</sup>, BY PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY

	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010	2010/ 2011	2011/ 2012	2012/ 2013	Apr- Jul 2013
Belfast East	0	0	0	1	0	0
East Antrim	1	0	0	0	0	0
East Londonderry	0	2	1	2	3	2
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	2	2	2	1	1	0
Foyle	1	0	0	0	0	0
Lagan Valley	1	0	0	0	0	0
Mid Ulster	0	0	1	2	2	0
Newry and Armagh	0	1	0	0	0	0
North Antrim	1	3	1	1	3	0
South Antrim	0	2	2	1	1	0
West Tyrone	4	4	6	2	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>

#### Notes:

- 1 Latest available fully validated renewable energy information.

## Compliance Improvement and Review Team

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 22037/11-15, on what legal basis he is withholding the reference numbers; and to detail the planning applications.

**(AQW 25615/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** In response to AQW 22037/11-15 my predecessor (Minister Alex Attwood) indicated that there was an ongoing audit of minerals planning application files which had not yet been completed. The reference numbers, locations and descriptions of minerals applications forms part of this audit work which is still in the course of completion.

The Environmental Information Regulations 2004, Part 3, Regulation 12(4)(d) outlines the exception to the duty to disclose environmental information in this instance.

## Protection of Cyclists

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of the Environment what action he is taking to prevent cyclists being killed or seriously injured on roads.

**(AQW 25631/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** My Department has a statutory duty to promote road safety and, within the context of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy, does this through a wide range of road safety education activities, including road safety public information campaigns and education programmes.

I believe that reducing further all deaths and serious injuries on our roads, with the ultimate ambition of 'Vision Zero', where any death is unacceptable, is an important and achievable objective.

Between 2008 and 2012, six cyclists died on our roads. So far this year three cyclists have died. In 2012, 55 cyclists were seriously injured, an increase from 36 in 2003. The rate of Pedal Cyclist deaths and serious injuries per 100 million kilometers cycled in 2011, the latest figures available, was 77, an increase of 28% on the 2004-2008 baseline of 60.

Drivers are responsible for the majority of collisions, with the main causes being speeding, drink driving and inattention on our roads. Changing the attitudes and behaviours of drivers is therefore the most effective way of protecting all road users and our campaigns concentrate on changing such behaviours. The Road Safety Strategy recognises cyclists as a vulnerable road user group and includes a range of actions that relate to cyclists' safety.

In October 2011, the Department launched the 'Be Cycle Aware' campaign to remind drivers and cyclists to pay attention when sharing the road. This campaign consists of two radio messages and bus back posters.

In May 2012, a campaign was launched to encourage road users to 'respect everyone's journey'. The important safety messages to drivers will benefit all vulnerable road user groups, including cyclists.

In September 2012, a campaign was launched, focusing on wider road user responsibility, urging all road users to take responsibility for their actions on the road. The television, press and online campaign includes an injured cyclist saying "I was cycling in the bike lane. The driver said the sun was in his eyes."

A further campaign, launched on 24 April 2013, invites everyone to 'Share the Road to Zero'. This is aimed at all road user groups – cyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists, drivers and passengers and, indeed, focuses heavily on cyclists in the opening scenes. The aim is to get every road user to take personal responsibility for helping to prevent deaths on Northern Ireland's roads. The social media aspect of this campaign provides appropriately targeted road safety messages to subscribers. This can be found at [www.sharetheroadtozero.com](http://www.sharetheroadtozero.com)

A 'Cycling Skills & Cycling Safety' guide, developed jointly by DOE and DRD, is available in hard copy and online and provides information on the benefits of cycling, on basic safety requirements and on the rules of the road.

The Cycling Proficiency Scheme is offered by the DOE Road Safety Education Officer Service to every primary school in Northern Ireland. Over 530 Primary Schools participate in the scheme each year, with approximately 8,365 children benefiting from the scheme annually.

Rules 204 to 218 in the Highway Code provide advice on how drivers should treat vulnerable road users, including cyclists, with extra care and attention. Advice specifically for cyclists can be found in Rules 59-82.

Given a rise in cyclist casualties, the Department is currently analysing available data and has commissioned qualitative research to help inform consideration of potential new educational activity around cyclist safety.

I recognise the continuing challenges of reducing casualties on our roads, and will take forward further actions as appropriate from this analysis and research.

## Protection of Cyclists

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of the Environment what proposals he has to make roads safer for cyclists.

**(AQW 25637/11-15)**

**Mr Durkan:** My Department has a statutory duty to promote road safety and, within the context of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy, does this through a wide range of road safety education activities, including road safety public information campaigns and education programmes.

I believe that reducing further all deaths and serious injuries on our roads, with the ultimate ambition of 'Vision Zero', where any death is unacceptable, is an important and achievable objective.

Between 2008 and 2012, six cyclists died on our roads. So far this year three cyclists have died. In 2012, 55 cyclists were seriously injured, an increase from 36 in 2003. The rate of Pedal Cyclist deaths and serious injuries per 100 million kilometers cycled in 2011, the latest figures available, was 77, an increase of 28% on the 2004-2008 baseline of 60.

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Given a rise in cyclist casualties, the Department is currently analysing available data and has commissioned qualitative research to help inform consideration of potential new educational activity around cyclist safety.

I recognise the continuing challenges of reducing casualties on our roads, and will take forward further actions as appropriate from this analysis and research.

## Department of Finance and Personnel

### Deaths by Suicide

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of (i) deaths by suicide; (ii) deaths from complications following a suicide attempt; and (iii) suspected deaths by suicide in cases where there has not been an inquest or coroner verdict, in each of the last five years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust area.

**(AQW 25307/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):** The table overleaf details the number of deaths registered as a suicide<sup>1</sup> in Northern Ireland, for 2008 to 2012, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust Area.

Cause of death is based on a medical or coroner's certificate. The certifying doctor or coroner states the direct cause of death (e.g. 'Suicide') on the certificate. It would thus be very unusual for "Complications following a suicide attempt" to be written on a death certificate.

There is a duty placed on all medical practitioners (and others for example the Registrar of Deaths or Funeral Directors) and the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) in the 1959 Coroners Act (Northern Ireland) to report all deaths from unnatural causes to the coroner for investigation. This would include all cases of known or suspected suicide. The PSNI Investigating Officer must then collate an inquest file on behalf of the coroner to investigate the full circumstances surrounding the death. Once the file is complete the coroner will decide if an inquest is necessary. This is dependent on the circumstances of the death and the final report of the post mortem examination.

The purpose of the coroner's investigation, with or without inquest is to find out who the person was and, how, when and where they died and to establish the details the Registrar of Deaths needs to register the death. There should therefore be no instances in Northern Ireland of any suspected suicide being registered which has not been the subject of a coroner's investigation.

<sup>1</sup> In considering suicide events it is conventional to include cases where the cause of death is classified as either 'Suicide and self-inflicted injury' or 'Undetermined injury'. Since 2001, the ICD10 codes used for 'Suicide and self-inflicted injury' are X60-X84 and Y87.0 and the ICD10 codes used for 'Undetermined injury' are Y10-Y34 and Y87.

**TABLE 1: NUMBER OF DEATHS REGISTERED AS SUICIDE<sup>1</sup> IN NORTHERN IRELAND BY HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST AREA, 2008-2012**

Health & Social Care Trust	Registration Year				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012P
Belfast HSCT	68	72	79	80	72
Northern HSCT	55	54	65	61	67
South Eastern HSCT	37	32	65	52	47
Southern HSCT	69	47	51	57	46
Western HSCT	53	55	53	39	46
Northern Ireland	282	260	313	289	278

<sup>1</sup> In considering suicide events it is conventional to include cases where the cause of death is classified as either 'Suicide and self-inflicted injury' or 'Undetermined injury'. Since 2001, the ICD10 codes used for 'Suicide and self-inflicted injury' are X60-X84 and Y87.0 and the ICD10 codes used for 'Undetermined injury' are Y10-Y34 and Y87.

P Data for 2012 remains provisional until the publication of the Annual Report of the Registrar General in late 2013.

## Rates Relief

**Mr Cree** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of households in receipt of Rates Relief at the end of the financial year 2012-13.

**(AQW 25492/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** Only one person in a household can obtain Rate Relief. As at 31st March 2013 there were a total of 17,563 live Rate Relief awards.

The figure provided relates to claims for Rate Relief administered by Land & Property Services.

## Rates Relief Scheme

**Mr Cree** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail how many people on the Rates Relief Scheme were in employment during the financial year 2012-13.

**(AQW 25493/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** Information on the employment status of rate relief recipients is not available. Of the 17,563 live awards of Rate Relief at 31st March 2013, a total of 5,824 households had reported some earned income.

The figures provided relate to claims for Rate Relief administered by Land & Property Services.

## Northern Ireland Community Safety College at Desertcreat

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he has approved the process for the development and construction contract of the new Northern Ireland Community Safety College at Desertcreat.

**(AQW 25534/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** Having completed their internal processes and endorsed the business case for the Northern Ireland Community Safety College at Desertcreat, the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) formally submitted a joint business case to my Department (DFP). Following consideration this case received DFP approval in September 2011.

Following this DOJ invited tenders for the project. It was soon clear that the tender responses were in excess of costs in the approved business case. To address this, a bill of reductions exercise was necessary and an Addendum to the business case required to ensure value for money and that the ethos and functionality of the college is maintained. The Addendum will require DFP approval, but as yet it has not been received.

DOJ and DHSSPS appointed Health Estates as their Centre of Procurement Excellence (CoPE), whose role was to take forward the procurement process for the Northern Ireland Community Safety. The process for the development and construction contract itself therefore is not an issue for my Department but the appointed Centre of Procurement Excellence.

## Sub-Contractors

**Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 22464/11-15 to detail the (i) sub-contractors; and (ii) value of the contracts.

**(AQW 25603/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** The positional improvement part of the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) Improvement Project was carried out by two Land & Property Services sub-contractors DSM Geodata Ltd and BLOM Aerofilms Ltd.

The total monies spent on the contracts, now completed, totalled £2.43 million. The DSM contract accounted for £1.14 million and the BLOM contract accounted for £1.29 million

## Northern Ireland Civil Service Pensions

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consideration he has given to ensuring that correspondence sent to members of the public regarding Northern Ireland Civil Service pensions can be understood by the recipient, who is unlikely to have in-depth actuarial knowledge.

**(AQW 25665/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** Civil Service Pensions has a dedicated Communications Section responsible for maintaining the website, booklets, leaflets and standard letters which are issued to scheme members. In all their literature and correspondence Civil Service Pensions Branch endeavours to use plain English. Where technical terms are used in the booklets and leaflets they are put in bold and explained in a Glossary Section. Pensions is a complex area and therefore Civil Service Pensions also recommends that members seek financial advice when making life changing decisions relating to their pension.

## Rates Revenue

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an estimate of the rates revenue that has been lost since 2007 as a result of the closure of retail outlets due to the recession.

**(AQO 4537/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** Land & Property Services does not collect or generally hold information on why retail outlets close down or vacate premises. There are many reasons why a business or retail outlet closes, for example retirement, lack of sales due to the increase in e-commerce, competition, movement to another location and so on. For this reason LPS is unable to provide an estimate of rate revenue that has been lost since 2007 as a result of the closure of retail outlets due to the recession.

## Rates Relief Scheme: Pensioners

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many pensioners were included in the 2012/13 Rates Relief Scheme.

**(AQO 4544/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** There were approximately 17,500 pensioners included in the 2012/13 Rate Relief Scheme, over 11,000 of these were owner occupiers and around 6,500 were tenants.

The Low Income Rate Relief scheme was introduced under Direct Rule in April 2007 to address shortcoming in the rating system where there were virtually no reliefs beyond those available through the housing benefit system. It is a top up scheme which provides assistance to those low income households that are just beyond the thresholds for Housing Benefit or that are in receipt of partial Housing Benefit. The scheme was biased in favour of pensioners, particularly those who are asset rich and income poor. The scheme costs the NI Executive almost £7m per annum.

Since its introduction other allowances were introduced by the NI Assembly to help moderate the excesses of the new rating system, including the £400,000 value cap and the Lone Pensioner Allowance.

My Department is currently out for consultation on removal of the top up scheme. This is so we can better afford to retain the main rate rebate scheme which currently helps around 225,000 of our lowest income households but is faced with a 10% cut in funding imposed by HM Government – a cut that applies throughout the UK.

Before jumping to conclusions on the removal of the top up scheme I would urge members to study the worked examples in the consultation paper, as they do show that the scheme is not targeted at the poorest households, whether that be pensioners or those of working age.

Given the continuing public spending squeeze, we have to look at these things in terms of what are our real priorities in terms of helping those least able to pay rates.

## Capital Resource Allocation

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how he intends to proceed with the allocation of resources freed up by the delay in the A5 and the additional capital allocated by Her Majesty's Government.

**(AQO 4536/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** As the Member will recall, the Executive agreed as part of June Monitoring that my officials would commission a capital budget reallocation exercise for the 2014-15 financial year. The main objective of this exercise is to reallocate capital funding that has become available due to delay in projects such as the A5 road scheme and additional allocations received from HM Treasury.

An important element of this exercise will also be to make further progress on allocating out the Financial Transactions capital funding the Executive has available over the next three years.

The capital budget reallocation exercise is now well underway and I intend to inform the Assembly of the outcome once the Executive has considered my proposals as part of the October Monitoring round.

## Surplus Land Sales

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what assets have been raised through the sale of surplus land through Land and Property Services over the last three years.

**(AQO 4538/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** I am presuming that the Member is referring to monies realised from the sale of surplus land and buildings managed through Land & Property Services (LPS).

I can report that in the period January 2010 to August 2013 the total sales proceeds realised from the sale of surplus land and buildings through LPS amounted to £39,188,373. This figure includes all land and buildings sold on the open market as well as properties sold to other public sector bodies. A further £2,554,375 of sales are agreed "subject to contract."

## Economic Pact

**Mr Douglas** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on his Department's role in the implementation of the Economic Pact.

**(AQO 4539/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** My Department is responsible for taking forward a range of actions included in the Economic Pact and will report to the First and deputy First Minister on progress. Broadly speaking these are on track to meet the agreed delivery timetable.

For example, work on allocating the £100 million in additional borrowing is underway as part of a 2014-15 Capital reallocation exercise, while my officials are in discussions with their BIS counterparts to confirm Northern Ireland's allocation in respect of both the PEACE and INTERREG Programmes.

Furthermore, within the last couple of weeks I have held a series of meetings with the Secretary of State, the Chief Executive of the British Bankers Association, and the Irish Finance Minister to help progress access to finance issues. Work is also ongoing to prepare for the implementation of any positive decision on the devolution of Corporation Tax and in considering the case for Enterprise Zones and the potential for devolving additional fiscal powers.

My Department and I will continue to work to progress these and the other issues in the Economic Pact significantly over the coming months.

## Zero-Carbon Homes

**Mr Byrne** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what efforts his Department has made to promote the development of Zero Carbon Homes through the rates process.

**(AQO 4540/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** In 2009 my Department introduced a scheme to provide a rates holiday to the first occupiers of newly built zero and low carbon houses. However my predecessor closed the scheme in 2012 due to the high cost of administration and the relatively low take up. He chose instead to transfer the funding to the Green New Deal, in order to make better use of available money in pursuit of similar aims.

I have no plans to resurrect the scheme.

## Public Sector Reform

**Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how the new Public Sector Reform Division will operate.

**(AQO 4541/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** I firmly believe people in Northern Ireland are entitled to world class public services both in terms of the quality and coverage of those services, and to achieve this goal, we need to make the Executive's resources stretch as far as possible. I have therefore established, within my department, a new Public Sector Reform Division to be a catalyst for change and improvement, designed to support and enable departments, arms length bodies and local government to deliver more effective public services.

Creating a more competitive government will both improve our public services and help to stimulate economic growth. There is certainly potential to deliver public services in a more cost effective and efficient manner, for example, by thinking innovatively about procurement and by ensuring we have in place the most effective delivery models. The new reformed RPA structure creates opportunities for new, larger councils to engage in collaborative procurement and shared service undertakings. Organisations like the European Investment Bank are keen to assist in developing our infrastructure but the previous local authority structure and HM Treasury rules frequently hindered such developments advancing.

The new Reform Division will also have a key role to play in encouraging the private sector and local authorities to bring forward investments that can utilise the increasing amounts of Financial Transactions Capital that the Executive receives from HM Treasury.

## Rates Liability for the Landlord Sector

**Mr McGimpsey** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of any preliminary findings of the consultation on the review of Rates Liability for the Landlord Sector.

**(AQO 4542/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** My Department has recently published the outcome of the consultation on review of rates liability for the landlord sector on the Rating Policy Division website.

The consultation closed on the 28 June 2013. A total of 16 responses to the consultation exercise were received, consisting of 2 businesses, 8 organisations, 2 district councils, 1 political party and 3 ratepayers.

My initial assessment is that the policy proposals to simplify the current arrangements were well supported by the consultation and I am inclined to make these relatively straightforward changes, with the Assembly's support, through new legislation. The measures to be taken forward will remove the need for landlords to provide tenancy agreements to LPS and will also standardise the level of allowance.

Furthermore my Department has also put in place administrative arrangements to deal with difficult cases. However, the Department must act in accordance with the legislation when assessing rate liability and recovering outstanding debt.

I should add that some consultees want radical changes to be made to the rating system. They lie in opposing camps - landlords would like tenants to be liable in all cases and vice versa for the advice sector.

Either of those approaches would represent a major change and I am not convinced that now is the time to do that given everything else that is going on, in particular Welfare Reform with the difficult question of direct payment of housing costs to landlords. I think the sensible thing is to wait before we do anything radical with the rates and we can revisit this whole area at a better time.

### **Rates: Capital Value Limit**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consideration has been given to removing the statutory maximum capital value limit for rating purposes instead of scrapping rate relief payments, as proposed by his predecessor.

**(AQO 4543/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** This particular issue was consulted upon during my Department's preliminary public consultation which took place between January and April this year. A few organisations suggested this as an alternative way of helping close the funding gap caused by the restricted funds now provided for rate rebate under Housing Benefit.

However, I share the views of my predecessor that this measure, which was introduced following the Executive's 2007 Review of the Domestic Rating system, remains relevant today as it continues to moderate one of the extreme effects of the rating system introduced under Direct Rule. It does this by ensuring that no ratepayer in Northern Ireland pays more than the average of someone in the highest council tax band in England.

Whilst I am not one for keeping old policies that are redundant or don't do their job properly or are low priority, I think I am on safe ground in saying that what was fair then, remains fair today. For this reason I am not keen to pursue this particular suggestion. However, before making my mind up on the matter I would like to consider the outcome of the current consultation on the future of Rate Rebate.

### **Fiscal Powers**

**Mr Ó hAisín** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the recent research report produced by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action regarding the potential for enhanced fiscal powers.

**(AQO 4545/11-15)**

**Mr Hamilton:** NICVA's recent report on the Assembly's fiscal powers provides a useful contribution on the debate on this matter it sets out the current Scottish and Welsh approaches to fiscal devolution and using that identifies some further fiscal powers that we might seek. However, in considering this it is important to recognise that the context and rationale behind the devolution process in the other administrations is somewhat different from our own.

Financial accountability has been a major focus for Scotland and Wales whilst in contrast we have, unapologetically, taken an economic focus thus far. Increasing accountability is about bringing the revenues you raise more into line with the monies that you spend. That is why income tax powers are such a big part of this for Scotland and Wales. While Corporation tax with a total tax base of maybe £800m-£900m remains a possibility, it would in my view be unwise to seek devolution of any other substantial tax.

That said, we are examining the potential for devolving specific additional powers in line with that commitment in the Economic Pact.

## Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

### Children who have Cardiac Procedures

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of local children who have required cardiac procedures in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 25302/11-15)**

**Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety):** Information on the number of cardiac procedures carried out on local children, in each of the last five years is detailed in the table below.

Year	Number of cardiac procedures
2008/09*	111
2009/10*	97
2010/11	121
2011/12	131
2012/13	132

**Source:** Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Information Department and the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Board (HSCB)

\* HSCB was unable to provide data on the number of cardiac procedures undertaken during 2008/09 and 2009/10. As such the figures for these years relate only to those children resident in Northern Ireland who were treated at the Belfast HSCT.

### Children who have had Cardiac Procedures

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of local children that have had cardiac procedures completed in (i) Northern Ireland; (ii) Republic of Ireland; and (iii) England, in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 25303/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Information on the number of paediatric cardiac procedures carried out on children resident in Northern Ireland, in each of the last three years is detailed in the table below.

Year	Northern Ireland <sup>1</sup>	Republic of Ireland <sup>2</sup>	England <sup>2</sup>
2010/11	70	9	42
2011/12	80	15	36
2012/13	58	40 <sup>P</sup>	34 <sup>P</sup>

**Source:**

- 1 Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Information Department
- 2 Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Board (HSCB)

**Note:**

- P 2012/13 is provisional and subject to validation

## Loane House

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety if the closure of twelve beds by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust in Loane House, South Tyrone Hospital, is (i) temporary, and if so, for how long; or (ii) permanent, and if so, why.

**(AQW 25312/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** There has been a temporary closure of 12 beds at Loane House due to a downturn in demand over the summer months. The Southern Health and Social Care Trust has advised that as soon as the rate of referrals to Loane House increases the beds would be reopened.

## Complaints Against Nursing Staff

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why complaints against doctors and dentists are dealt with by an independent body but complaints against nursing staff are dealt with internally; and to outline the plans he has to bring independent oversight and appeal procedures to the nursing profession.

**(AQW 25344/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The procedures for dealing with all HSC staff, including doctors and nurses, are employer led and managed internally. In addition, in serious cases, HSC employers may make referrals to relevant professional bodies e.g. Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) in the case of nurses or General Medical Council (GMC) in the case of doctors.

I have no plans to bring independent oversight and appeal procedures to the nursing profession.

## Complaints Against Nursing Staff

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the criteria that is used for immediate suspension of nurses following complaints; and how the rate of suspension compares with complaints against doctors that are now dealt with by an independent investigatory body.

**(AQW 25345/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The immediate suspension of a nurse will apply on lapse of registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). In other cases, immediate suspension may be appropriate where gross misconduct is suspected or alleged and where continued working may give rise to further misconduct or interference with the process of fair investigation. In the calendar year ending December 2012, 53 nurses were suspended compared to 3 doctors.

## Missed GP Appointments

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many appointments were missed at (i) GP surgeries in North Down; (ii) Bangor Hospital; (iii) Newtownards Hospital; and (iv) the Ulster Hospital, over the last twelve months.

**(AQW 25371/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:**

- (i) General Practitioners (GPs) are independent contractors who contract with the Health and Social Care Board to provide Primary Medical Services to their patients. As independent contractors, GPs are responsible for the day to day management of their practice, including patient appointment arrangements, therefore information on missed appointments is not collated centrally and therefore could only be available at disproportionate cost. (AQW 25371/11-15 & AQW 25372/11-15)
- (ii) – (iv) The number of outpatient appointments missed at Bangor Hospital, Newtownards Hospital and Ulster Hospital, in each quarter of the last twelve months, is shown in the table overleaf. These figures represent the number of outpatient appointments where a patient did not attend (DNA) and failed to give advance warning to the hospital. (AQW 25371/11-15)

When assessing the level of missed outpatient appointments, it is more appropriate to consider these in the context of the total number of outpatient attendances, in order to provide a more comparative trend analysis. This involves the calculation of a standardised measure of missed appointments, which is called a DNA rate. DNA rates are also presented in the table below.

Hospital	Quarter Ending	No. of Missed Outpatient Appointments	Missed appointment (DNA) rate <sup>1</sup>
Bangor	September 2012	223	7.3
	December 2012	252	7.8
	March 2013	259	7.8
	June 2013 <sup>P</sup>	222	6.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>956</b>	<b>7.4</b>
Newtownards	September 2012	503	8.9
	December 2012	509	9.1
	March 2013	560	10.0
	June 2013 <sup>P</sup>	526	9.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,098</b>	<b>9.3</b>
Ulster	September 2012	3,725	10.2
	December 2012	3,939	10.1
	March 2013	4,090	10.6
	June 2013 <sup>P</sup>	4,044	10.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15,798</b>	<b>10.3</b>

**Source:** Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (QOAR) Part 1

<sup>P</sup> Data is currently provisional

1 The DNA rate is calculated as follows: (Number of missed appointments/(Number of outpatient attendances + Number of missed appointments))\*100

The cost of a hospital appointment being missed can only be provided at disproportionate cost. (AQW 25372/11-15)

## Missed GP Appointments

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of missed appointments at (i) GP surgeries in North Down; (ii) Bangor Hospital; (iii) Newtownards Hospital; and (iv) the Ulster Hospital, over the last twelve months.

**(AQW 25372/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:**

- (i) General Practitioners (GPs) are independent contractors who contract with the Health and Social Care Board to provide Primary Medical Services to their patients. As independent contractors, GPs are responsible for the day to day management of their practice, including patient appointment arrangements, therefore information on missed appointments is not collated centrally and therefore could only be available at disproportionate cost. (AQW 25371/11-15 & AQW 25372/11-15)

- (ii) – (iv) The number of outpatient appointments missed at Bangor Hospital, Newtownards Hospital and Ulster Hospital, in each quarter of the last twelve months, is shown in the table overleaf. These figures represent the number of outpatient appointments where a patient did not attend (DNA) and failed to give advance warning to the hospital. (AQW 25371/11-15)

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P Data is currently provisional

- 1 The DNA rate is calculated as follows: (Number of missed appointments/(Number of outpatient attendances + Number of missed appointments))\*100

The cost of a hospital appointment being missed can only be provided at disproportionate cost. (AQW 25372/11-15)

### **Profoundly Deaf Children.**

**Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assistance his Department provides for the parents of profoundly deaf children.

**(AQW 25374/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Following diagnosis and assessment, appropriate advice and guidance is given to parents and/or carers by Health and Social Care Trusts. These include for example, counselling support, parents support groups and family sign classes. Any child who is profoundly deaf is entitled to be assessed under the Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland framework, which includes a section on the needs of carers.

In addition, my Department's Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy which was published in 2012, recognises the important role that carers play in lives of children with disabilities. The needs of children and their carers are also being addressed through the Children with Disabilities Sub-group of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership which includes representatives from the field of sensory disability, including the National Deaf Children's Society

The Health and Social Care Board has also recently identified an additional £750k of funding support for the carers of children with a disability.

### **Elderly People in Carrickfergus**

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what provision exists in the Carrickfergus area for elderly people who require (i) residential care; and (ii) respite care; and what is the current waiting time for each.

**(AQW 25433/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Northern HSC trust has informed me that there are 3 care homes in the Carrickfergus area which provide, amongst other services, residential care for the elderly.

The Trust also advises that there are 2 dedicated respite care beds available in Joymount Residential Unit. Should demand for respite beds increase the Trust will commission additional capacity from the independent sector to meet this need.

There is currently no waiting list for residential or respite care in the area.

### **Joymount House**

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many beds for respite care were available in Joymount House between the 28 June and 7 July 2013.

**(AQW 25434/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The information is not held centrally and was requested from the Northern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust.

The Northern HSC Trust stated that there are 2 dedicated respite beds in Joymount House. Both were occupied between the 28 June and 7 July 2013.

### **Number of Suppliers Invoices**

**Mr McClarty** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of suppliers invoices (i) paid; and (ii) paid within ten working days of receipt by each Health and Social Care Trust (a) between 1 April 2013 and 31 August 2013; and (b) in the 2012/13 financial year.

**(AQW 25438/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The number of invoices paid by each Health and Social Care Trust and the number paid within ten working days of receipt (a) between 1 April 2013 and 31 August 2013; and (b) in the 2012/13 financial year are contained in the table below.

<b>Trust</b>	<b>1 April 2013 to 31 August 2013</b>		<b>2012/13 Annual Accounts</b>	
	<b>Total Invoices paid</b>	<b>Total paid within 10 working days</b>	<b>Total Invoices paid</b>	<b>Total paid within 10 working days</b>
Belfast	154,103	93,605	365,366	141,411
Northern	36,232	14,806	144,344	64,211
Southern	48,608	23,762	123,324	59,689

Trust	1 April 2013 to 31 August 2013		2012/13 Annual Accounts	
	Total Invoices paid	Total paid within 10 working days	Total Invoices paid	Total paid within 10 working days
South Eastern	55,736	25,724	148,914	74,183
Western	47,432	33,295	119,570	76,188
N.I.A.S.	6,233	1,243	14,690	3,467

### Fees Paid to Private Nursing and Care Homes

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority has expressed a view on the sufficiency of the present level of fees paid to private nursing and care homes, having regard to the standards which they require.

**(AQW 25441/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The level of fees is a matter for agreement between the provider and the placing authority, normally a Health and Social Care Trust or in the case of private funders, an individual client or their representative.

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority as an independent arms length body is required to register and inspect all residential care and nursing homes in accordance with regulations and against minimum care standards published by the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety.

Regulations include a requirement that the provider furnishes the patient or resident with a statement specifying the fees payable and to notify in advance, any increase in fees.

RQIA as regulator monitors compliance with the regulations but has no role in the setting of such fees.

### Ex-Service Personnel

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many ex-service personnel, who served during 31 August 1969 and 31 July 2007, from the (i) armed forces; (ii) UDR; (iii) RUC; and (iv) Prison Service are currently suffering from (a) mental health issues; and (b) physical injury.

**(AQW 25494/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** This information is not collected by the DHSSPS.

### Bangor Hospital

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are currently available at Bangor Hospital.

**(AQW 25499/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Current services at Bangor Hospital consist of a wide range of outpatient clinics including diabetes, chest, rheumatology, gynaecology, skin, pain, audiology, sexual health and reproductive services, wound management, lymphoedema, and continence. The hospital also houses a therapy and rehabilitation centre, minor injuries unit, radiology service, along with medical outpatients and 20 GP inpatient beds. Bangor Hospital also contains offices for Cruse Bereavement Care.

## Northern Ireland Community Safety College at Desertcreat

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has agreed the process for development and the construction contract of the new Northern Ireland Community Safety College at Desertcreat.

**(AQW 25550/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** This project is being procured and funded through the normal method of public capital procurement using competitive tendering processes, in line with DFP and Departmental guidance. The project is now at the stage where consideration is being given to the appointment of the preferred bidder.

As you will be aware the costs of this project have increased since the business case was approved in 2011, requiring approval of the addendum to the business case by all parties – Departments and the three relevant bodies. This is currently underway.

## Bangor Hospital

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many outpatients have attended Bangor Hospital over the last three years.

**(AQW 25594/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** This information is not collected by the DHSSPS.

## Foundation Dentists

**Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many places were available for Foundation Dentists commencing practice based training in August 2013.

**(AQW 25596/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** There were 34 places available in Northern Ireland for Foundation Dentists commencing practice based training in August 2013.

## Child Care Services

**Ms McGahan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the child care services and providers located in the South Tyrone constituency.

**(AQW 25609/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The website, [www.familysupportni.gov.uk](http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk), lists all registered childcare providers across Northern Ireland. Registered childminders are also included on the website apart from a small number who have requested that their details are withheld on security grounds.

A list of registered childcare providers in the South Tyrone constituency is attached.

### REGISTERED CHILDCARE PROVISION IN SOUTH TYRONE CONSTITUENCY

Name	Postcode
Caledon Playgroup	BT68 4UF
Aughnacloy Parent & Toddler Group	BT69 6AX
Aughnacloy Playgroup Ltd	BT69 6DU
Dungannon SureStart Ballysaggart Time 2 Be Me 2YOP	BT70 1BS
Kiddiwinkles at Ballysaggart	BT70 1BS
Little Ladybird Adult & Child Group	BT70 1BS

<b>Name</b>	<b>Postcode</b>
Naiscoil Aodha Rua	BT70 1HD
The Roundabout Club	BT70 1HE
Rainbow Playgroup	BT70 1LE
Ballygawley Cross Community Parent & Toddler Group	BT70 2HD
Galbally Parent & Toddler Group	BT70 2NX
Lollipop Playgroup	BT70 3DL
Tarrant Tots Parent and Toddler	BT70 3DL
Ballygawley Early Years Ltd Playgroup	BT702HD
Paddington Playgroup	BT702NX
Newmills Parent & Toddler Group	BT71 4BL
Newmills Playgroup	BT71 4HJ
Forever Friends Playgroup	BT71 4JJ
Jumpin Jacks Parent & Toddler Group	BT71 4LS
Happy Days Playgroup (Coalisland)	BT71 4NW
An Tearmann Parent & Toddler Group	BT71 4PF
Krafty Kidz Afterschool	BT71 4PF
Little Teddy Bear Parent and Toddler Group	BT71 4PF
Time To Be Me	BT71 4PF
Iar Scoil Ui Neill	BT71 4PU
Little bo Beep Parent & Toddler Group	BT71 4PU
Busy Kids Day Nursery	BT71 4QZ
Busy Kids Out Of School Club	BT71 4QZ
Brockagh Playgroup	BT71 5DX
Jolly Tots	BT71 6AA
Dungannon Campus Out of School Club	BT71 6BE
Washingford @ Sth West College	BT71 6BQ
Kiddiwinkles Afterschool Club	BT71 6DE
Kiddiwinkles Playgroup	BT71 6DE
Tiny Stars Playgroup	BT71 6HX
Loughshore Playgroup	BT71 6PA
Rainbow Community Child Care Day Nursery	BT71 6PW
Rainbow Community Childcare Out of School Club	BT71 6PW
Kiddiwinkles Day Nursery	BT71 6QD
Little Sunbeams Parent and Toddler Group	BT71 6RL

<b>Name</b>	<b>Postcode</b>
St Peter's Out of School Club	BT71 6SW
St Peter's Playgroup	BT71 6SW
Washingford Day Care	BT71 7BG
Washingford Day Care After School	BT71 7BG
Washingford Playgroup	BT71 7BG
Kute Little Treasures Day Nursery	BT71 7HJ
Kute Little Treasures Out of School Club	BT71 7HJ
Benburb Community Playgroup	BT71 7JT
Little Stars Parent & Toddler Group	BT71 7RG
Humpty Dumpty Playgroup	BT71 7RJ
Moy Community Playgroup	BT71 7SN
Panda Playgroup	BT711TH
Little Acorns Playgroup Laghey	BT716RJ
Killyman Playgroup	BT716RL
Kids R Us	BT75 0PA
Fivemiletown Out of School Club	BT75 0PQ
Clogher Valley Playgroup	BT76 0UW
Clogher Valley SS Two's Company	BT77 0BG
Woodland Adventure Playgroup	BT77 0ET

#### **REGISTERED CHILDMINDERS IN SOUTH TYRONE CONSTITUENCY**

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Post Code</b>
Wendy	Beatty	BT69 6DB
Lorna	Kyle	BT69 6DU
Helen	Cadoo	BT69 6EW
Eimear	Lowe	BT70 1HG
Eimear	Lowe	BT70 1HG
Olive	Reid	BT70 1LB
Frances	McKillion	BT70 1LZ
Linda	Symington	BT70 1NN
Fiona	Currie	BT70 1QX
Alberta	Hall	BT70 1SG
Sabrina	Mullin	BT70 1SR
Jayne	McArdle	BT70 1SU

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Post Code</b>
Donna	Mallon	BT70 1TF
Wendy	McFarland	BT70 1TW
Lisa	McCrystal	BT70 2EY
Brenda	Douglas	BT70 2HA
Sheila	McBride	BT70 2JF
Roberta	Devlin	BT70 2JN
Joanne	Galloway	BT70 2JU
Noleen	Carson	BT70 2LJ
Lorraine	Gillespie	BT70 2ND
Sylvia	Gates	BT70 2TZ
Zoe	Burrows	BT70 3AB
Ann	Muldoon	BT70 3AT
Siobhan	McVeigh	BT70 3BP
Mairead	McKane	BT70 3BT
Denise	McCann	BT70 3BW
Maria	Heatherington	BT70 3EL
Iwona	Wnek-Labedzka	BT70 3EL
Patricia	Shields	BT70 3EU
Annmarie	Kelly	BT70 3GZ
Veronica	Hughes	BT70 3GZ
Roseleen	Donaghy	BT70 3HH
Margaret	Hamill	BT70 3Lu
Paula	Allen	BT70 3LY
Ciara	Campbell	BT70 5DA
Jill	Crooks	BT71 4BG
Estelle	Evans	BT71 4DW
Jennifer	Wilson	BT71 4EE
Edith	Reid	BT71 4ES
Esther	Little	BT71 4GX
Tracey	Rodgers	BT71 4HJ
Orla	Hughes	BT71 4LF
Grainne	Scullion	BT71 4LW
Julie	Hughes	BT71 4LW
Bernie	Campbell	BT71 4LY

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Post Code</b>
Petra	Toner	BT71 4NG
Sheenagh	Corr	BT71 4PF
Paula	Quinn	BT71 4PT
Claire	Scullion	BT71 4RT
Lea	Bleeks	BT71 4ST
Alicia	McDonald	BT71 4TH
Sinead	Daly	BT71 4XF
Roisin	Coyle	BT71 5EN
Fiona	McKeown	BT71 5EW
Karen	Brodison	BT71 5PX
Linda	Burrows	BT71 5QQ
Evelyn	Holmes	BT71 6DU
Claire	McCann	BT71 6EZ
Laura	Bloomer	BT71 6FR
Orla	Currie	BT71 6GY
Darina	Coary	BT71 6GY
Margaret	Hazlie	BT71 6HN
Cherie	Cardwell	BT71 6HW
Caitriona	Donnelly	BT71 6HX
Tracy	McGahan	BT71 6HZ
Clodagh	Kerr	BT71 6JP
Sharon	Gallagher	BT71 6JW
Kathleen	Toal	BT71 6LR
Allison	Green	BT71 6LT
Alison	Cullen	BT71 6NB
Frances	Gilpin	BT71 6PL
Shirley	McKee	BT71 6QT
Karen	Sloss	BT71 6SB
Joan	Willis	BT71 6SF
Ellen	Donnelly	BT71 6SS
Martina	Murphy	BT71 6SY
Bernadette	Mulhall	BT71 6TN
Julie	Johnston	BT71 6UB
Stacey	Donaghy	BT71 6UE

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Post Code</b>
Anne	McCreedy	Bt71 6UH
Nicola	Robinson	BT71 6XA
Eleanor	Peile	BT71 6XD
Julie	Burke	BT71 6XP
Orlagh	Moore	BT71 7BH
Eimear	Burns	BT71 7BH
Pamela	Montgomery	BT71 7EJ
Eleanor	McCaughey	BT71 7ES
Tina	Finn	BT71 7JF
Gillian	Harvison	BT71 7PE
Deirdre	Daly	BT71 7PP
Caroline	Burton	BT71 7PP
Camelia	McWhirter	BT71 7PQ
Tanya	Burke	BT71 7PW
Helen	Fearon	BT71 7PZ
Karen	Paisley	BT71 7RN
Jacqui	Williamson	BT71 7SS
Bernadette	Hughes	BT71 7SS
Mairead	Quinn	BT71 7TD
Eileen	Morris	BT71 7TH
Marie	O'Hagan	BT71 7TJ
Magdalena	Kesy	BT71 7TY
Phyllis	Willis	BT716NU
Jacqueline	Meneely	BT716UE
Lisa	Fee	BT75 0JD
Gemma	Cunningham	BT75 0LQ
Hilary	Johnston	BT75 0LQ
Helga	Montgomery	BT75 0PS
Charlene	Farmer	BT75 0PZ
Natalie	Holme	BT75 0QJ
Amanda	Lee	BT75 0QP
Paula	Scott	BT75 0SA
Kerry	Ferguson	BT75 0SD
Wilma	Lee	BT76 0AS

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Post Code</b>
Sharon	Robinson	BT76 0AS
Joan	Beatty	BT76 0HF
Pauline	Robson	BT77 0BE
Charleen	Thompson	BT77 0BP
Valerie	McFarland	BT77 0BW
Doreen	Irvine	BT77 0DE
Sharon	Little	BT77 0EH
Veronica	McKenna	BT78 2SQ

### **Continuing Health Care**

**Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what mechanisms are in place to ensure that Health and Social Care Trusts are compliant with the provision of Continuing Health Care.

**(AQW 25610/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Departmental Circular ECCU 1/2010 'Care Management, Provision of Services and Charging Guidance' provides Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts with direction on the assessment of a person's health and social care needs. As set out in the circular the outcome of the assessment could be either a primary need for health care, which is provided free; or social care for which a means tested contribution may be required.

My Department sought confirmation from all HSC Trusts in October 2012 that they were compliant with this circular. All HSC Trusts confirmed that this was the case.

### **Pinewood Home in Ballymena**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the consultation regarding the closure of the Pinewood Home in Ballymena was completed prior to his Statement of 3rd May 2013.

**(AQW 25617/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** On 03rd May I stopped all Trust consultation processes with regard to statutory residential homes for older people. Consequently, the Northern Health and Social Care Trust's consultation on the Future of Statutory of Residential Care for Older People, which included Pinewood, was not completed.

The HSC Board launched the Project Initiation Document for their Project on Improving Services for Older People – A New Process for Consulting, Engaging and Implementing Change on 21 August 2013. This new regional approach gives assurance that best practice will be followed in the future development of proposals, engagement and delivery of change.

Pinewood Residential Care Home will be considered as part of this process going forward. Residents, families and staff have been advised of the new two stage process and I would encourage people to share their views during the forthcoming two periods of public consultation.

### **Hydraulic Fracturing**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department has made, or intends to make, any assessment of the health impacts from the extraction of oil or gas using slick water high volume hydraulic fracturing.

**(AQW 25626/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Public Health England (formerly the Health Protection Agency), provides specialist advice and support to Departments and agencies across the UK on a wide range of health protection matters. PHE is currently reviewing the potential health impacts of hydraulic fracturing, the process commonly known as fracking. It is anticipated that this report will be available in the near future. My Department and the Public Health Agency will be guided by this advice.

### **Cycling and Pedestrian Infrastructure**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department is promoting the need for proper cycling and pedestrian infrastructure as an aid in improving public health.

**(AQW 25634/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I would like to answer both these questions together as they are of a similar nature.

My Department and the Department for Regional Development have ongoing discussions about the importance of creating an environment that promotes walking and cycling, including the need for appropriate infrastructure. This supports the delivery of my Department's obesity prevention framework, "A Fitter Future for All", and DRD's Active Travel Strategy for Northern Ireland, which was launched in January 2013, and the Active Travel Action Plan, launched in August 2013.

### **Cycling and Pedestrian Infrastructure**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what communication he has had with the Minister for Regional Development on the link between better cycling infrastructure and improved levels of public health.

**(AQW 25635/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I would like to answer both these questions together as they are of a similar nature.

My Department and the Department for Regional Development have ongoing discussions about the importance of creating an environment that promotes walking and cycling, including the need for appropriate infrastructure. This supports the delivery of my Department's obesity prevention framework, "A Fitter Future for All", and DRD's Active Travel Strategy for Northern Ireland, which was launched in January 2013, and the Active Travel Action Plan, launched in August 2013.

### **Belfast School of Dentistry**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assurances he can give on the future of the Belfast School of Dentistry; and whether there are any plans to migrate the service elsewhere.

**(AQW 25682/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The General Dental Council has a statutory obligation to quality assure dental education courses and judges whether students have reached a level of experience suitable to allow GDC registration. It decides if an undergraduate dentistry course is deemed sufficient and so enables a dental school to recruit and train students. The 2011 and 2012 GDC inspection reports for the Belfast School of Dentistry at Queen's University concluded that the then final year students would be allowed to register and that the course was sufficient. However both reports required further inspections in the next year. The report of the GDC inspection of 16 and 17 April this year has not yet been published but Queen's graduates joined the GDC register in June.

I remain committed to having a dental school in Northern Ireland. A local dental school provides a key source of trained dentists for our future dental workforce and consultant staff also provide an important specialist service function. I have previously assured the GDC of my full support and commitment to the Belfast School of Dentistry and the GDC have acknowledged the strong and clear level of support from my Department at a time when sustainability and vulnerability are concerns for those involved with

the dental school. I note the progress that has been made at the School of Dentistry at Queen's and continue to keep the situation under review.

My Department provides recurrent funding of almost £6m, along with similar funding from DEL, for undergraduate dental education including senior clinical academic staff. My Department has also invested £2.9m in recent years to refurbish clinical areas in the dental school and the GDC has been pleased with the positive impact that this has made.

No plans have been made to migrate the service elsewhere.

### **Profoundly Deaf Children**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children in each constituency are diagnosed as profoundly deaf.

**(AQW 25722/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Refer to answer in AQW 25375/11-15

The information provided in the answer to AQW 25375/11-15 cannot be disaggregated beyond Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust Area.

### **Smoking Prohibition**

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the decision by the Western Health and Social Care Trust to prohibit smoking throughout all its buildings and grounds; and whether he has any plans to encourage other Trusts to implement a similar policy.

**(AQW 25725/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I fully support the decision by the Western Health and Social Care Trust to become completely smoke-free by prohibiting smoking in both premises and grounds. This decision is in line with my Department's 10-year tobacco control strategy which encourages organisations, such as HSC Trusts, to go further than the legislation requires by adopting more comprehensive smoke-free policies.

The Public Health Agency has established a steering group to implement the tobacco control strategy and its action plan includes a commitment to support any HSC Trust wishing to become completely smoke-free. I have no doubt that the decision by the Western Trust will encourage other Trusts to adopt similar policies.

### **Training College at Desertcreat**

**Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the outstanding approvals needed before work can begin on the Training College at Desertcreat.

**(AQW 25774/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The business case was approved in 2011, at which point work commenced on the design element of this project.

The costs for this project subsequently increased significantly, requiring a new addendum to be developed and approved by all parties before the project can continue.

The addendum to the business case needs to be approved by both my Department and the Department of Justice, whilst the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, Police Service for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Prison Service need to agree the plans in terms of value for money and affordability. Finally, given the cost of this project, approval is required by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

## Care Home Provision

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps have been taken to improve health service engagement with elderly people and their families over the future of Health Service residential care homes and care packages for the elderly.

**(AQO 4580/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The HSC Board launched the Project Initiation Document for their Project on Improving Services for Older People – A New Process for Consulting, Engaging and Implementing Change on 21 August 2013. This new regional approach will include two periods of public consultation: the first will be on draft criteria which will be applied to statutory residential homes at a local level by Trusts; the second will focus on any proposals arising from that exercise.

With that in mind I am confident that this revised process will allow every opportunity for people to share their views with adequate transparency and consistency. The HSC Board will be working closely with residents and relatives throughout the process, as well as liaising with key stakeholders such as the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland, the PCC and Age NI.

## Causeway Hospital

**Mr McQuillan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the options appraisal for the management arrangements at the Causeway Hospital.

**(AQO 4581/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Post Consultation Report on the “Transforming Your Care: Vision to Action” published in March 2013 recommended that an options appraisal on the future of management arrangements for Causeway Hospital should go forward, with a view to completing this appraisal within 6 months. My Department had begun preparatory work on the appraisal.

In parallel with this, work has been ongoing at the Northern Trust to take forward the implementation of the Turnaround Improvement Plan. A key element of that work is a series of service reviews, including networking of clinical services, and development of a new model for medical leadership and management. These processes should provide the Trust the opportunity to embed necessary change and reform. I am advised that it is the view of the Turnaround and Support Team that an appraisal on future management options should be informed by this work and therefore should follow on from it. This view is shared by the Trust. Accordingly, I am of the view that these processes should be substantially in place before further work is carried out on the options appraisal on management arrangements.

My objective remains to ensure that we have effective delivery of safe, sustainable and resilient services for patients and clients served by the Causeway Hospital.

## Care Home Provision

**Mr Cree** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will give a commitment that, following consultation, statutory residential care homes will not be forced to close in areas where there is no alternative local supported housing or a lack of affordable care.

**(AQO 4582/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The HSC Board launched the Project Initiation Document for their Project on Improving Services for Older People – A New Process for Consulting, Engaging and Implementing Change on 21 August 2013. This new regional approach gives assurance that best practice will be followed in the future development of proposals, engagement and delivery of change.

As this revised approach is only just underway it would be wrong of me to predetermine its outcome. There will be two periods of public consultation as the process moves forward and I would encourage people to share their views and any concerns they may have during those consultations before any decisions are made on individual statutory homes.

I would like to be clear, however, that, should a resident living in a statutory residential home move to a different home as a result of decisions made in this process, they will not be financially disadvantaged by any such move.

### Care Pathway

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the emergency and urgent care pathway procedure in time-critical cases for children and young people.

**(AQO 4583/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I understand that this question is in respect of children and young people presenting to hospital emergency departments requiring cardiac care.

Cardiac emergencies in children are rare occurrences. If a child presents to an emergency department they will be assessed and stabilised. The emergency department staff may call for assistance from paediatric, anaesthetic or other specialty teams if they are available on site. The child will then usually be admitted for further assessment and treatment. The clinicians will decide if the admission should be to the local paediatric unit, or to the regional paediatric intensive care unit, or the regional paediatric cardiology unit in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. Further care and treatment will depend on the individual patient's condition.

### Elderly and Vulnerable People

**Ms McCorley** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will consider a rights-based approach to the protection of elderly and vulnerable people.

**(AQO 4584/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Current regional adult protection policy and procedural guidance is based on principles that respect the rights of all vulnerable adults, including the elderly.

Furthermore, my Department, in conjunction with the Department of Justice, is also in the process of developing both a new Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy Framework and a Mental Capacity Bill. Both the Policy Framework and the Bill will be underpinned by a number of principles which reflect a rights-based approach and have safeguarding the rights and dignity of people who fall within scope at their core.

### Bexsero

**Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the decision by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation not to recommend the Meningitis B vaccine Bexsero for adoption into the national immunisation program.

**(AQO 4585/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) issued an interim position statement on the vaccine Bexsero® on 24 July. Before finalising its advice to Ministers, JCVI will seek comments from the key stakeholders who provided evidence to JCVI and its sub-committee about the use of this vaccine. This includes the national meningitis charities and Novartis, the vaccine manufacturer.

I will consider the final JCVI recommendations before deciding what the policy will be in Northern Ireland.

In the meantime, I would like to reiterate that I welcome the quest for an effective, safe and cost-effective vaccine to protect against meningitis B.

### Loane House

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the future of Loane House at South Tyrone Hospital, Dungannon.

**(AQO 4586/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** No decision has been taken regarding the future of Loane House. The Southern Health and Social Care Trust is exploring options across the Trust for improved, affordable delivery of care in light of the changes outlined in Transforming Your Care which are required to meet the needs of our growing older population. The Trust is committed to working with the Health and Social Care Board as commissioner of services and engaging at an early stage with clinical leaders, the wider body of staff in the Trust, key partners, and the wider community.

## **Welfare Reform**

**Mr Milne** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on progress on cross departmental working to monitor the impact of Welfare Reform on the lives of health and social care users.

**(AQO 4587/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Welfare reform will undoubtedly impact on the lives of health and social care users in Northern Ireland.

The delivery of passported benefits, such as free dental and ophthalmic care and the Healthy Start scheme, an important issue for my Department, with the forthcoming introduction of Universal Credit. To this end, my Department have been liaising closely with the Department for Social Development and counterparts in Great Britain in order to examine the potential implications for services and patients.

My Department has also been involved in several areas as follows:

In respect of childcare, my Department is working with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and DSD to ensure that the forthcoming Childcare Strategy takes account of the impact of Welfare Reform. Work has taken place on amendments to the familysupportNI website to ensure that the Social Security Agency has access to provision of accurate, up to date, information on registered childcare settings. My Department, in conjunction with colleagues in the Social Security Agency, is considering terms of reference for research on the impacts of ratios of adults to children in registered settings on the costs of childcare to parents.

In respect of adult services, my Department is currently taking forward a three-stage process of reform to establish the future direction and funding of adult care and support in Northern Ireland. In doing so my Department has worked closely with DSD, recognising the key role that benefits play in helping people with care needs to remain independent.

In respect of General Medical Services there has been an initial discussion between my Department and DSD with regard to the issues surrounding medical reports and work capability assessments. Both Departments agreed to continue to work together to try progress any emerging issues and to minimise the impact on individuals.

## **Department of Justice**

### **Definition of the Criminal Offence of Glorifying Terrorism**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice to provide a definition of the criminal offence of glorifying terrorism.

**(AQW 25156/11-15)**

**Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice ):** Section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006 makes it an offence to publish statements which are likely to be understood by members of the public as a direct or indirect encouragement to commit, prepare or instigate a terrorist offence. Indirect encouragement includes statements which glorify acts or offences of terrorism whether in the past, in the future, or of terrorism more generally. Glorification includes any form of praise or celebration.

## Welfare of Animals Act 2011

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of people that have been convicted of offences under the Welfare of Animals Act 2011.

**(AQW 25180/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Sentencing and conviction datasets are currently available only up to 2009. The Welfare of Animals Act came into force on 11 July 2011. Therefore, it is not possible to provide the information requested.

## Welfare of Animals Act 2011

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of people that have been charged under the Welfare of Animals Act 2011, and of these, how many were tried on indictment.

**(AQW 25181/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Sentencing and conviction datasets are currently available only up to 2009. The Welfare of Animals Act came into force on 11 July 2011. Therefore, it is not possible to provide the information requested.

## Cattle and Sheep Theft

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many (i) cattle; and (ii) sheep have been (a) stolen; or (b) reported missing, in each constituency, in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 25197/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The issue raised in this question is an operational matter for the Chief Constable.

Given the way that thefts are recorded, the detailed data may not be available.

## People Employed by Recruitment Agencies

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of people employed by recruitment agencies in (i) his Department; and (ii) arms-length bodies, as of 1 April (a) 2011; (b) 2012; and (c) 2013.

**(AQW 25198/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The number of people employed by recruitment agencies in the Department of Justice and its arms-length bodies (ALBs), at 1 April 2011, 1 April 2012 and 1 April 2013 are detailed below:

Date	Number of people employed by Recruitment Agencies in DOJ (inc Agencies)	Number of people employed by Recruitment Agencies in DOJ ALBs
1 April 2011	44	676
1 April 2012	36	430
1 April 2013	50	409

## Temporary Release of Prisoners

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 24515/11-15, to detail (i) the reason for the delay in answering this question; (ii) when the investigation commenced; (iii) who ordered the investigation; (iv) how many staff and at what grades are carrying out the investigation; (v) the terms of reference; and (vi) when this is expected to be concluded.

**(AQW 25218/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** In response to AQW/24515/11-15 NIPS advised that an internal investigation had been established into the temporary leave application and risk assessment process of Mr Parker in 2008. There was a delay in answering in order to ensure that the answer was accurate.

This investigation was initiated by the Director of Offender Policy and Operations on 4 July 2013 when terms of reference were issued to a Governor II from Headquarters assisted by a Principal Officer.

The terms of reference required the investigators to establish the circumstances around the following matters:

- i Whether managers within the Lifer Management Unit followed the correct procedures when authorising the accompanied temporary release of Noel Parker in 2008.
- ii. If errors were made in the temporary release process or application what were they and who made them?
- iii. What influence did a named manager have on this process and what were the circumstances that led to their departure from the Northern Ireland Prison Service?

The investigation itself was conducted under the provisions of the Code of Conduct and Discipline, and was submitted to the commissioning authority on 31 August.

### **William Beggs**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to William Beggs, formerly from Northern Ireland and having returned from serving a custodial sentence in Scotland, given that the murder conviction included sexual violence and despite a court ruling which ordered his name being removed from the sex-offender register due an incorrect administrative recording of his conviction at trial, and given that he is now residing in Northern Ireland (i) what assurances can be provided that an appropriate order is sought to ensure he is monitored given the nature of the crime, the sexual violence involved and the risk to public safety; and (ii) to outline the procedure for obtaining such an order.

**(AQW 25221/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Mr Beggs is a life sentence prisoner in custody in Scotland, and as such, the Department of Justice has no role in the management of this individual.

### **Legal Aid in respect of Marian McGlinchey**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice to detail the amount of Legal Aid that has been paid for all court cases in respect of Marian McGlinchey since she was first charged with the current offences of providing a phone for use in terrorism; attending a meeting of a proscribed organisation; resisting and obstructing police on 10 July 2010 and the granted application to have this set aside; and all other applications at all court levels in respect of the alleged inability to appear at court due to health and media concerns.

**(AQW 25268/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The total legal aid paid to date in respect of various offences relating to Marian McGlinchey heard in the Magistrates' Court is £14,290.19 (including VAT of £2,381.70).

Of the fees paid in Magistrates' Court proceedings a total of £10,838.17 (including VAT of £1,806.36) was paid to solicitors and a total of £3,452.02 (including VAT of £575.34) was paid to counsel.

The Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission is precluded from releasing any information in respect of any payments made under the civil Legal Aid Schemes by virtue of Article 24 of the Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (NI) Order 1981 without the legally assisted person's express consent.

### **Chairman of the Prison Officers' Association**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice for assessment of the remarks made by the Chairman of the Prison Officers' Association in an article in the Irish News on 24 June 2013, particularly in relation to the statements "The reality is that they (new custody officers) will never become an offender supervisor" and "Magilligan is just a powder keg because people lie about doing nothing."

**(AQW 25269/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The comments quoted in the Irish News on Wednesday 24 July are the views of the chairperson of the Prison Officers Association. However, the Member should note the following:

- (i) The Terms and Conditions of Employment for those recruited to the role of Custody Prison Officer (Custody Officer) since September 2012 explicitly state that Custody Officers in possession of a Certificate of Competence will be eligible to apply for Prison Officer Offender Supervisor vacancies.

Those who have been recruited to this role since September 2012 are currently undertaking a programme of development leading to the attainment of this Certificate of Competence.

- (ii) Whilst in the past year the population at Magilligan Prison has increased, there is a range of activities for Prisoners. These include access to recreational programmes, education and skills programmes and visits.

### **Prosecuted Traffickers**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the total funds confiscated from prosecuted traffickers in each year since 2009; and (ii) the proportion of these funds awarded to victims as compensation.

**(AQW 25270/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** A total of £68,081 has been confiscated from convicted traffickers. This sum relates to monies confiscated in 2012 from the convicted trafficker, Rong Chen. Of this, 50% was available to the Assets Recovery Community Scheme.

A total of £52,500 has been paid in compensation to victims of trafficking. £30,000 was paid to one victim in 2009 and £22,500 was paid to another victim in 2013.

However, these compensation payments were made under the Northern Ireland Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (2009), and not directly from funds confiscated from those convicted.

### **Death of Kieran Doherty**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Justice, further to the award of compensation arising from the death of Kieran Doherty, what plans he has to review the criminal injury compensation legislation.

**(AQW 25296/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** In June 2013, I launched a five year Strategy for Victims and Witnesses of Crime which included a commitment to review the legislation underpinning the Criminal Injuries and Criminal Damage Compensation Schemes. The review has commenced and it is my intention to publish a Consultation Paper relating to the criminal injuries scheme by next summer. The decision to review the legislation underpinning the compensation schemes was taken before the recent coverage of the Doherty case.

### **Programme for Government Commitments**

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the progress made on each of his Department's Programme for Government commitments.

**(AQW 25300/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Of the seven Department of Justice Programme for Government (PfG) commitments, progress at the end of the first quarter indicates that the Department is on track, or broadly on track to deliver against six of the seven commitments.

The remaining commitment, that of delivering at least 70% of the programme capital budget for the construction of the new Police, Prison, and Fire Training College is not expected to be delivered within the current PfG period.

Details on the progress against each commitment is set out at Annex A.

**ANNEX A****Commitment 53:****Quarter: April-June****Substantially complete the construction of the new Police, Prison and Fire Training College**

Recent action has addressed the immediate issues identified in the previous report. Provided that the identified dependencies do not raise new issues, achievement of the overall Commitment remains possible. The programme as a whole is highly sensitive to further delay - consequently early identification of potential issues and prompt, robust action to address these will be essential to the achievement of the Commitment.

**Commitment 54:****Quarter April-June****Reduce the level of serious crime**

The position in respect of the cross-Departmental Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending has been rectified. The Central Team anticipates sight of the findings of the CJINI report in the next reporting quarter. The proposed broadly on track assessment is appropriate.

**Commitment 55:****Quarter: April-June****Tackle crime against older and vulnerable people by more effective and appropriate sentences and other measures**

The Minister of Justice announced measures for transparency, consistency, and understanding of sentencing practice in June 2012. As part of these measures, two lay members, one of whom is representative of the views of victims, have been recruited to the Sentencing Group, established by the Lord Chief Justice to enhance the guidance available to the judiciary. Justice Committee agreed the action plan tackling crime against older and vulnerable people in January 2013 and a number of actions are now being progressed. The Central Review Team is content that appropriate consideration of the requirement for legislative changes has occurred, and that the commitment is therefore on track for delivery.

**Commitment 56:****Quarter: April-June****Improve community safety by tackling anti-social behaviour \*Statistically significant change**

The baseline for the percentage of people affected by ASB has been established as 82.1%\*. This has been taken from the Northern Ireland Crime Survey. Policing and Community Safety Partnerships have all now been fully established and are operational. ASB action plan agreed by Justice Committee in January 2013 and actions are being progressed.

**Commitment 57:****Quarter: April-June****Improve access to Justice**

The Minister for Justice published his response to the Access to Justice Review and associated Departmental Action Plan. A Bill to give effect to reforms requiring primary legislation will be introduced in autumn 2013.

**Commitment 68:****Quarter: April-June****Actively seek local agreement to reduce the number of 'peace walls'**

The 2012/13 milestone is complete. Implementation of action plans on 40 to 54 remaining structures has begun per the 2013/14 milestone. Preparation for monitoring community tensions and residents concerns are in hand. Reporting in future quarters should focus on: engagement at the remaining 14

structures; progress on implementation of action plans; and, where appropriate, actual or anticipated further reductions in numbers of physical structures.

**Commitment 69:**

**Quarter: April-June**

**Reform and modernise the Prison Service**

Currently, 100% of the recommendations in the Prison Review Action Plan are on track for achievement within the agreed timescales.

**Sexual Offence Whilst in a Prison Facility**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 25084/11-15, whether there have been any reports of (i) rape; (ii) indecent and/or sexual assault; (iii) lewd and/or obscene behaviour; and/or (iv) any other sexual offence whilst in a prison facility in each of the last five years, broken down by prison facility.

**(AQW 25311/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The tables below provide the requested information for each prison.

**HYDEBANK**

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>
Rape	0	0	0	0	0
Indecent and/or sexual assault	2	0	3	0	0
Lewd and/or obscene behaviour	0	2	5	2	2
Any other sexual offence	0	0	0	0	0

**MAGILLIGAN**

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>
Rape	0	0	0	0	0
Indecent and/or sexual assault	0	1	0	0	0
Lewd and/or obscene behaviour	0	1	1	1	3
Any other sexual offence	0	0	0	0	0

**MAGHABERRY**

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>
Rape	0	0	0	0	0
Indecent and/or sexual assault	0	0	0	0	0
Lewd and/or obscene behaviour	3	5	7	3	2
Any other sexual offence	0	0	0	0	0

**Human Trafficking**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 18870/11-15, to detail (i) the mechanism used for logging cases involving issues of human trafficking where no prosecution for offences was

brought but individuals were prosecuted for other offences, such as controlling prostitution; and (ii) the number of cases that have been logged in each of the last five financial years.

**(AQW 25314/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The information requested is as follows:

- (i) A broad range of information for such cases is recorded on the PPS Case Management System (CMS), including key data relating to suspects, the nature of the offences for which they have been charged or reported by police, the prosecutorial decisions and offences relating to individual suspects and (where appropriate) any outcomes at court.

Relevant management reports are produced on request.

- (ii) For each financial year from 2008/09 to 2012/13, the following details have been provided, as recorded via the PPS CMS:

- The numbers of cases submitted by police, involving at least one offence of human trafficking. A case may involve several individual suspects.
- The numbers of individual suspects charged or reported in respect of human trafficking offences.

**FILES RECEIVED BY THE PPS WITH A COMPLAINT RELATING TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING 2008/09 TO 2012/13\***

Financial Year	Number of Cases	Number of Suspects
2008/09	4	6
2009/10	2	5
2010/11	3	5
2011/12	3	5
2012/13	5	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>28</b>

\* Based on date first papers received from police.

**Northern Ireland Prison Service**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the reform of the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

**(AQW 25332/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Good progress is being made against the extensive programme of end to end transformational reform, guided by the 40 recommendations made by the Prison Review Team (PRT). To date, nine recommendations have been approved as complete by the Prison Review Oversight Group, which I Chair.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service is currently half way through a three year programme of reform which will run until April 2015. A clear pathway for delivery has been developed to ensure all recommendations are implemented, with the remaining recommendations due to be completed at various stages over the next 18 months.

The Oversight Group has a robust independent element and provides the Justice Committee with an update on progress after each meeting. The next update will be issued to the Committee in October 2013.

## **Lisnevin Site, Millisle**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Justice whether there is a timetable in place for the sale of the Lisnevin site, Millisle.

**(AQW 25333/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The current plan for closure and vacating Millisle is predicated on the opening of the Northern Ireland Community Safety College. However NIPS will shortly explore options for the early disposal of the Millisle site which will include offering the site to other Government bodies. If no interest is shown by the public sector, it will be advertised for sale on the open market. In the meantime the site will continue in its present role as the Prison Service College.

## **Inquiry into Prostitution**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the terms of reference for the inquiry into prostitution; (ii) who has been appointed to carry out the inquiry; (iii) the groups, organisations and/or individuals who will be invited to participate; (iv) when it will commence; and (v) when it is expected to conclude.

**(AQW 25379/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** I recently announced that I intend to commission independent research into the extent and nature of prostitution in Northern Ireland. Initial work is underway to scope the extent of the research required. Once this work is complete, a specification will be drawn up and tenders will be sought. I have undertaken to share the specification with the Justice Committee.

## **Serious Case Review: Thomas Ward**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice to outline the Terms of Reference for the Serious Case Review into the handling and monitoring of Thomas Ward; and why the report has not yet been published despite being completed in September 2012 and presented to the Strategic Management Board of the Public Protection Arrangements in Northern Ireland.

**(AQW 25380/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** As explained in an earlier answer (AQW/13008/11-15), the case did not fall within the guidelines for a serious case review as defined in the PPANI guidance. However, in view of the circumstances, the PPANI Strategic Management Board, representing the relevant agencies, decided to undertake internal agency reviews of the case.

The purpose of the reviews was to look at the respective agencies' practice in this case; and identify any learning for future application.

These agency reviews were considered at the September 2012 meeting of the PPANI Strategic Management Board (SMB), and an executive summary was provided to the Department.

Thomas Ward then lodged an application for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal against his conviction and sentence.

Decisions on publication of the conclusions of the report cannot be taken until judgment is made in the appeal proceedings currently before the Court of Appeal.

## **Northern Ireland Prison Service Museum Collection**

**Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister of Justice to outline his plans to preserve and promote the Northern Ireland Prison Service Museum Collection.

**(AQW 25383/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** I recognise the importance of many of the artefacts held by the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

NIPS is currently giving consideration to the future arrangements for storing and managing these artefacts and has engaged with a number of interested parties. Work is also ongoing to clarify what, if any, legal obligations are attached to the material. No final decisions have been taken.

### **Magilligan Prison**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Justice, following his announcement in March 2013 to outline the progress made, and the future timetable, regarding the rebuilding of Magilligan Prison on the existing site.

**(AQW 25404/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Following my update to the Assembly on 19 March 2013 and my response to question AQW/22450/11-15 dated 16 May 2013, NIPS Officials continue their work in developing the plans for all the projects included in the Estate Strategy, including that of the rebuilding of Magilligan.

In the intervening period, a Strategic Outline Business Case has been developed in-house and approved by colleagues in the Department of Finance and Personnel. NIPS Officials are in the process of developing the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the project with a deadline for completion by the end of this year.

The future programme is dependent on the OBC being approved and capital funding being made available. Until the Business Case is approved and capital funding made available, I am unable to provide any further details of the timetable.

### **Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Policy 2011**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice whether he plans to place a copy of the local Maghaberry policy and procedures pertaining to hot and cold debriefs, as referred to in Annex N of the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Policy 2011, in the Assembly Library.

**(AQW 25425/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** I have no plans to place the local Maghaberry policy in the Assembly Library.

### **Grants to Assist People Leaving Prison**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the grants that are available to assist people leaving a prison facility after serving a custodial sentence to either find or set up employment; (ii) who provides funding for the grants; (iii) the application procedure; (iv) if more than one grant or allocation of funding can be paid to an ex-prisoner following release(s); (v) what follow-up monitoring is carried out to ensure funding is appropriately expended and utilised; and (vi) if a grant is found to have been misspent or misused does the grant have to be paid back and is there any other penalty.

**(AQW 25428/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** My Department does not make any grants available to assist people leaving a prison facility after serving a custodial sentence to either find or set up employment. I am however aware that NIACRO occasionally provides grants to organisations, but not individuals, for the purpose of assisting ex-offenders to find employment through its Jobtrack programme.

### **Electronic Scanning Equipment**

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the implementation of electronic scanning equipment across the prison estate, specifically the application by the Northern Ireland Prison Service to the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under the Ionising Radiation legislation.

**(AQW 25557/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The Northern Ireland Prison Service submitted its Justification Application on behalf of the Department of Justice to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), in May 2013. In compliance with the legislation surrounding the Justification of Practices involving Ionising Radiation

Regulations 2004, DECC have a co-ordination role in this process and have established a Justification Liaison Group (JLG).

The JLG met in London, on 21 August 2013 to consider the NIPS Application. This meeting was chaired by a representative from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and included representatives of the Health and Safety Executive, the Office for Nuclear Development, the Food Standards Agency, the Welsh Executive, Health Protection Agency and NIPS.

The meeting agreed that the NIPS Justification Application was similar, but not identical, to existing practices employed by the United Kingdom Borders Agency (UKBA). However, because the UKBA practice pre-dated the enactment of the 2004 legislation and had never been subject to a full justification process, it is likely that they will subject the NIPS Application to further scrutiny before coming to a final determination.

My Officials and I await the written determination from this Group which will show what further information, if any, may be required from NIPS should a full justification process prove necessary and the timescale within which this will take place.

### **Speech, Language and Communication Difficulties and Criminality**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the link between speech, language and communication difficulties and criminality; and to outline the preventative measures being taken by his Department.

**(AQW 25900/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** There are many factors associated with offending behaviour. It is the case that individuals with speech, language and communication difficulties are over-represented in the justice system but there is no automatic link between such communication difficulties and offending.

Individuals with speech, language and communication difficulties have particular needs within the criminal justice system in terms of support. My Department has introduced a number of measures to address these needs and provides assistance at critical points in the criminal justice journey.

Earlier this year, I launched the Registered Intermediaries Scheme pilot. Registered Intermediaries are communication specialists who assist vulnerable individuals with significant communication difficulties to communicate their answers more effectively during police interview and when giving evidence at court.

The Youth Justice Agency is working in partnership with the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) to enhance support for young people with speech, language and communication difficulties within the youth justice system. This included the development of an e-learning tool to assist staff in identifying young people experiencing difficulties with communication.

On 12 September 2013, I approved the appointment of a dedicated Speech and Language Therapist resource to be based at the Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is separately working with Mindwise in Belfast, Antrim and Londonderry to ensure that young people and adults (aged 13-25) engaging with PSNI are provided with support and advocacy in a number of areas including assistance with communication.

Within prison custody, the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) provides a varied selection of programmes to meet prisoners' speech, language and communication needs. Prisoners are screened on committal to identify indicators of speech, language and communication difficulties.

Under the auspice of the Strategic Framework for Reducing Offending, my Department is looking at options to improve the management and support of vulnerable individuals across the justice system - particularly those with mental health issues and learning, speech and communication difficulties. Early priorities for this work will include improving arrangements for assessing offender needs and vulnerabilities and providing appropriate training and guidance for staff working with vulnerable offenders in all areas of the justice system.

## Department for Regional Development

### Railway Bridge at Craigdarragh Road

**Mr Dunne** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any flooding incidents that have occurred on the roadway at the railway bridge at Craigdarragh Road, Helen's Bay and to outline any remedial drainage works that have been carried out at the bridge since 2009.

**(AQW 25173/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development):** Flooding incidents have occurred at this location on the following dates:

- 5 January 2009;
- 21 July 2009;
- 12 November 2009;
- 29 October 2010;
- 11 November 2010;
- 17 October 2011;
- 24 October 2011;
- 27 August 2012;
- 17 October 2012;
- 22 November 2012; and
- 5 February 2013.

The railway over bridge is located at the low point on Craigdarragh Road and, during periods of heavy rainfall, debris is carried by surface water to this point.

Although Roads Service has installed large gully covers at this location, leaves and debris can on occasions prevent surface water from accessing the gullies. Indeed, seven of the eleven incidents detailed above occurred in the autumn, when fallen leaves were the main contributing factor.

On all occasions Roads Service staff have removed the debris covering the gullies which has allowed the water to drain from the road. The drainage system at this location is considered to be functioning correctly.

### Rathgael Road, Bangor

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total spent by Roads Service on the (i) Rathgael Road; and (ii) Balloo Road in Bangor, in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 25182/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department does not monitor capital and resource expenditure for individual roads. I would remind the Member that information on completed and proposed roads schemes for the current financial year can be found in Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address:

[www.drdni.gov.uk/index/freedom\\_of\\_information/customer\\_information/cinformationtype-results.htm?signpost=Customer+information&informationType=Roads+Service+reports+to+councils](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/freedom_of_information/customer_information/cinformationtype-results.htm?signpost=Customer+information&informationType=Roads+Service+reports+to+councils)

### Rathgael Road, Bangor

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number times that roadworks have taken place on the Rathgael Road, Bangor, in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 25183/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** The following works have been carried out on the Rathgael Road, Bangor in the last five years:

- Apr/Mar 2010 - Drainage works involving a two week road closure on the section of Rathgael Road from the A2 to Clandeboye Road;
- February 2012 – Carriageway refurbishment patch involving a three day closure on the section of Rathgael Road from the A2 to Clandeboye Road; and

- August 2013 – Resurfacing scheme involving a three week road closure on the section of Rathgael Road from Clandeboye Road to Balloo Road RBT.

## Cycle Hoops

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many cycle hoops have been installed in each council area in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 25212/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Over the last five years my Department has installed 156 cycle hoops in the following council areas:

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| ■ Belfast – 97       | ■ Coleraine – 4   |
| ■ Londonderry – 18   | ■ Moyle – 3       |
| ■ Down – 6           | ■ Dungannon – 2   |
| ■ North Down – 6     | ■ Omagh – 2       |
| ■ Limavady – 5       | ■ Lisburn – 2     |
| ■ Newry & Mourne – 4 | ■ Castlereagh - 1 |
| ■ Magherafelt – 6    |                   |

Cyclehoop is the trade name of a specific brand of cycle stand which attaches to existing street lighting columns or sign posts. Therefore, for the purposes of answering this question, the information above refers to cycle stands in general and not a specific brand or type.

Councils and, for example, the Department for Social Development as part of public realm works, may have also installed cycle stands and other cycling facilities, details of which are not maintained by my Department or included in the above figures.

## Bicycle Racks on Ulsterbus and Metro Services

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration he has given to introducing bicycle racks on Ulsterbus and Metro services.

**(AQW 25213/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Translink considered introducing an exterior mounted type of cycle rack for potential fitment to buses three years ago. The rack was to be fitted either to the front or rear of a bus. It was decided not to proceed as racks mounted at the front of a bus substantially obscured the driver's field of vision through the front windscreen of the bus. The rear mounted version was also ruled out as it would have severely restricted access to the bus engine compartment for both routine maintenance and emergency access.

In addition other safety issues associated with these racks were identified, primarily the potential increased risk of injury to cyclists who would be required to load, unload and secure their bicycles in the racks, as well as the potential increased risk to pedestrians if they were accidentally struck by the racks.

## Storage Facilities for Bicycles on Trains

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has given consideration has to installing vertical storage facilities for bicycles on trains, to provide more space for cyclists and other passengers.

**(AQW 25214/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Translink is responsible for the design specification when it commissions new trains.

For Class 3000 train design, various methods of cycle storage were considered including vertical storage. Class 3000 trains entered service in 2004-05. The final design was based on a flexible multi-purpose area incorporating tip-up seats, space for parents with buggies, standing passenger space or accommodating up to 4 bicycles which are securely stowed with minimum effort.

The design team believed that this arrangement was superior to vertical storage in regards to ease of use; less risk to other passengers and best use of space. The concept proved very successful in operation and in the design of Class 4000 trains, which entered service in 2011-12, the multi-purpose/ bicycle area was duplicated in both driving cars providing a total space for 8 bicycles in a 3 car train.

In striving to provide as much capacity as possible and to carry as many passengers as possible, Translink have placed no restrictions on the number of folding bicycles that they can carry provided they are completely folded down. These may also be carried at any time, including prior to the normal 09.30 restriction.

### Parking in Cycle Lanes

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he intends to introduce tougher penalties for drivers who park in cycle lanes.

**(AQW 25216/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** In July last year, I increased the amount of a Penalty Charge Notice from £60 to £90 for all parking contraventions. My officials are currently reviewing the impact of that increase.

Mandatory cycle lanes are bounded by a solid white line and all other vehicles are excluded from entering them. A Traffic Regulation Order is needed to introduce mandatory cycle lanes and a Penalty Charge Notice can be issued if a vehicle is found parked in one. Mandatory cycle lanes are only used where it is reasonable to exclude all other traffic, for example, where there is no frontage development, no need to park, and where there is an adequate carriageway width.

Advisory cycle lanes are bounded by a broken white line and signify that other vehicles should not enter unless it is safe to do so. These can be provided without the need for an Order. The vast majority of cycle lanes here are advisory and unless there are other parking restrictions such as clearway regulations, a Penalty Charge Notice cannot be issued to a vehicle found parked within one of these lanes.

### People Employed by Recruitment Agencies

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of people employed by recruitment agencies in (i) his Department; and (ii) arms-length bodies, as of 1 April (a) 2011; (b) 2012; and (c) 2013.

**(AQW 25255/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** The required information for DRD and its associated arms-length bodies is shown in the table below.

	Numbers of Agency Staff		
	1 April 2011	1 April 2012	1 April 2013
DRD	12	14	20
NIW	28*	29*	17
Translink	9	15	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>57</b>

\* Headcount figures captured at 31 March

## WiFi Provision on Buses and Trains

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of WiFi provision on buses and trains.

**(AQW 25320/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** The relevant capital and annual costs for the installation of Wi-Fi across Translink bus and train services as currently available are included in the table below.

	<b>Capital Cost £k</b>	<b>Annual cost £k</b>
Goldline	160	41
Enterprise	99.5	4
Class 3000	422	64
Class 4000	-	56
Cross Channel Services	6	8

As far as Class 4000 trains are concerned, Wi-Fi fitting was included in the procurement specification.

Internal costs for Wi-Fi fitting are minimal, as the equipment supplier is responsible for its fitting.

## Train Services

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development what incentives are in place to encourage young people and students to use train services.

**(AQW 25322/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** yLink is the Translink youth card. This smartcard is available to all young people between the ages of 16-23 years of age (until their 24th birthday). It costs only £8 for up to 8 years and offers substantial savings across all Translink services:

- Metro 1/3 off cash singles
- Ulsterbus 1/3 off cash singles
- NI Railways 1/3 off singles, day returns, weekly and monthly fares
- Enterprise up to 50% off fares

In addition, the card offers savings and promotions with many partner businesses.

The card is promoted heavily throughout the year, but in particular at this time Translink runs a series of roadshows at Freshers' Events in third level colleges. More detailed information can be obtained at the following link,

[www.translink.co.uk/Fares/Translink-Products/ylink/](http://www.translink.co.uk/Fares/Translink-Products/ylink/).

Translink has advised that a discount for mature students using rail services was introduced separately from bus because a mature student travelling by rail is not able to obtain as good a discount without the use of the 24+ Railcard, whereas mature students using both Metro and Ulsterbus services can avail of the best discounts through standard Smartlink products which are available for bus journeys.

Furthermore, the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) currently provides a range of financial assistance, including help with transport costs, to those students who are most in need and who might otherwise be unable to undertake a course of study at a further education college or higher education institution in Northern Ireland.

Further details are available at [www.delni.gov.uk](http://www.delni.gov.uk).

## Donaghadee Public Transport

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of passengers travelling to and from Donaghadee on public transport, in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 25324/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** The information cannot be provided in the format requested as Translink record the number of passenger journeys as it cannot record the number of actual passengers. The table below therefore provides the number of passenger journeys undertaken.

Financial Year	Passenger Journeys	
	Boarding Donaghadee	Alighting Donaghadee
10/11	66,782	50,737
11/12	66,883	48,628
12/13	68,039	49,202
<b>Total</b>	<b>201,704</b>	<b>148,567</b>

## Donaghadee Public Transport

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the steps that his Department and Translink are taking to increase the use of public transport in (i) Donaghadee; and (ii) Millisle.

**(AQW 25330/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Following liaison with my officials, Translink has advised that Donaghadee and Millisle are included in the promotional and advertising campaigns covering all areas where Ulsterbus services are operated. It has further advised it has recently concluded a campaign to encourage use of bus services for the summer / tourism season, including special fares and tickets. They will now commence a further campaign to promote the use of bus services to those travelling to college and also to promote the uptake of the yLink youth card.

## Railway Halts

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the railway halts where an increase in parking provision is has been identified; and the plans that are in place to address this.

**(AQW 25353/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Translink is currently considering Park & Ride schemes for the following railway stations and halts (in no particular order).

- Ballymoney
- Dunmurry
- Cullybackey
- Moira
- Whiteabbey
- Finaghy
- Carnalea
- Holywood
- Whitehead
- Ballycarry
- Londonderry
- Ballymartin
- Portadown
- Lurgan

All are at different stages and some may not proceed due to issues with Planning, land acquisition, economic appraisal, operational requirements or funding.

As you may be aware, following a Strategic Review of Park & Ride in 2011, my Department established a Park & Ride Programme Board which is responsible for co-ordinating and prioritising the implementation of Park & Ride and Park & Share projects in line with the Department's strategy.

The Programme Board has produced a 'Park & Ride Strategic Delivery Programme 2013-15' which is a prioritised schedule of new Park & Ride projects in the next 2 years with clearly defined responsibilities for funding, implementation, maintenance and operation. This Programme plans to create at least an additional 1,000 Park & Ride and Park & Share spaces across Northern Ireland in the next 2 years. The Programme is available on my Department's website at: [www.drdni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-details.htm?docid=8996](http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-details.htm?docid=8996)

Funding has been set aside for Park & Ride in my Department's budget. However, the implementation of Park & Ride schemes will take place in a constrained budgetary context.

The Programme contains a number of projects for the development of Park & Ride facilities associated with the railway network.

## Speed Limits

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development what legislation permits the designation of speed limits on roads of less than 30mph.

**(AQW 25360/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Most road traffic law pertaining to speed limits is contained in The Road Traffic Regulation (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. Other relevant legislation includes the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 and the Motor Vehicles (Speed Limits) Regulations (NI) 1989.

All speed limits, other than those on restricted roads, are made by order under Article 38 of the Road Traffic Regulation (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. This is applicable to all speed limits under 30 mph.

## Sewerage System in Millisle

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the new sewerage system in Millisle.

**(AQW 25364/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that it is investing £2.3 million in a project to upgrade the sewerage system in Millisle in order to comply with European Union bathing water standards and to reduce the risk of out of sewer flooding. The project is progressing well and is presently at design stage. Completion of the overall project will involve the replacement of the existing Shore Road Wastewater Pumping Station by a new pumping station constructed on land adjacent to the car park beside Millisle Presbyterian Church. It will also involve the construction of a new wastewater pumping sewer, a new marine emergency overflow and some other associated pipe laying work.

Subject to NIW obtaining all necessary statutory approvals and the satisfactory completion of all necessary lands and procurement procedures, it is envisaged that construction work will commence in Spring 2014 and finish in Spring 2015.

## Highway Code

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of whether the Highway Code is adequately providing for cyclists and other road users.

**(AQW 25390/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Statutory responsibility for the Highway Code in Northern Ireland rests with the Department of the Environment (Article 51 of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995).

## Public Transport Service between Derry and Belfast

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development when an hourly public transport service between Derry and Belfast will be introduced.

**(AQW 25417/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Bus services between Belfast and Londonderry currently operate on a 10-minute basis during peak hours, and every 30 minutes in the off-peak.

NI Railways currently operates 9 services daily each way between Londonderry and Belfast, resulting in a 2-hour frequency service. An hourly frequency operates all day between Coleraine and Belfast.

The introduction of an hourly rail service between Belfast and Londonderry cannot be achieved until Phase 2 of the Coleraine to Londonderry renewal project is complete. At this time the predicted completion date of the work is late 2016.

## Railway Line from Portadown to Dungannon

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development for a breakdown of the £187m cost of extending the railway line from Portadown to Dungannon.

**(AQW 25418/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** The estimate of £187m quoted in the consultation paper on Future Railway Investment to extend the railway from Portadown to Dungannon was an indicative figure based on an industry average of £11 million to lay a mile of new single track line, inclusive of associated infrastructure costs, multiplied by the distance of new track required, which in this case is estimated to be 17 miles.

A detailed feasibility study of any planned railway extension would be necessary in order provide a more precise breakdown of the likely costs involved.

## Comber and Donaghadee Bus Stations

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the cost of retaining Comber Bus Station since its closure; and (ii) the actions that are being taken to dispose of Comber and Donaghadee Bus Stations.

**(AQW 25421/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Translink advise that no expenditure has been outlaid in relation to the facility at Comber since it was vacated by Ulsterbus.

Comber station was immediately put through the process whereby surplus property is initially offered to other parts of the public sector (this is known as the D1 process and is facilitated by Land and Property Services). A local Housing Association expressed an interest in purchasing it. The Housing Association has made an offer and a meeting is scheduled with Translink's Estates Department to progress potential disposal of the site.

Donaghadee Bus Station will be offered to the public sector through the D1 process. If the property is not purchased through the D1 process it will then be placed on the open market for sale through an agent.

## WiFi at Bus and Train Stations.

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he would consider making WiFi available in waiting areas at major bus and train stations.

**(AQW 25540/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Wi-Fi is currently available at Central Station but is not free; it is a commercial service provided by BT Openzone.

Translink has looked at providing free Wi-Fi in key locations but this is not being progressed at present, mainly on the basis of cost and the fact that most passengers spend only a short period waiting for its services.

### **Plans to Extend the Rail Network**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department plans to extend the rail network.

**(AQW 25604/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** There has been a wide ranging response to the recent public consultation on Future Railway Investment with a variety of preferences for prioritisation of different railway investment options including those in support of extensions to the rail network.

The Department is continuing to analyse all of the information gathered as a result of the consultation alongside the on-going wider analysis of future investment in transportation infrastructure. The outcome will lead to a prioritisation framework for all future transportation investment. I expect to publish a report on the railways analysis later in the autumn.

While I am increasingly minded that we should explore the potential for extensions to the existing network at some future point, the ability to invest in the railway and indeed, in our wider transport infrastructure, will be very much dependent upon what the Executive can provide in future budget allocations

## **Department for Social Development**

### **Social Housing Stock Levels in Carrickfergus**

**Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the social housing stock levels in Carrickfergus.

**(AQW 25184/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development):** The Housing Executive has advised that they currently have 1901 social housing units in Carrickfergus. Housing Associations have advised that they have 544 units of social housing units in Carrickfergus also.

### **Rates Relief Scheme**

**Mr Cree** asked the Minister for Social Development how many people in receipt of (i) Disability Living Allowance; (ii) Housing Benefit; and (iii) Employment and Support Allowance were registered on the Rates Relief Scheme in the 2012/13 financial year.

**(AQW 25249/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Housing Executive has advised that in relation to (i) the number of claimants who were in receipt of Disability Living Allowance in 2012/13 and who received Rates Relief was 3494; and (ii) the number of claimants who were in receipt of Housing Benefit in 2012/13 and who received Rates Relief was 21,325.

Neither my Department nor the Housing Executive holds the information requested at Part (iii).

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

### **Interpreters Attending Benefit Appeal Tribunals**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister for Social Development how much has been spent on interpreters attending benefit appeal tribunals in each of the last twelve months.

**(AQW 25265/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The cost to the Appeal Service (TAS) to provide interpreters at benefit appeal tribunals in each of the last twelve months is detailed in the table below.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
September 2012	1,857.24
October 2012	3,587.16
November 2012	722.44
December 2012	1,494.45
January 2013	2,154.98
February 2013	1,498.93
March 2013	1,306.43
April 2013	2,096.31
May 2013	2,249.46
June 2013	1,309.68
July 2013	1,126.30
August 2013	1,608.49
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,011.87</b>

### **Protection of Tenancies**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Social Development, given his Department's role as the social housing regulator, how the Department ensures the protection of secure tenancies in the context of a proposed merger of housing associations; and whether the requirement for a ballot of tenants would assist in the protection of these tenancies.

**(AQW 25274/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Department will only approve the merger of a Registered Housing Association another Registered Housing Association .The tenancies of Housing Association tenants involved in any such merger are therefore fully protected because they remain within the same regulatory framework. A ballot of tenants would not provide any additional protection.

### **Protection of Tenancies**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the conflict of interest that exists in his Department being the promoter of housing association mergers and the protector of secure tenancies.

**(AQW 25275/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** There is no question of a conflict of interest. The Department does not promote mergers. However it has been and will continue to be fully supportive of associations which wish to merge. On the issue of secure tenancies when a merger between Registered Housing Association occurs, the housing stock always remains under the control of a Registered Housing Association therefore the security of tenancy for the tenants is fully protected

### **Recruitment Arrangements for the Appointment of a Director of Transformation**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Social Development (i) to detail the recruitment arrangements for the appointment of a Director of Transformation in the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; (ii) why

the Strategic Investment Board was involved in the recruitment; and (iii) what is the total cost of the financial package awarded to the appointee.

**(AQW 25316/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:**

- (i) The post of Director of Transformation was filled through an open competition managed by the Strategic Investment Board (SIB). At interview each candidate was assessed against the competency requirements set out in the application pack. These competencies were determined by the requirements of the post.
- (ii) NIHE identified the need for a specialist post to support them in organisational change to improve service delivery and in preparation for the impacts of the Social Housing Reform Programme. NIHE sought the assistance of SIB in the sourcing of this resource.
- (iii) The package being offered to the successful candidate is an annual salary of £142k with reimbursement of annual travel and local accommodation costs up to £15k.

### **Housing Association**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Social Development what provisions or guidance exist in relation to ballots of Housing Association tenants in the event of proposed mergers or take-overs; and what plans he has to provide for same, as exists elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

**(AQW 25317/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** There is no provision for Tenant ballots in respect of proposed mergers between registered Housing Associations although tenant consultation must take place. This is the position in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The position is different in Scotland where tenant ballots are required. I do not anticipate a need to change the position in Northern Ireland at present.

### **Northern Ireland Housing Executive**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development what type of insulation is used in properties owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

**(AQW 25335/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Housing Executive has advised that they generally have used blown fibre and polystyrene beads which are bonded together with an adhesive as the means of cavity wall insulation in their dwellings.

They also provide roof space insulation as part of the heating installation programme and External Cyclic Maintenance (where Heating upgrades are not planned). The specification for roof insulation is regularly reviewed, with the latest specification being in use since September 2012. In the main, mineral wool insulation is used; however there are cases where Phenolic foam insulation is acceptable (areas of sloping roof of a room within a roof and roof space trap doors etc.). The aim is to improve the thermal comfort of their homes by bringing their roof space insulation up to 300mm.

### **Programme for Government Commitments**

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the progress made on each of his Department's Programme for Government commitments.

**(AQW 25351/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** My Department is responsible for six of the Programme for Government commitments. The commitments on Social and affordable housing, fuel poverty and Public Realm are on target for achievement. Slippage in the Double Glazing Programme should be retrievable within the overall Programme for Government period. A Community Asset Transfer policy framework will be submitted to the Executive in the autumn following public consultation. Work is also currently underway to explore the reform of social housing structures, with engagement occurring with key stakeholders. However, it is unlikely that the new structures will be fully implemented by 2015.

### Small Pockets of Deprivation

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development how much Small Pockets of Deprivation funding has been made available the Rathgill estate, Bangor, over the last five years.

**(AQW 25369/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** My Department has provided £304,093.00 of Small Pockets of Deprivation funding to Rathgill Estate over the last five years.

### Small Pockets of Deprivation

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development how much has been spent on Small Pockets of Deprivation in each year since its inception.

**(AQW 25411/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** My Department has provided the following levels of Small Pockets of Deprivation funding:

2007/2008	£539,298
2008/2009	£739,429
2009/2010	£454,948
2010/2011	£415,740
2011/2012	£414,920
2012/2013	£450,003

### Small Pockets of Deprivation Funding

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development to list the areas currently receiving Small Pockets of Deprivation funding.

**(AQW 25416/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** My Department is currently providing Small Pockets of Deprivation funding for: Rathgill & Harbour, Bangor; Bawnmore, Newtownabbey; Benmore & White City, Belfast; Castle, Carnary & Glebeside, Ballymoney; Gortalee, Greenisland & Sunnylands, Carrickfergus; Tullgarley & Dixon Park, Larne; Bowtown, Glen Ward & West Winds, Newtownards; Strathfoyle, Londonderry.

### Four Areas Visited by the Minister

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to the Topical Question I asked on 9 September 2013, to detail which four areas he visited.

**(AQW 25481/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** On 7th August I visited Belfast's Lower Oldpark/Hillview, Tiger's Bay/Mountcollyer, Divis/Albert Street and Doury Road in Ballymena. These areas were brought to my attention by elected and community representatives who felt they demonstrate the characteristics of areas suitable for Housing Led Regeneration as set out in the Housing Strategy for NI.

### Areas at Risk Funding

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development to list the areas currently receiving Areas at Risk funding.

**(AQW 25500/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The following Areas are currently receiving Areas at Risk Funding: Old Warren and Hillhall in Lisburn, Ballybeen and Annadale in Belfast, Ferris Park in Larne, Crossmaglen, Beechfield in Donaghadee, Scrabo in Newtownards and Gilford in Banbridge.

## Village Regeneration Scheme in Belfast

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how many houses have been rebuilt as part of the Village Regeneration Scheme in South Belfast; (ii) how many are yet to be rebuilt; (iii) whether the scheme has been scaled back in regard to rebuilding plans; and (iv) if so, why this is the case.

**(AQW 25598/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** Regeneration plans for the Village area were approved in 2008 to include:

- The demolition of 539 dwellings; and
- The construction of 273 dwellings on a mixed tenure basis over a ten year period.

To date 87 new social dwellings are complete or nearing completion. A further 9 properties are currently being rehabilitated for future social housing. In addition a further 53 social dwellings have been completed at two adjacent overspill sites at Roden Street and Richview Court.

A further phase of social housing comprising 27 dwellings has been submitted for planning approval and is expected to start in early 2014. This planning application also seeks approval for the creation of a dedicated area of public open space which is a Planning Service requirement for the area. A further scheme to rehabilitate 13 more properties for social housing is also due to start in early 2014.

There has been no scaling back in relation to rebuilding plans.

## Bungalows in Bloomfield, Bangor

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Social Development what were the results of the residents' ballot on the proposed stock transfer of the bungalows in Bloomfield, Bangor.

**(AQW 25625/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** Over the period 17th May 2013 to 02nd August 2013 the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) commissioned a formal tenant consultation exercise on the Bloomfield Bungalows Stock Transfer proposal for the transfer of 72 NIHE properties in Bloomfield estate in Bangor to Oaklee Housing Association.

Allowing for void properties and joint tenancies there were 71 ballot papers issued. These were posted to the tenants on 04th July 2013 and were to be returned by 02nd August 2013. A number of home visits were carried out by Holywell Consultancy, on behalf of the NIHE, to follow up on non response before the return deadline.

The Ballot Report was submitted to the NIHE on 05th August 2013 and the result of the ballot was as follows:

Ballot papers returned	63
Ballot response at home visit	1
In favour of the transfer proposal	62
Not in favour of the transfer proposal	2
Ballot papers returned after the deadline	2
No response	5

In summary 90% (64 out of 71) of tenants responded in the ballot. As noted on the Offer document the outcome of the Tenant ballot is determined by a majority of those who returned their ballot papers. Therefore a majority of 96.7% (62 out of 64 responses), were in favour of the transfer proposal (although not counted, the 2 late ballot papers were also in favour of the proposal).



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## Revised Written Answers

### Friday 20 September 2013

**(AQW 25615/11-15)**

In response to AQW 22037/11-15 my predecessor (Minister Alex Attwood) indicated that there was an ongoing audit of minerals planning application files which had not yet been completed. The reference numbers, locations and descriptions of minerals applications forms part of this audit work which is still in the course of completion.

The Environmental Information Regulations 2004, Part 3, Regulation 12(4)(d) outlines the exception to the duty to disclose environmental information in this instance.

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