



Northern Ireland
Assembly

OFFICIAL REPORT
(Hansard)
and
**JOURNAL OF
PROCEEDINGS**

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Official Report (Hansard)

Assembly Sitings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 8 September 2014

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon (Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Speaker's Business

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order. Before we proceed to today's business, I welcome Members back after the recess.

Executive Committee Business

Budget (No. 2) Bill: Royal Assent

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that the Budget (No. 2) Bill (Northern Ireland) received Royal Assent on Wednesday 16 July 2014. It will be known as the Budget (No. 2) Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Assembly Business

Sam Foster CBE

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Members will have been saddened to learn of the passing of Sam Foster, a former Assembly Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone and Minister of the Environment in the first mandate. Sam was one of life's true gentlemen and had a history of public service rooted in Fermanagh and South Tyrone. He was dedicated to the community that he served and attracted a huge amount of respect as a Member of this House. The culmination of his career saw him appointed as Minister of the Environment — a position that he held with great honour and pride. I take this opportunity to extend my personal condolences to his family circle and to all his party colleagues on their sad loss.

As we have done in the past on these occasions, I will call a representative of each party to speak for up to three minutes to pay tribute to our late friend and colleague. I will allow 30 minutes for tributes, and, if there is sufficient time remaining after all parties have spoken, I may be able to call other Members who rise in their places to say a few words. The House will now pay its own respects.

Mr Nesbitt: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. In a previous life, I sometimes offered media training, and I would show worst case/best case examples from TV. I often favoured the launch of an anti-drink-driving Christmas campaign that Sam Foster was in charge of during his time as Environment Minister because his sound bite in that report was absolutely perfect. It was perfect because it was genuine. Sam Foster spoke good sense, and he spoke it from the heart. I think that that will be many people's abiding memory of Sam Foster.

Like many Members of the House, I attended his funeral in St Macartin's Cathedral in Enniskillen, which was a huge affair befitting a man with a long lifetime of public service. Like Sir John Gorman, whom we lost earlier in the year, Sam was elected to this House in 1998, and both came to politics with experience of successful careers in other areas. At Sam's funeral, it was striking how many different interest groups were there: groups that shared nothing but mutual respect for Sam Foster.

Sam served his country as a Reserve police officer and then a major in the Ulster Defence Regiment. So he was not only a public servant, he was a brave one, unafraid to put himself in harm's way to defend his family, community and country from terrorist threat. He was present at the IRA attack on the cenotaph in Enniskillen in 1987; indeed, with his bare hands, he helped rescue people from the

rubble. Sam was the embodiment of a decent human being. He was also a loyal Ulster Unionist who served his country and party faithfully for many decades. He was a huge figure in Fermanagh unionism. He may have risen to high office but he never forgot his roots and remained, at heart, a Fermanagh man.

I was not fortunate enough to sit on these Benches beside Sam, but, when I joined the Ulster Unionist Party, I was amazed and sometimes perplexed by his unwavering support. However the reason why was quite simple: if he was on board, he was on board 100%.

The House supports diversity, so it would probably be wrong to suggest that we need 108 Sam Fosters, but entirely right to say that we need 108 MLAs with Sam Foster's values. I am proud to have known such a great unionist and Ulsterman. My deepest sympathies and condolences go to his wife, Dorothy, and his family circle. He will, indeed, be sadly missed.

Lord Morrow: I, too, rise to pay my respects and to say a few words about the late Sam Foster. I do so on behalf of my party and myself. I knew Sam Foster for quite a number of years. I think that my first direct acquaintance with him was probably in the old Northern Ireland Forum, and that goes back a little. However, I always heard of Sam Foster. His name was synonymous with Fermanagh. He served on Fermanagh District Council for a long period of years. He was also a man who went, as I call it, the second mile. He was also a member of the security forces, and, living in Fermanagh, that was no mean achievement, particularly in those times.

As his party leader said, he was also caught up in that awful situation of the Enniskillen bombing on Poppy Day. Sam Foster came through all of that with great fortitude and dignity. He was highly regarded and respected, not only by his colleagues who had an affinity with him, but by those of us in other parties. We had a respect and regard for Sam Foster, because I always believed that, when Sam Foster spoke, he meant what he said and he said what he meant. He was quite determined and resolute in the things that he believed in and the direction that he was going. He was never a man who set out purposely to cause offence. He was an individual who wanted to the best for his constituents and the people he represented.

So, on behalf of my party, I extend to his wife and family our sincere and heartfelt sympathy. He will be a great loss. Ulster Unionists will miss him most, but Ulster, in general, will miss Sam Foster. To put it in a few words: he was a good man in every respect.

Mr Maskey: On behalf of Sinn Féin, I express my party's deepest regrets and condolences to Dorothy and all Sam's family. I had the pleasure of working with Sam here in the first Assembly and in the negotiations in the run-up to the Good Friday Agreement. I would hesitate to call him a political opponent because I always remember that Sam — notwithstanding the fact that he was an Ulster Unionist — worked to try to make the Good Friday Agreement and these institutions work. My recollection is that he always treated each and every one of us with the utmost respect.

A mark of his character is that, even when he was appointed Minister, I had the pleasure of being in a lift with him — I will not use his exact words — and he expressed some surprise at being appointed to the position. He was, of course, honoured to do that and he was in no doubt

about the challenges that he would face in the time ahead. He certainly embraced the challenges, and I think that he embraced them in the spirit of the time in 1998, 1999 and thereafter. Therefore, in calling Sam a political opponent, I would be very generous and use the term advisedly. As I said, a tremendous mark of respect to Sam Foster is that he spent a long time in public life. He never ever, in my experience or presence, had any airs or graces about him. He was obviously a man of the people, and he was very well respected in Fermanagh and South Tyrone and in the wider community. I have no doubt that he will be missed in the Ulster Unionist family. Of course, he will be missed by his own family. On behalf of Sinn Féin, I express our condolences to the family, loved ones and colleagues of Sam Foster.

Dr McDonnell: I, like others, express my sympathy and condolences and those of my colleagues and our party, the SDLP, to the family and friends of Sam Foster. Sam was a thoroughly decent man, as others said. He was a Christian man. He was a great public representative and a good Minister. I valued Sam as a friend. Indeed, he was a good friend to all whom he came into contact with. It was unfortunate that ill health forced Sam to retire from here, but, after his retirement, I renewed my friendship with him on occasions when I visited Enniskillen. He was still the same kind, generous Sam.

Sam spent his life working for the betterment of others. When he was here with us, he gave the Assembly all his energies and attention. I hope that, today, Sam has his just reward and that he is in a happier place.

Mr Ford: I appreciate the opportunity to add a few words from my colleagues. There is absolutely no doubt that Sam Foster's life was marked by public service in a whole range of spheres: first, his main career in social work and the education welfare field, where he undoubtedly contributed to the welfare of many families in Fermanagh; his role as a special constable and as an officer in the Ulster Defence Regiment; his time on Fermanagh District Council, which others have spoken about so favourably; and then his election to the first Assembly. There is no doubt that he came here with his unionist principles. He did not come here having changed his mind but he was determined to make this place work for the good of all of us in Northern Ireland. It is no surprise that, in that context, he was given a ministerial post. Even if, supposedly, he was surprised, it was clearly a reward for the good job that he had done in bringing members of his party into this place. Where I got to know him most was in my role as a member of the Environment Committee while he was Minister. He was certainly an interesting person to deal with in the details of that, and he clearly had a commitment not just to being a Minister but to doing that job. It is rather unfortunate that the suspension of the Assembly in 2002 meant that three significant pieces of legislation were not his but merely became Orders in Council in Westminster, because we would have seen that legislation as the epitaph to his ministerial service had that Assembly survived.

There is no doubt that he was a gentlemen in all his dealings, including to those of us on the Committee who did not always make life easy for him. He was straightforward and honest. He was an example of public service that we should all seek to live up to. On behalf of my colleagues, I extend our sympathy to his wife, children, family and friends.

Mr Allister: My political career did not much coincide with that of Mr Foster, but, observing him from afar, it was very clear that — in the words of Lord Morrow — Sam Foster's interests were synonymous with those of Fermanagh. He was seen always to be a very proud son of Fermanagh and as someone who valiantly fought for its interests. I know that, in unionism in Fermanagh, he was a towering figure. I associate myself with the condolences offered to his wife and family on his passing.

Certainly, his political perspective in latter years would have been quite different from mine. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the Belfast Agreement and an implementer of it. On that, we would have disagreed, but one could not doubt the sincerity of the view that he held in that regard. There was more integrity to his view of the Belfast Agreement than there was to the views of those who initially lambasted him for having that view and then ended up implementing the same agreement. There was a certain sincerity and integrity about Sam Foster that we would do well to have more of in politics.

12.15 pm

Mr Agnew: My political career was only in its very earliest beginnings when Sam Foster retired from politics due to illness. The thing that strikes me, looking back over his political career, was his commitment to the victims of the Enniskillen bombing and the work that he did in the aftermath of that atrocity. That gave me a sense of the nature of the man's character.

Mr Allister alluded to Sam Foster's work in implementing the Good Friday Agreement and in embedding these political structures. Perhaps the best that he could do to serve victims of the many atrocities in Northern Ireland was to help to create stable political institutions and work across communities and across the parties for peace in Northern Ireland.

He served as Environment Minister, and I can only wish that I had had the opportunity to hold him to account in the way that I have tried to hold to account our current Environment Minister and all Environment Ministers who have been in post since I was elected. I have no doubt that he would have been more than able to stand up to that scrutiny.

He showed himself to be a very able and, as we can see today, very respected politician, and I offer my condolences and those of the Green Party in Northern Ireland to his family, his party and his very wide circle of friends and respected colleagues.

Mr McNarry: Sam Foster was the master of the short, concise statement, which, if you were on the receiving end of it, either stood you up or knocked you back. You always knew, after talking to Sam, where you stood. There are many good 'uns who have come out of Fermanagh, and, in my humble opinion, Sam is right up there with the best of them.

This is a fitting tribute to Sam, a former colleague, which I am proud and pleased to be associated with. I thank the House for enabling us to say so.

Mr B McCrea: I did not know Sam personally, but my family has deep roots in Fermanagh and would know his family very well and went to school with them. On that basis, I offer my condolences to his family.

Having listened to all the kind words being passed about Sam, perhaps the only thing worth adding is that it does make a difference if you make a difference. Mr Allister mentioned his own opposition to the Belfast Agreement, but it was one of Sam's finest stands, and I thank him and his family for the line he took on that occasion.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: As we have a little time left of the allocated period, I will call Members who have indicated that they wish to speak by rising in their seats.

Mr Elliott: I, too, thank you and the House for allowing us to pay this tribute to Sam, who was, as we have heard, a great and honourable colleague to many of us, whether that was in the Assembly or as a party colleague.

Almost all of Sam's life was dedicated to the community.

He was a school attendance officer, and I know of some people — I include people as close as my wife — saying that he had methods that might now be classified as unorthodox to get people to attend school and get the best from their education. Anyway, that was the style of what Sam did.

He then went into social work, as Mr Ford said. I still meet people who Sam worked with as a social worker and who have nothing but the highest regard for him. During that time, he served in the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment, and he was not, as we have heard, afraid to put his life at risk to serve others.

He was prominent in the Orange Institution and Royal Black Preceptory and, of course, in the political world as a councillor, where he served for a number of years on Fermanagh District Council and, indeed, was chairman of the council. Many of us also knew him as a Member of this Assembly and Minister of the Environment.

When you look at that record, it is fair to say that all the choices that Sam made in life were not easy choices. He did not always take the easy route and sometimes felt that it was his right to take maybe a more difficult route for the best of society. The Enniskillen bomb, I think, had a profound effect on Sam Foster and, indeed, maybe changed some of his views as to how Northern Ireland should move forward.

It was quite good to have a political debate with Sam because there was one thing that I could always say, and I had as many political debates with Sam as maybe most others here: there was never any grudge held the next day, and you were friends again.

Not only would Sam have regular debates about political things but in the Foster household, I can tell you, there were huge debates around football because he was a keen football fan and his sons usually supported a different team. I had the pleasure of bringing Sam and company to many matches at Ballinamallard United Football Club, and I am pleased to say that when he told me back in April that he had never owned a club tie, we were able to present him with one.

I and this House have lost a true friend and colleague. My sympathies are with his wife Dorothy, children Mervyn, Helen and David, and the wider family circle.

Mr Dallat: As one of the original 26 remaining in this Assembly, I felt that I should say something in addition to what my party leader said.

I imagine that there will never be any pressure on me to write my memoirs but if there was, I would have to include Sam Foster in them because in those days there were people who came to this Assembly to make it work and there were those who came to make it extremely difficult. Sam was most certainly one who not only changed attitudes but did it by example. My lasting memory of Sam was as Minister of the Environment. Here was a man who was not overtaken by the graces of the ministerial car, briefcase and special advisers. He remained a humble man who you could go to in his office and talk to on matters of road safety and other things.

I imagine his family at this time will take comfort from the fact that Sam will be remembered not just as an Orangeman or whatever else he was in the unionist community but as somebody who won respect and admiration across the Floor. Perhaps there are not too many who have achieved that. That is a lasting memory for his wife Dorothy, family and friends: that Sam Foster was a changer of people's views and helped to put down enough foundations for this Assembly to survive and be here today.

Matters of the Day

Death of Former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Leave —

Mr Allister: On a point of order, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Sorry, just let me finish this particular item. Leave has been given to make a statement on the death of former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds, which fulfils the criteria set out in Standing Order 24. If Members wish to be called, they should so indicate by rising in their places and continuing to do so. All Members called will have up to three minutes to speak on the subject. I remind Members that I will not take any points of order on this or any other matter until the item of business has finished.

Mr M McGuinness: Go raibh maith agat, Principal Deputy Speaker. First, it is a great honour to stand here today to say a few words about the massive contribution that Albert Reynolds, as Taoiseach, made to peace in this country. I was on holiday with my family in Sligo when I learned of his sad passing, and I decided to break the holiday to attend his funeral in Dublin.

Albert Reynolds was one of those people who recognised that, to resolve conflict, dialogue and communication were very important. He broke with tradition in that he authorised his principal adviser on the North, Martin Mansergh, to open up discussions with Sinn Féin against the backdrop of the dialogue that was taking place at the behest of Gerry Adams, John Hume and Father Alec Reid. The meetings that Albert authorised were mainly between Martin Mansergh, his principal political adviser on the North, and myself. Martin and I were involved in many meetings in advance of the IRA ceasefire in 1994.

Albert was the person who coined the phrase, "Who is afraid of peace?", and that represented a real challenge to everyone. He was someone who I believe had a very intimate knowledge of the North of Ireland and a very intimate knowledge of every section of the community that lived in the North of Ireland. He was very proud of his contacts with many people in the business community who came from the unionist community and also was very much in contact with many people right across the political and business spectrum. So, he was someone who understood the problem and understood when he came into the role of Taoiseach that he had a huge responsibility to try to assist in bringing that conflict to an end against a backdrop of, I think, a fairly wide recognition on behalf of all of the combatants that there could be no military victory for anyone. So, there was an imperative to create the conditions that would pave the way for a peace process and for an inclusive political negotiation that would bring the end of conflict and violence in this country.

So, I believe that the people of Ireland owe a great debt of gratitude to Albert Reynolds for the courage that he showed, for his acceptance that communication and dialogue were absolutely vital in moving forward and for the work that he, at a very early stage, was involved in, as I said, with Gerry Adams, John Hume and Father Alec Reid. Then, of course, there was the involvement with Irish America, and the entering into the process of President Bill Clinton clearly provided a great opportunity for all of us to

move forward in a way that has dramatically improved the lives of the people who all of us here represent.

I think that it is also fair to say that, without Albert Reynolds's visionary approach at a very early stage of this process, it is hardly likely that any one of us would be in this arena today. He was someone who really was not, during his lifetime, given the credit that he was due for the contribution that he made, and it is very interesting to see that the credit that came basically came after his passing, and that, I think, is very, very sad.

So, it was very important to go to the funeral to extend my condolences and those of everybody, I think, in the North to Kathleen, his wife, and to his children on the enormous contribution that Albert made to improving all of the lives and the lives of all of the children who have benefited from peace over the last 20 years.

It was also quite interesting that Albert died in the week that ran into the twentieth anniversary of the ceasefire, which undoubtedly set in train a process that challenges everyone who, even still, believe, in their deluded world, that violence and conflict offer the best way forward.

12.30 pm

Albert's message is as true today as it was 20 years ago, and it is this: who is afraid of peace? Those out there who wish to plunge us back to the past need to recognise that the vision showed by Albert Reynolds and other political leaders — they were joined, it has to be said, in fairness, by many unionist leaders during the course of building the peace process — of a conflict-free Ireland is the one that all of us in this room and, I believe, in the whole of Ireland, want to live in. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the vision showed by Albert Reynolds.

Mr Bell: I rise to offer the sympathy and condolences of the Democratic Unionist Party to the family and family circle of the former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds. I extend our sympathy, care and love to them. They are in our prayers. There is no doubt that Albert Reynolds contributed to helping to find an exclusively peaceful way forward for Northern Ireland. He had numerous skills as a businessman, as a leader and, from what I read, as a loving and devoted husband, father and grandfather. It is a wonderful legacy to be known as having made an undoubted contribution to helping to find that exclusively peaceful way forward for Northern Ireland. That is significant in itself.

The Democratic Unionist Party differed with the Taoiseach on many occasions. We did not share the same political outlook. We differed on many grounds, but I can say that, as a devoted unionist, I respect the fact that Albert Reynolds was the first Irish Prime Minister who understood and supported the principle of consent in relation to Northern Ireland. He had a profound understanding of the relationship between the Republic of Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. He also, and this is what I admire him most for, was a person who eschewed all forms of violence and who would not accept any caveats to ceasefires. It had to be, in his view — the correct view — exclusively peaceful, without caveat and without question.

Today, as the House gathers to remember him, we remember him as somebody who was committed to seeking peace. While we may be critical of his political outlook — that is the nature of political discourse — we

hugely admire somebody who sought peace and has left a legacy of peace in Northern Ireland. Our sympathy and love are with his family circle.

Dr McDonnell: I am glad and, indeed, privileged to be able to rise here and have an opportunity to pay tribute to Albert Reynolds, who died recently. Albert Reynolds coined the phrase, as quoted earlier, "Who is afraid of peace?" It is a very poignant question and one that we would all do well to answer for ourselves and keep answering for ourselves as we go forward.

Albert was a self-made businessman before he came into politics and perhaps that gave him the foundation for much of his political career and the wisdom that he brought to that political career. We here in the Chamber, and, indeed, in Northern Ireland, owe Albert a great debt of gratitude for his endless efforts to bring peace and stability to Northern Ireland. His contribution was enormous. We also owe him a debt of gratitude for the way he changed the relationship with the British Prime Minister. The robust working relationship that he forged with Sir John Major was the hinge on which much good came. The tribute, warmth, rapport and congratulations that John Major got at Albert's funeral were very significant.

It was a tragedy that events conspired to have Albert retire as Taoiseach before the full fruits of his dialogue with Sir John and all the other leaders came to a harvest point in the Good Friday Agreement.

I was privileged to attend Albert's state funeral, where he was paid many tributes, which were long overdue, and, as I said, Sir John was commended for the contribution that he made. I have spoken to Kathleen and the family, but I welcome the opportunity here again, on behalf of myself and the wider SDLP, to extend my sympathy and condolences to the whole Reynolds family.

Mr Kennedy: On behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, I rise to pay tribute to the late former Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, Mr Albert Reynolds, who died recently. It is appropriate that we acknowledge from all sides of this House the role that Albert Reynolds played as Taoiseach between February 1992 and December 1994 in developing a peace process here in Northern Ireland.

Albert Reynolds was an astute businessman, and he was a very shrewd political operator in his own political party, Fianna Fáil. He may have been a soldier of destiny, but he did not really emerge from that old hard-line republican background. As has already been indicated, he and John Major have perhaps been overlooked in acknowledgement of their contribution to the peace process, but, looking back, it is clear that their relationship was key to improving British-Irish relationships in the early 1990s.

Albert Reynolds was of course never a unionist, but he was part of the transition of attitudes in the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland. From a unionist point of view, we were political opponents, but he had a moderating approach to the more extreme elements of republicanism, and he helped to redress the traditionally anti-British and anti-unionist approach to Northern Ireland affairs from south of the border. He started to manage change in attitudes whilst keeping his traditional southern republican constituency on board. Critically, it was during his prime ministership that it dawned on those in political power in Dublin that the future had to involve the dropping of the territorial claim in the constitution of the Irish Republic

and that the consent of a majority in Northern Ireland was required for any constitutional arrangement. In effect, Northern Ireland would remain part of the United Kingdom because of the wish of the majority of its people.

Albert Reynolds's legacy is that of a pragmatic leader, a dealmaker who played his part in creating the relative peace that we have enjoyed for the past 16 years. Therefore, on behalf of myself and my party, I offer sympathy to his widow Kathleen, his children and his extended family.

Mr Ford: I just wish to add a few words, on behalf of my colleagues, in tribute to Albert Reynolds and in sympathy to his wife, family and family circle.

As has been said, there is no doubt that it has only really been in recent days that people have fully acknowledged the role that Albert Reynolds played in the early days of the peace process. When people look back on those events of the 1990s, they are likely to see the photos that the BBC will pull out every now and again of the clip peeling round the conference room in Castle Buildings, with Tony Blair, Bertie Ahern and some of us, as well as some who are no longer in this Chamber, and it is unfortunate in many ways that the contribution that was played by Sir John Major and Albert Reynolds in the early days of the peace process does not get recognised because there is absolutely no doubt that the relationship that the two of them established laid the foundations on which others built to put forward the Good Friday Agreement. There is also no doubt that that kind of change in relationships and understanding between the two Governments really only began when Albert Reynolds became Taoiseach and replaced his predecessor.

Albert Reynolds was not seen as somebody who was naturally sympathetic to the viewpoint of unionists. He came from a different kind of background, but there is no doubt that his business contacts, his relationships with a wide variety of people across the border and maybe the fact that he had a base in the midlands and not just in the Dublin metropolitan area gave him a different outlook and a degree of understanding of the cross-border nature of relationships on this island, even if he was not ever likely to be seen as a unionist.

Just as, a few minutes ago, we praised Sam Foster for the way in which he came into a different set of arrangements, bringing his political principles with him, there is no doubt that Albert Reynolds sought to encourage that as he brought his principles as well.

I certainly remember one meeting at which we discussed the practical arrangements for the establishment of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation during the early post-ceasefire days. There is absolutely no doubt that it was a sign of his wishes that there would be the maximum possible attendance in order to seek the best possible understanding between the parties of these islands. He did not get everybody he would have wished to be there, but he certainly ensured that the forum helped to set in train what became the Castle Buildings talks a couple of years later.

Of course, he was not Taoiseach for very long. We will never know what might have happened had he been in that post for a bit longer, but there is absolutely no doubt that the contribution that he made in the short time he had in

office was very significant. We and the people of Ireland, North and South, are all beneficiaries of it.

Mr McCallister: In paying tribute to former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds, I, like many colleagues, look back and reflect, as Mr McGuinness said in opening these remarks, on 20 years and the absolute transformation in British-Irish relations in that time. The work of Albert Reynolds and Sir John Major, to which many colleagues have referred, was absolutely key to building on that success and what it eventually became. Indeed, it is an illustration that people and personalities matter so much when they get together and can make a difference. We heard from colleagues about the impact that Sam Foster made by coming here, sticking to his principles and making it work. The difference that Albert Reynolds and Sir John Major made was in starting that transformation in British-Irish relations, going from two almost hostile neighbours to being very much best friends with a strong working relationship built on interdependency. It will be the lasting achievement of Albert Reynolds along with Sir John Major that they began the work of that transformation.

Albert Reynolds's wife Kathleen, whom I had the privilege of meeting a few months ago, and the Reynolds family are in our thoughts and prayers at this time. It is a huge loss to Irish politics. That contribution should, quite rightly, be reflected on here today.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I join every other party in the House in mourning Albert Reynolds and acknowledging his work for the peace process. He had a very long and varied career. Every time I pass Longford en route to Mayo to visit my mother, I think of Albert Reynolds. As my colleague Martin McGuinness said, he did tremendous work for peace. He asked, "Who is afraid of peace?". None of us needs to be afraid of peace. He was elected in 1997 and served until 2002. I knew him quite well during my time as director of Féile an Phobail. He officially opened and supported cultural events. He also attended and spoke at many Féile events, along with representatives of all political traditions and none. I pay tribute to him and send our deepest sympathies to his wife, Kathleen, and his family, who live throughout the island of Ireland.

Carl Frampton: Super-bantamweight World Champion

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr William Humphrey has been given leave to make a statement on Carl Frampton becoming the super-bantamweight world champion, which fulfils the criteria set out in Standing Order 24. If other Members wish to be called, they should rise in their place and continue to do so. All Members who are called will have up to three minutes to speak on the subject. I remind Members that I will not take any points of order on this or any other matter until the item of business has finished. I will, Mr Allister, return to your earlier point of order when this item is finished.

12.45 pm

Mr Humphrey: On the back of the Commonwealth Games and Rory McIlroy's exploits over the summer, Northern Ireland has had a terrific weekend in sport: Ulster's last-minute securing of a point away to Scarlets; the Shankill's own Marc McCullough winning his fight easily on Saturday night; the green and white army having a great victory in Budapest last evening; and, of course, on Saturday night, Carl Frampton, north Belfast's own, becoming the world champion. I congratulate Carl on behalf of the people of north Belfast on a great win. He certainly caught the mood of the people of the city and the country — all the people — with over 1,000 people attending the weigh-in at the Ulster Hall.

Carl started his career as a young boy of seven. He was guided and moulded as an amateur boxer by Billy McKee MBE, as so many boxers in north Belfast have been. On Saturday evening, at the purpose-built stadium beside the Titanic Quarter, some 16,000 people went along to the bout. I suggest that Saturday evening was almost a throwback to the 1980s and McGuigan's great fights in this city. I commend Barry McGuigan and his wife Sandra for the way that they have managed Carl since he turned to professional boxing. They have managed his career and promoted him, Belfast and Northern Ireland in such a positive way. Carl was at a training camp for 16 weeks: four months of hard work and dedication. The hard work, dedication, commitment and professionalism have now paid off, with Carl becoming our latest world champion.

As I said at the start, I congratulate Carl, a young man who started his career at seven years old and progressed to be a world champion. I think that we should all, in this city and across the country, be immensely proud of his achievement. I also congratulate his family, who have been there to support him through the years: his mother and father, Flo and Craig; his wife, Christine; and, of course, his young daughter, Carla. Their love and support will have been invaluable to him throughout his career, particularly his professional career.

When you listen to Carl being interviewed on the TV or radio, you are left in no doubt that he has very much gained the love and interest of the people of our wee country. For me, he is a great athlete, a great sportsman and a great role model for any young person, particularly a young person growing up in working-class north Belfast, and he is now a great world champion. As I said, we in north Belfast are hugely proud of his achievements. His success is now there for the world to see. This young man spent his childhood in Tigers Bay, and, now, across north

Belfast, this country, this kingdom and the world, we talk about Carl Frampton, the world champion. I wish him well in the future as he defends his title and, as he may well do, fights to merge other titles with it.

Ms Ní Chuilín: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I join my north Belfast colleague William Humphrey in congratulating Carl Frampton and, indeed, all the boxers on the ticket on Saturday evening: Marco McCullough, Jamie, Eamonn, Conrad, Anthony and Matthew. Each one of them did us proud, but today is about Carl Frampton, the Frampton family and the McGuigans. Kiko Martinez put up 12 rounds to give us an excellent boxing match, as did the rest of the opponents. They are all very worthy. Carl Frampton, as the many of us here who have met him on occasion will know — some of you will know him better than I do — is an excellent role model for young people involved in sport, whether that is at an amateur or professional level. Carl Frampton is now the world champion bantamweight. That in itself will provide great inspiration and aspiration for young people, particularly those in north Belfast who are coming behind him.

William mentioned the role that Billy McKee, Gerry Storey and many others had in Carl's illustrious career as an amateur boxer. Certainly, the McGuigans, Cyclone Promotions and others were involved in giving us what was a boxing treat on Saturday evening. We have been told that 120 countries had television rights to the boxing matches, with an estimated 250 million people watching what we in Belfast already know was an absolutely brilliant display of boxing on Saturday evening. That was against the magnificent backdrop of the Titanic building. I had the privilege of being there, representing the Executive, and what I saw was a city in concert in support of Carl Frampton and the other boxers. For me, that is another success story.

As we all know, boxing, to use an old but well-trodden phrase, like the nine medals that we had in the Commonwealth Games, punches well above its weight in this part of the island and, indeed, in the whole of the island. Carl Frampton — for his mother Flo, father Craig, wife Christine, daughter Carla and, indeed, all the family and the entire north Belfast community — is one of our own. We are all extremely proud of him and will continue to be proud not just of his achievements as a professional boxer but, indeed, of the achievements that our boxers on the ticket on Saturday night brought to us all. We wish him all the best, and it is appropriate that he is mentioned in the House today as a Matter of the Day. On behalf of everyone — I am sure that everyone will have an opportunity to speak — we are all absolutely delighted for Carl and extremely proud of him and the rest. Well done.

Mr A Maginness: We are a very talented lot in north Belfast, and that is not just the politicians. It includes Mr Carl Frampton, and, of course, we are all delighted at his wonderful achievement. There is something in the air in north Belfast that produces very fine boxers — as well as politicians. Carl really proved himself and united the community in popular support right across the divide. He is a champion — a world champion — and that is something for all of us to be exceptionally proud of. I hope that he does well in the future. He has put Belfast on the map once again in sporting terms. We have had quite a number of boxers from north Belfast: Michael Conlon and Paddy

Barnes, and, of course, we also have Michaela Walsh. That is a great tribute to those people and to those who are involved in the sport in north Belfast and throughout Belfast.

I wish Carl well. It is good to see a Tigers Bay man doing well, and it is good to see someone from a humble background doing well. He is a charismatic and modest individual, but he has shown his worth to all of us. He is a tremendous role model, I think, for many young people here in Northern Ireland. I look forward to his civic reception in Belfast, where the Lord Mayor, Nichola Mallon, will welcome him in due course. I hope that I get an invitation.

Mr Nesbitt: Excellence in boxing is in our sporting DNA, possibly in a way that does not apply in any other sport. As a young sports reporter, I was brought up on the legends of Rinty Monaghan in the 1940s, Johnny Caldwell and Freddie Gilroy in the 1950s and 1960s, Charlie Nash in the 1970s, right through to more modern world champions like Wayne McCullough and Dave “Boy” McAuley. Even in listing those names, there will be those who love boxing who will be screaming out, “You have forgotten Hugh Russell, Brian Magee, Eamonn McGee and Jim McCourt”. So it goes. Excellence in boxing truly is in our DNA, and Carl Frampton is the latest example.

There is something else about boxing: it unites our society in a unique way. In the 1980s, I was lucky and privileged to follow Barry McGuigan’s story. Innumerable times, I drove down to Clones to interview Barry or his father or to speak to his mum, who was working in the shop. I followed Barry all the way to Loftus Road in 1985, where he beat Pedroza and brought a world title back to Belfast.

I suggest that seldom has Northern Ireland and its people been more united than they were that night around Barry McGuigan’s success. For him to recreate that, 29 years later, not in London or in Dublin but in the Titanic Quarter in Belfast, is a huge testament to himself and to Carl Frampton. It was a magnificent achievement in sporting, social and cultural terms. I congratulate him on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, without reservation.

The late Gerry Anderson used to tease Dave “Boy” McAuley, a world champion, on Radio Ulster that if he was on ‘University Challenge’ or ‘Mastermind’, his specialist subject would be the lights and the ceiling of the King’s Hall because he had spent so much time on his backside on the canvas looking at them, which was not true, of course. Well, I can guarantee you, Carl Frampton will never be an expert on the lights and the ceiling of the King’s Hall, but I hope that he defends his title here in Belfast. I also hope, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, that the Assembly invites Carl Frampton and his family and Barry McGuigan and his family to a reception here to celebrate his success, because we have some rather fine lights and lamps out in the Great Hall.

Mr Lyttle: I rise on behalf of the Alliance Party to extend our wholehearted congratulations to Carl Frampton, his family, his team and the McGuigans. I was not able to be at the fight, but I listened to the atmosphere on the radio, and I have seen the plethora of videos that have been posted, showcasing what was truly a spectacular event for Belfast and Northern Ireland — one that we can be proud of. Indeed, it was a spectacular achievement by Carl and his team.

As many MLAs have said here this morning, it is not just about the dedication, skill and belief that Carl has as a world champion boxer now, but the dignity with which he performs, the respect with which he treats his opponents and the love that he shows for his family, his friends and the people of Northern Ireland, regardless of their community background. He absolutely has achieved what many people have failed to do and united our city and our community. I think that he is a shining example of what can be achieved with dedication, hard work and ability.

We should also say that he is an example for the many people who are involved at grassroots level in boxing across our community. I congratulate them on the hard work that goes on at that level in our boxing community. However, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, it is not enough that we as elected representatives congratulate and respect the hard work of our world champions and grassroots volunteers: we need to show the investment and the support that they deserve in order to develop our boxers and our community so far as possible. We extend our congratulations to Carl, and we wish him well for future success.

Mr Allister: Thank you. I am delighted to join in the very well-deserved congratulations to Carl Frampton. He has brought great pride, I am sure, not only to his close family, Tigers Bay, north Belfast and the rest of Belfast but to all of Northern Ireland. I think that we all feel pride in the fact that we have another world champion from our midst, and we want to salute him and congratulate him in all of that.

It would be remiss not also to congratulate the sporting fraternity on the achievements reached during the recess: the success of Rory McIlroy, and the success of many of our sportspeople at the Commonwealth Games. Northern Ireland has done itself tremendously proud in sport over the summer months, and this has been the crowning jewel in respect of all of that.

Mr McCausland: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. May I join with others in giving my congratulations to Carl Frampton in the wake of his success, on Saturday night, in the centre of Belfast on bringing back to Belfast, and to Northern Ireland, the IBF super-bantamweight title? We have a rich history of boxing in Northern Ireland, particularly, I have to say, in north Belfast. As has been mentioned, a long line of boxers have come from that part of the city.

1.00 pm

In congratulating Carl, we pay tribute to the role that his family have played. He was brought up in a very good family and had a good start in life, and that is hugely important. He has also been well managed and looked after by Barry McGuigan during his career.

I am glad that my colleague William Humphrey mentioned the start that Carl had all those years ago in Midland Boxing Club in Tigers Bay in the Duncairn area of north Belfast. In that context, I pay tribute to Billy McKee, who has given, I think, 40 years of voluntary service to that little boxing club where Carl started his boxing life. It was right and proper that Billy was acknowledged with the BEM earlier this year.

Carl has shown great talent in the ring and shown by his manner outside the ring that he is a responsible and good citizen. He is a good example to others and is, in many

ways, a role model for young people. We can be truly proud of him. The city can be proud of him and so can the country.

As has been said, there is a wealth of boxing talent in Northern Ireland, but it goes wider than that. As has been pointed out, we have had great success in golf and at the Commonwealth Games, and we also note the successes once again this year in the World Pipe Band Championships. So, at world level, Northern Ireland is, to borrow a phrase from boxing, certainly punching above its weight.

Mrs McKeivitt: I, too, put on record my sincere congratulations to Carl Frampton and Kiko Martinez for a fantastic fight on Saturday night. Our focus is rightly on our new world champion, but it is right to recognise the achievements of both boxers during what was a gruelling and well-contested match.

Like many others, I was ecstatic to see Carl crowned world champion on Saturday night. It was a nail-biting fight at times, but, from the moment that Carl knocked Martinez down in the fifth round, I think that we were all confident that he was a hero in the making. I am only sorry that not all people from across the North were able to watch the match, because it costs so much to rent. I therefore appeal to our local broadcasters to think about how they can make all sports more accessible to everyone in the future.

I am so pleased and glad to hear that my party colleague the Mayor of Belfast, Nichola Mallon, is already planning a civic reception for Carl. That will allow the people who did not see the match to contribute, take part and congratulate him. I support the calls here this afternoon for there to be an event in Parliament Buildings, which would be a very fitting tribute to him.

Aside from his boxing, Carl has become a unifying figure in Belfast and beyond. His success has brought people from every community together to celebrate a local champion. He and other sports stars have set a positive example that continues to inspire our young people and to wear down the barriers between our communities. If that alone happens, we will be absolutely delighted.

Again, I congratulate Carl and the team. We wish them all the very best for the future.

Assembly Business

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Earlier, Mr Jim Allister indicated that he wished to raise a point of order.

Mr Allister: Obligated. When we were dealing with Speaker's Business, I wanted to enquire about whether Mr Speaker intends, on behalf of the Northern Ireland Assembly, to send his best wishes and congratulations to Baron and Lady Carrickfergus, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, on the happy announcement this morning that they are expecting a further heir to the British throne.

Will Mr Speaker, on behalf of the House, convey our best wishes and congratulations to the royal couple?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I will bring the matter to the Speaker's attention.

Ministerial Statements

British-Irish Council: Misuse of Substances

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I wish to make the following statement on the ninth British-Irish Council misuse of substances ministerial meeting that took place in Dublin Castle on Friday 27 June 2014.

I apologise for the delay in making the statement to the Assembly. Unfortunately, the timing of the meeting and the start of recess meant that this is the earliest opportunity to make the statement to the Assembly. Junior Minister Jennifer McCann MLA and I represented the Northern Ireland Executive at the meeting. This statement has been agreed with junior Minister McCann and I am making it on behalf of us both.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

The Minister of State with responsibility for primary care, Alex White TD, represented the Irish Government and chaired the meeting. Norman Baker, Minister of State for Crime Prevention, represented the UK Government. Roseanna Cunningham, Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs, represented the Scottish Government. The Welsh Government were represented by Dr Mark Drakeford, Minister for Health and Social Services. Jersey was represented by the Health and Social Services Minister, Deputy Anne Pryke. Guernsey was represented by the Minister for the Home Department, Deputy Peter Gillson, and the Isle of Man was represented by the Minister for Home Affairs, Juan Watterson.

The main thematic discussion at the meeting focused on "Changing Trends in Drug Use — Current Patterns and Responses" with a particular emphasis on cannabis, new psychoactive substances and the misuse of prescribed and illicit medicines. We noted the importance of addressing the supply of such substances and agreed on the value of national and international collaboration to intercept these and prevent the trafficking of illicit and illegal drugs, medicines, new psychoactive substances and the materials used to make these substances, which are known as drug precursors. We identified the need to respond quickly and effectively on the emergence of new psychoactive substances and the need to promptly and proactively control and ban these substances when there is evidence of harm.

The issue of cannabis farms was discussed and Ministers shared information about innovative approaches to detecting cannabis production, including cannabis factories in residential areas, such as sharing information between energy companies, landlords, fire services and awareness campaigns. We also discussed ways to tackle the misuse and diversion of prescribed medicines. This is a particular issue in Northern Ireland and it was very useful to discuss the work we are undertaking on this issue and hear the experience of other jurisdictions. In particular, we highlighted the role of good prescribing practices combined with enforcement and raising awareness of the dangers of misusing prescribed medicines.

We shared information on the trends in drug misuse in each jurisdiction, and all Ministers noted the importance of the media — and social media in particular — in engaging with people about the dangers of substance misuse

and promoting harm reduction messages, as well as signposting people to prevention, early intervention, and treatment and support services. The need to reach out to and educate and inform young people was noted as being particularly important in preventing harm and stopping misuse at an early stage.

In addition to discussing drug misuse, we also shared information on alcohol misuse policies. Each jurisdiction recognised the impact alcohol misuse has and highlighted the need to raise awareness and prioritise tackling this issue. We discussed prevention, education, early intervention and treatment and support as well as the importance of using licensing laws to reduce the accessibility, availability, and affordability of alcohol. In particular, we discussed the potential public benefits of an approach such as minimum unit pricing.

At the meeting we also reviewed the good work that has been carried out by this sectoral group over the last year. This work has focused on prevention and education, tackling the impact of parental substance misuse on children, which is also known as hidden harm, and the role of online support services and telephone helplines. We agreed that this work stream provided a very useful forum for sharing the detailed expertise and knowledge of those involved in the drugs sector across the British-Irish Council area. It was also noted that, in addition to exploring specific themes in depth, each meeting has facilitated the exchange of information on wider policy developments and initiatives.

We therefore agreed the work programme for the group going forward over the next year, which will include addressing the issue of alcohol and drug misuse in an ageing cohort and the development and implementation of Naloxone programmes to reduce deaths from opioid overdoses. The next official level meeting of the group will be held in Scotland in September 2014 and the next ministerial meeting will be held in mid-2015. The group will continue to link and share information informally between meetings to the benefit of the effort against drug and alcohol misuse in all jurisdictions.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (The Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his statement on what is a hugely important issue. Specifically, Minister, I request your thoughts on an issue around which there has been much debate, namely the recent tragedies connected with legal highs and, particularly, the drug being referred to as Speckled Red or Cherry Red, and some of the very positive work that Belfast City Council carried out in the removal of these substances from the shops. I ask the Minister specifically to intervene and use his office to ensure that local authorities pick up on the existing power to make sure that these are taken off our shelves.

I also specifically refer to the ongoing debate around detoxification and rehab. The Minister will be all too aware of some of the debates in and around the Western Trust area. Given that this is a British-Irish Council paper and that there has been recent discussion at the North/South parliamentary forum on developing all-Ireland approaches to this, I ask specifically for his intervention on the detox facility in Muff, County Donegal, which has effectively been a storeroom because there is no service-level agreement with the health authorities in the North.

Mr Poots: I will deal with detoxification first. Certainly, that is a discussion that can be had with the Department of Health and my counterpart. Indeed, I am aware that we also have an excellent facility in Newry that is being run by the voluntary sector. We can look at how best we can progress these things. We had an all-Ireland conference on alcohol and the problems arising from that, which was the first of its kind, in Armagh some time ago. That was a very successful conference. I am happy to continue to engage in the discussions on all of that.

There have been quite a number of deaths as a result of Speckled Red, Green Rolex and all of that, and that has been quite well publicised. Regrettably, many of those drugs are still out there and still on the market. It is important to get out the message of just how dangerous they are and how dangerous to a community the people who supply those drugs are. We must always drive that message home, because many of these people do not come from outside a community, they come from within a community and are supplying poison to the children of those communities. That poison has caused the death of many people, in particular young people, who have taken those drugs.

The psychoactive substances are termed by some "legal highs", We need to get away from the notion that they are in some way legal. Psychoactive substances have a danger. Calling them "legal highs" perhaps gives people a notion that they are in some way less dangerous. We need to be very clear that psychoactive substances can cause very traumatic reactions in people, including causing death. We need to discourage people from using them. I am happy to take up and carry out the suggestion that we correspond with councils to indicate to them the success of the Belfast City Council work on head shops.

Mr Wells: The Minister is acutely aware of the problems caused to our community by cheap alcohol. Many of us in the House believe that the only solution is some form of minimum pricing. Can he give us an update on the situation regarding that suggestion?

Mr Poots: Thankfully, it is not just many in this House but many in the Houses in Scotland and Wales and in Dáil Éireann who think that that is the case. Each of those areas is considering moving forward on the minimum pricing of alcohol. Unfortunately, England is somewhat falling behind, still deciding what it should do and perhaps procrastinating. We are keen to move ahead. We have had the work carried out by Sheffield. That is now with the Department, and the indications are that we should move ahead. The Scottish Government have been taken to court. They won their case in Scotland, and they are now being taken to the European courts as a means of delaying this. That should not prevent us starting work that would, in the first instance, engage in a consultation process with the public.

1.15 pm

I recall very well having to attend the emergency department with my learning-disabled brother a number of years ago, and we sat until 3.00 am before he got his bed. I spoke to the sister later in the evening when things had quietened down, and I said, "I make the observation that there seem to be a lot of people here who have drink on them". She said, "Yes, over half of them would have drink on them". I said, "But this is the middle of the week. This is

Wednesday night". She said, "It is the same every night of the week, because drink is so cheap". The message sank in with me way back then that it was something that we needed to act on. The price of drink encourages an awful lot of the social problems that we have and causes an awful lot of the problems in our health service, and people are destroying themselves with it. It is an area that we will have to act on, and I thank the Member for raising that important issue.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister. He is relaying valuable discussions to the Floor. Can I concentrate on prescription drugs? Given the wider financial and health pressures, there is a financial as well as a health imperative in terms of prescription drugs. So, in terms of best practice, can the Minister point to robust action that is being taken so that those who are meant to get the drugs get the value of them, the taxpayer gets the best value for money and the potential is at least limited for those who are getting them to abuse them?

Mr Poots: The Member mentions a very difficult problem, particularly for the GPs who are on the front line. People very often come to a primary care practice needing help, and they receive drugs, and that helps them. In some instances, they are given pain relief, and people can become addicted to painkillers. In some instances, people who have been going through mental health trauma receive benzodiazepines, and they very often become addicted to them. Doctors are trying, in many instances, to take people off drugs, and I am getting letters from some MLAs expressing concern about that because individuals have gone to them. We need to ensure that GPs are encouraged to stay the course in the work that they are engaging in, because it is not in the long-term interests of the individual to stay on a drug that they have become reliant on. It is important that we work together on those issues.

There is another problem in that many people buy drugs over the Internet. Those may be similar drugs, but we do not know the quality of them. They have not gone through all of our licensing procedures. We have a problem with people who take prescription drugs. Twenty-one per cent of people report having used sedatives and tranquilisers, and 22% have used antidepressants, with around one in 10 having used them last year. That is the scale of people's drug use. Not all of them need to be using those drugs, but not all of them understand that they do not need to use the drugs.

Mrs Dobson: I also thank the Minister for his statement. Unfortunately, Minister, as we know, despite many campaigns, there remains a damaging stigma attached to substance misuse, and no one can have failed to be moved by the recent steps taken by a brave mother to show, through the media, the last photos of her dying son. Minister, what are you doing to highlight the grave dangers of substance abuse, especially among our young people?

Mr Poots: I join Ms Dobson in paying tribute to that mother. It is absolutely harrowing to see a fine-looking young man and see what he was left with at the end of it. It was absolutely appalling and heart-wrenching that anyone should go through that.

In terms of our Department's response, we have the new strategic direction (NSD) phase 2, and that is a five-year strategic plan set out to address the harm related to

alcohol and drug misuse in Northern Ireland. We have allocated approximately £8 million to its implementation for each year. That involves, in some instances, public information campaigns, and we are looking at prices and promotions and at access and availability. Indeed, I was down in Mrs Dobson's constituency last Monday at the invitation of the local Member of Parliament, David Simpson, and met REACT. Absolutely fantastic work is being carried out by that organisation, which works with young people. The organisation raised the issue of education and of getting into schools. We and the Department of Education need to do some work on that, and there needs to be a discussion on how we can ensure that we are absolutely working as closely together as we should be to fight this scourge.

There is no doubt that the messages to people on drugs are ever more important. Some people always refer to it as being about young people; we have actually a bigger problem with 25- to 34-year-olds than we have with 18- to 25-year-olds. Of course, that has happened because those people have got themselves hooked on drugs at a younger age. There is a real problem amongst that age group. These are not youngsters who are going out there and sampling for the first time; these are long-term users. We have had people in their forties who have died recently from the misuse of drugs. One of the problems with psychoactive substances is that people take them in large quantities, they do not get the kick that they expect and they find that, by the time that it does kick in, their bodies have started to overheat. They cannot stop it as they have taken the drugs at that stage and the damage has been done. It is really frightening that those people are overheating and that they are dying awful deaths from overheating. The public need to know that that is the score. Young people and those who use those drugs need to know the dangers of them.

Mr McCarthy: Like others, I welcome the statement this afternoon, particularly the commitment to prevention, early intervention and treatment, not only for drug users but for alcohol abusers. We pay tribute to all the groups in Northern Ireland that work diligently and consistently in this field. It is not an easy task, and they work day and night to overcome it. Can the Minister assure the House that, despite all the financial pressures at this time, funding will continue to all those groups engaged in trying to overcome this scourge for all our communities?

Mr Poots: The truthful answer is "No, I can't". That is one of the issues that I raised. It is certainly an area where I do not want to see cuts taking place. I do not think that it is appropriate for cuts to take place in that area, but that is one of the things that is currently being given consideration. We will look to the October monitoring round to see whether we can ensure that the cuts are less critical than they currently would be, but, at this moment, we do not have holy grails in the Department where those cuts do not extend to. We need to ensure that, as far as possible, we can mitigate the cuts. I hope that the parties in the Executive will assist me in coming to an agreement that will ensure that that will be the case.

Mrs Cameron: I welcome the Minister's statement to the House this afternoon. I also welcome the information sharing that is going on about the important subject of substance misuse. Could the Department have done

more to raise awareness of substances such as Speckled Cherries?

Mr Poots: Speckled Cherries, Green Rolex and so forth have been a very significant issue. Last year in east Belfast alone, we witnessed how, over a couple of months, nine young people, I think it was, lost their life. As soon as the Department became aware of this substance being available in Northern Ireland and its potential links to the number of deaths, the Chief Medical Officer issued an alert to all key stakeholders, including alcohol and drug services, on the same day. In addition, the Public Health Agency issued a range of information to the media and the public and appeared on a number of programmes. It should be noted that it goes across a wide range of socio-economic groups. The majority of those who lost their life in that instance were over the age of 25.

Given the nature of drugs, the only safe option is not to take any substance. When you take a substance, you cannot know what its effects on you will be. So it is important that people avoid taking drugs in the first instance.

There are people out there who profit from drugs. We need to ensure that those people are exposed and that communities report them to the police so that they go through due process for engaging in that behaviour. We must always make it clear that drug use is unacceptable, damaging and harmful. Particularly when taken with alcohol, the dangers of drugs spike. We will continue to put those messages out there and to take on those who seek to profiteer through drugs.

I am often critical of the media, but they have been very helpful in getting a lot of these messages out, and I encourage them to continue to take an interest in these subjects. Getting the messages out there on key programmes and key news programme etc and having people made aware of the risks that they are putting themselves at is critical.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his statement and pay tribute to the Cuan Mhuire centre in my constituency, which does so much to help people deal with alcohol and drug-related issues.

Minister, you mentioned prescription drugs, which have become an increasing problem. These prescription drugs are readily available online and, without proper medical supervision, can be extremely dangerous. We have already had fatalities in the North related to these prescription drugs. Minister, do you think that enough is being done to counteract that particular avenue of access to prescription drugs?

Mr Poots: My Department does not look after the regulation of importing drugs, which is largely done through the Internet, but we work very closely with the authorities that do, and a remarkable amount of drugs are found and taken away from the end user as a result. However, one can only imagine that there is a far greater amount of drugs coming through, and that makes it quite frightening in terms of its scale and the amount of drugs that are being imported illegally. Those are prescription drugs or are similar to prescription drugs, but individuals may be taking drugs that are not properly licensed and that may contain things not in the prescription drug that they would like to use but that is not available to them.

They may contain other things that can cause them harm. I encourage the public to desist from using such drugs.

If someone has the problem of being addicted to prescription drugs, I would encourage them to talk to their primary care provider, pharmacist or doctor to try to work out a programme to wean them off. The truth is that, unless you need a drug and it has been prescribed to you by a doctor, you should not take it.

Mr Buchanan: I thank the Minister for his statement to the House today, especially in relation to psychoactive substances, which are a scourge on society. Does the Minister feel that his Department is doing enough to identify new substances or trends in drug use?

Mr Poots: I think that more could be done and the Department will want to be active in that. We have been corresponding with the Home Office on various courses of work that have happened in other countries and locations and are encouraging the Home Office to take actions that will help us to clamp down on a lot of these drugs. We were to have a report in the springtime, but we were then told that it would come in September this year, and I hope that it will, because obviously we are in September now. On the back of that, the national Government will be able to take strong actions to ensure that we can move much more quickly on removing these drugs from the market and take action against the people who are supplying those drugs.

1.30 pm

Mr Beggs: The misuse of drugs, whether prescribed, over the counter or illegal, can adversely affect the health and mental well-being of those taking them. The Minister's statement highlighted the particular problem in Northern Ireland of the "misuse and diversion of prescribed" drugs. As well as looking at the drugs available over the Internet, will the Minister highlight what action his Department, GPs and pharmacists are taking to try to identify where prescribed drugs are being diverted to others at a cost to individuals' health and to our limited budget?

Mr Poots: Many legal and prescription drugs contain opiates, for example. Individuals buy prescription drugs from people who indicated that they were unwell and had their doctor prescribe those drugs, which are broken up and used to supply the market. Indeed, when there was a problem with drug dealers getting heroin, they were quick to do that. We need to be aware that drug dealers are very sharp and are right up there when it comes to innovative ways to get their hands on product to sell. We also need to be very innovative in how we challenge them. Our primary care providers — GPs — have to be conscious of all that goes on when they prescribe some of these drugs. They must seek to ensure that such drugs will be properly utilised and will not be used by individuals who will cause harm to others. We are aware of these problems, and people are seeking to address them. Those courses of work will continue.

Mr G Robinson: I thank the Minister for his statement. How can parents become more informed and aware of the illegal drugs that young people and others can avail themselves of?

Mr Poots: It is absolutely critical that parents keep themselves informed of drugs, alcohol misuse or the misuse of the Internet and that they provide support to their

children. Despite repeated warnings from the Public Health Agency (PHA), the PSNI and the Chief Medical Officer, it is clear that people continue to take these substances, risking their health and well-being. Information on alcohol and drug misuse is included in the school curriculum as part of a broader life skills approach, and evidence shows that this is the best way to address the issue in schools.

I appreciate that some believe that we should have a hard-hitting media campaign to highlight the dangers of drug misuse, similar to those undertaken on road safety. However, evidence shows that, at best, campaigns on substance misuse are ineffective. Often, those who take drugs feel that such campaigns do not match their experience, and they therefore disregard them. At worst, there is some evidence that such campaigns can increase awareness of available substances and lead to increased risk-taking and drug-seeking behaviours. Therefore, we need to be very careful. Our mantra must be: do no harm.

I will ask the Public Health Agency to revisit the evidence base and look at how best it can continue to get the messages out there, particularly to young people, to ensure that they never start to take drugs and, therefore, do not become hooked on this scourge.

Mr Allister: I return to the scourge of legal highs; I appreciate the misnomer that the Minister made a point about. He may have answered my question because, in responding to Mr Buchanan, he turned his back on the House, and it was difficult to hear what he said. Will he update the House on whether there has been any specific indication from the Westminster Government as to how and when they propose to update the Misuse of Drugs Act so that it might deal with today's situation as it pertains to legal highs?

I cannot resist asking, since I notice that the next meeting is in mid-2015: does the Minister expect to be in office at that date?

Mr Poots: I do not know. That is something for others to decide and I am happy to do the job when I am asked to do it. In any event, the job in hand indicates that we have an issue and a problem now that we need to address. We had corresponded with Westminster, which indicated that it was carrying out an investigation into all of this, with the intention of looking at whether legislation is appropriate. That was to be concluded in the spring of this year; it is now to be concluded in September, so it should be weeks away at the latest. Hopefully, we will get information very soon from Westminster on what the next steps are. We have looked at actions that have taken place in New Zealand, the United States of America and the Republic of Ireland, where there has been greater success. We encourage our Government to ensure that they are well placed to combat the supply of drugs and the individuals doing that so that we can act against them.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his statement on what is a very important issue. I also take the opportunity to commend the work of the Forum for Action on Substance Abuse (FASA), which does an excellent job in north Down and the Ards area. Will the Minister elaborate on what approaches have been taken elsewhere in the UK and in the Republic of Ireland to address the real scourge of legal highs?

Mr Poots: Many head-shop products became illegal in the Republic of Ireland when its Criminal Justice (Psychoactive

Substances) Act 2010 was introduced. That empowered gardaí to seek court orders to close shops suspected of selling drug-like products, with the onus on owners to prove that they are not doing so. The United States of America has what is known as analogue legislation, which means that any new drug that acts in the same way as an already banned substance is automatically considered to be banned under the existing legislation.

New Zealand's plans were to regulate and license the new psychoactive substances (NPS) market. However, it is reported that some of the first legal highs to be sold under licence in New Zealand were urgently pulled off the shelves after users reported adverse health effects. Previously, they had been assessed by the Ministry of Health and, in August 2013, were judged to be of low enough risk to be sold to the public. There are now 42 legal high products being sold in New Zealand under interim licences. Suppliers paid £10,000 to register each product with the authorities, which evaluated calls to the National Poisons Centre and other reports of harm before granting approval.

All these options are being considered by the Home Office's expert panel, although it is clear from discussions at the meeting that none of these approaches is a complete solution on its own. Belfast City Council has led the way in being innovative in the United Kingdom by using existing legislation to remove materials from shops' premises. I very much welcome the fact that the courts supported the council when that was challenged by the shops.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. What direct or specific advice would the Minister or his Department give an MLA to pass on to a very distressed mother who contacted me on Friday evening to say that she had just found evidence of the wrongly named legal highs in her 17-year-old son's bedroom? She has since found out that it was Magic Dragon, three grams of which cost £24.

Mr Poots: I encourage her to speak to the legitimate authorities to pass on the name of whoever is supplying the drugs in the first instance. If there is any concern that some of the drugs have been ingested, I encourage a health check. I encourage her to engage with organisations that provide support and help to people who are using drugs or considering using drugs.

In all of this, we need to approach our young people, and others who are considering or are taking drugs, in a very sensitive way that sets out to try to help them. It is not always about badgering and barking at people; it is about outlining to them what the risks and dangers are and perhaps other ways that they can enjoy themselves without taking drugs. Quite a number of organisations available across Northern Ireland can provide support. Mr Dunne commended one of them. I commend that organisation and the others working very closely with communities to get positive messages out there and encourage people not to take drugs in the first instance.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): As the House is aware, I have authorised my Department to adopt the Belfast metropolitan area plan (BMAP) which will become operative on 9 September 2014. The adoption order was signed and sealed on 3 September 2014.

Since I took over as Minister of the Environment, with responsibility for planning, one of my key priorities has been to ensure that my Department concludes work on BMAP and other development plans. BMAP is necessary to provide the essential planning framework to guide development decisions in the Belfast metropolitan area and to provide certainty and confidence for those wishing to invest in the development of the area. Finalising BMAP is crucial not only for the six district council areas concerned but for the economy of the North.

I authorised the adoption last September of the Banbridge/Newry and Mourne area plan, and work is continuing on the northern area plan. The completion of the three area plans will provide an up-to-date, fit-for-purpose planning regime and the stability required before next April, when councils will become responsible for the future preparation of their own local development plans.

Adoption of this plan represents a sound foundation for decision-making affecting a significant percentage of the population and land area of the North. BMAP covers the council areas of Belfast, Lisburn, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Newtownabbey and North Down. The plan area, which is approximately 960 square kilometres, has a population of 671,559 — approximately 37% of the total population of the North — and is key to securing the economic growth of the region. It also covers areas of social deprivation with vulnerable communities, some of whom feel that they have been left behind.

A development plan drawn up for a designated geographical area provides a framework for the determination of planning applications by the designated statutory planning authority. Currently, that is the DOE, and, in future, it will also be the new councils. The planning authority must have regard for the development plan when determining a planning application insofar as it is material to the application, as well as all other material considerations.

The Belfast metropolitan area plan is a development plan prepared under the provisions of Part III of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 by the Department of the Environment. The process that must be followed by the DOE in preparing a development plan is specified in statute.

The preparation of, and consultation on, BMAP has followed a protracted process over the past decade, spanning periods of devolution and direct rule. Preparation of the plan was formally initiated in January 2001. During the initial preparation period for the plan, the DOE engaged in the most extensive consultation exercise ever undertaken for a development plan in Northern Ireland. That recognised the extent of the geographical area covered by the plan and its inherent significance to the economic and social development of the region as a whole.

Throughout that initial preparation process, councils informed and helped shape the draft plan through a plan political group, which was chaired by the then Environment Minister and comprised representatives of the six

councils that made up the plan area. There was ongoing consultation with individual councils at all stages of the plan preparation process.

In December 2001, the Belfast metropolitan area plan issues paper was published. That sought to stimulate a wide-ranging debate on issues likely to influence the shape of future development in the plan area and to encourage feedback from a wide range of interests.

During that initial consultation period, a series of 10 information meetings and 27 consultation meetings were held throughout the plan area. Voluntary and community groups were engaged, and over 1,500 people attended the public meetings and focus groups. Overall, that consultation process reflected a broad cross section of the people living in the plan area. A report presenting a collation of the views expressed during the consultation process was published in April 2003. The Department published the draft Belfast metropolitan area plan on 30 November 2004, and the statutory period for objections to the draft plan expired on 25 January 2005. In order to reflect changes in the planning context and to address a number of issues that were identified in the draft plan, the Department published a plan amendment in February 2006. The statutory period for objections to the plan amendment expired on 11 April 2006.

1.45 pm

Following receipt of a substantial number of representations, the Department requested the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) to hold a public inquiry into the objections received and to report to the Department on the inquiry. The inquiry opened on 16 April 2007 and was formally closed by the PAC on 1 May 2008. The PAC submitted its report to the Department in stages between January 2009 and January 2012. Its recommendations have been fully considered by the Department. In order to ensure full transparency of process, the Department published all the Planning Appeals Commission reports on the draft plan in June 2012. Full details of my Department's response to the commission's recommendations are set out in the Belfast metropolitan area plan adoption statement and its appendices.

Article 28(6) of the Planning (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 requires the Department to send a copy of the draft plan to the Department for Regional Development to consider whether it is in conformity with the regional development strategy (RDS) — the spatial strategy of the Executive. DRD completed its assessment of the draft plan in October last year and issued a certificate confirming that the plan is, in general, in conformity with the regional development strategy 2035. That, alongside completion of a habitats regulations assessment and equality impact assessment, marked the completion of all necessary legislative and procedural requirements in advance of adoption.

The plan is a substantial publication comprising seven volumes of material and runs to 900 A4 pages, plus 30 larger maps. It comprises a written statement and accompanying maps as well as detailed site designations. The written statement is divided into four parts. Part 1 sets out the background to the preparation of the plan; part 2 sets out its guiding principles and strategy; part 3 sets out the plan framework, comprising allocations, designations, policies and proposals relating to the plan area as a whole;

and part 4 translates the broad policies and proposals of part 3 for each of the council areas specifically addressed in volumes 2 to 7. In assessing the totality of the plan for each council area, it is therefore necessary to refer to volume 1 and the relevant district proposals — volumes 2 to 7 — for the particular council area.

The key components of the plan include supporting economic development; protecting the natural environment; promoting urban renewal; promoting equality of opportunity; enhancing quality of life; sustaining a living, working countryside; and developing an integrated, inclusive transport system

The plan's central aim is to strengthen the regional role of the metropolitan area so that it can compete successfully at European and international level. Securing the prosperity of this area is vital to the economic, environmental and social well-being of the region. In line with the regional development strategy, the plan seeks to promote the city of Belfast as the regional capital and the major focus for regional administration, commerce and employment. It also provides a framework to strengthen the complementary roles of Lisburn city and the adjoining boroughs of Castlereagh, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey and North Down.

In line with its key theme, the plan promotes Belfast city centre as the leading shopping centre and Lisburn city centre and the town centres of Bangor, Carrickfergus, Ballyclare, Carryduff and Holywood as the focus for additional retail capacity. That is consistent with the regional development strategy approach, which urges precaution in relation to major retailing proposals due to the adverse impact of out-of-town retailing on existing centres.

The plan retains the draft plan policy to restrict the future expansion of retailing at Sprucefield to the sale of bulky goods. I acknowledge that certain concerns exist about that issue, but my predecessor and I have previously explained in considerable detail the rationale for our approach on the matter, which again is consistent with the regional policy context to strengthen Belfast as the key economic driver for Northern Ireland, with Sprucefield playing a complementary role rather than competing with Belfast city centre. It also seeks to avoid the impact on other town and city centres in the BMAP area and beyond. In the absence of any evidence to sway me from that precautionary approach, which aligns with the Executive's endorsed approach in the RDS and the more recently published draft strategic planning policy statement (SPPS), I considered it appropriate to retain the policy.

The plan also secures an adequate supply of housing lands, with provision for an estimated 92,000 dwellings. That exceeds a six-year supply post-adoption. Of the 1,950 hectares of land zoned for housing, 103 hectares are specifically zoned for social housing. DOE has worked very closely with colleagues in DSD and the Housing Executive to address social housing needs in BMAP and also to develop regional policy for the delivery of social housing with the joint draft policy PPS 22 on affordable housing and the associated DSD housing policy.

The employment strategy seeks to sustain balanced economic growth and job creation by promoting city and town centres as the main focus for retail and office functions, along with providing a generous and continuous supply of land with a balanced portfolio of sites throughout

the plan area. Over 2,000 hectares of land are allocated for employment use, with four major employment locations, at Global Point, Newtownabbey; Titanic Quarter, Belfast; Purdysburn, Castlereagh; and Blaris, west Lisburn.

The plan provides proposals to safeguard those areas that may be vulnerable to development pressure or that are visually or environmentally sensitive. The plan's environmental designations acknowledge and protect the rich natural and built heritage of the area. The urban environment strategy promotes new development of the highest quality, protects areas of architectural and townscape importance, and promotes healthier living environments. The plan identifies 21 conservation areas and designates 99 townscape- or village-character areas, along with a number of historic parks, gardens and demesnes.

For the natural environment, the plan includes additional designations to afford special protection to Belfast metropolitan area landscapes that are particularly sensitive because of their quality or that need particular protection because of their location and development pressure. Those areas include the Belfast metropolitan coastal areas, the Lagan Valley Regional Park, the Belfast hills and areas of high scenic value (AOHSVs). The plan area contains 33 national or international nature conservation designations, 240 sites of local nature conservation importance and 288 local landscape policy areas.

Very briefly, I wish to take the opportunity to highlight a number of key proposals for each of the council areas covered by the plan.

The aim for Belfast, as previously referred to, is to strengthen its role as the regional capital and economic driver for the North. However, it is not only about Belfast city centre. The plan provides for a major redevelopment zoning in Titanic Quarter of circa 87 hectares, providing a unique opportunity to create a new quarter for the city on a scale unequalled in the past and unlikely to be repeated in the foreseeable future. A major site at the north foreshore is zoned for mixed use, comprising employment and open space of around 127 hectares. Other key employment sites include Monagh Bypass and a mixed-use site on the Crumlin Road. In the outer Belfast area, approximately 610 hectares of land are zoned for housing, including social housing. An office area is designated at Queen's University to facilitate university-related office use, and a further office node is designated at Stormont to facilitate public sector administration.

The plan facilitates the integration between transportation and land use and identifies the elements of the Belfast metropolitan transport plan that require protection through the planning process; for example, park-and-ride schemes, new railway stations or the widening of the A55 outer ring road.

The plan recognises the development potential of the Lisburn City Council area and aims to facilitate expansion and economic growth, with a focus on locus and Lisburn's favourable location along key transport routes. Key designations include the primary retail core, promoting city centre living and creating 24-hour vitality through protected city centre housing areas. As previously referred to, the plan sets out the complementary role of Sprucefield

shopping centre and designates a district centre at Dairy Farm and a local centre at Dunmurry.

The plan proposals for Carrickfergus aim to improve the general environment in order to strengthen the town centre and to promote the marine complex and urban waterfront. Key designations include 181 hectares of land zoned for housing, including land for the provision of social housing, and 151 hectares of additional land zoned for employment or industry.

The plan proposals for Castlereagh include the promotion of major recreational facilities. Key designations include 254 hectares of land zoned for housing and 93 hectares of additional land zoned for employment or industry, with a major employment location at Purdysburn/Newtownbreda. Carryduff town is also promoted as a focus for retailing and offices through the identification of a town centre boundary. A district centre is identified at Forestside and a local centre at Dundonald to complement the existing retail facilities.

The plan proposals for Newtownabbey enhance recreation and maritime pursuits and promote the major employment, retail, education and residential centres within the borough. Ballyclare town centre is promoted as a focus for retailing and offices, and district centres are identified at Northcott and the Abbey Centre. Major transport proposals include the Ballyclare relief road.

The plan proposals for North Down aim to enhance the status of North Down as an important tourism destination and facilitate the rapid economic and suburban growth that the area has been experiencing whilst protecting and enhancing the natural heritage aspects. The coastline is protected through the designation of a coastal policy area and is complemented by the designation of an urban waterfront in Bangor to promote the marina complex and its surroundings, encouraging a vibrant and attractive waterfront.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am conscious that we are fast approaching Question Time. I have another couple of pages to go, but, with your permission, I will wait until after Question Time to continue.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. As Question Time begins at 2.00 pm, as the Minister quite rightly pointed out, I suggest that the House take its ease until then. Questions on the statement will be taken following Question Time.

The business stood suspended.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Bright Start

1. **Mr Rogers** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the implementation of the Bright Start school-age childcare scheme. (AQO 6533/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness (The deputy First Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, with your permission I will ask junior Minister Jennifer McCann to answer this question.

Ms J McCann (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): The Bright Start school-age childcare grant scheme aims to create or sustain up to 7,000 school-age childcare places in low-cost social economy settings. Those will begin to address current unmet need for school-age childcare services. Some 77 applications were received under the first round of applications for the scheme, which closed in May. A second call for applications for the scheme projects will end on 30 September 2014.

The childcare partnership strategic funding panels have assessed the 77 applications and agreed that 50 met the selection criteria. The settings that will be funded will sustain 1,165 school-age childcare places and create 326 new school-age childcare places. The 50 successful applications represent funding of some £1.9 million, to be paid over a three-year period. All 77 applicants to the grant scheme have now been advised of the outcome of the assessment process. No new or existing setting was required to deliver its places by 1 September this year, but we expect most of the settings funded under the first call to be operating by the autumn. All the 40 childcare settings that are currently financially assisted by OFMDFM have applied for funding under the grant scheme, and those that were successful will continue to operate when their current funding ends on 30 September.

Mr Rogers: I thank the junior Minister for the response. Can OFMDFM confirm the number of new places that are available at the start of the school year? How many are rural based? How many are school based? How many are based in social enterprises?

Ms J McCann: I do not have the exact figures for the different sectors that you mentioned, but I can say that they are all from the social enterprise sector. The reason for that is that we are very clear that any surplus moneys are reinvested for more service provision to create more places and not for the distribution for owners. I do not have the exact figures here, but I can assure the Member that a number of those childcare places are in a rural setting.

Mr Lyttle: What public consultation has the junior Minister's Department undertaken with regard to the Westminster proposals to replace the childcare voucher scheme with tax-free childcare payments? Why does her

Department believe that the new scheme will be better for families in Northern Ireland?

Ms J McCann: As you said, the coalition Government propose to introduce a new scheme to provide financial support to help working families with the cost of childcare. The purpose of the new scheme is to enable those with responsibility for children to take up paid work or to work for longer. We are in the process of looking at the scheme, but no definitive consultation has happened yet. Part of our proposals for Bright Start are to ensure that all parents and carers are informed of all the schemes in respect of the childcare element of working families' tax credit and the vouchers. Part of Bright Start is to do that, so we will be looking to roll that out.

Mr Kinahan: How much of the £12 million budget for childcare is currently unallocated?

Ms J McCann: I have details of the £12 million. In 2011-12, £3,222 was allocated to the fund. In 2012-13, £1.482 million was allocated from the fund. Again, in 2013-14, £692,000 was allocated from the fund. I can give the Member details of where those specific allocations are, but I do not have time to go into them here. If the Member wants, I can write to him with those details. For example, in the last year, PlayBoard got £652,000 and £40,000 went to the Department of Health. All of that went towards delivering childcare services for people in local communities. As I say, there are quite detailed amounts. I will write to the Member with those details.

Phoenix Project: Funding

2. **Mr Irwin** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the current funding situation facing the Phoenix project. (AQO 6534/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: The Phoenix project was originally set up as an umbrella group with a number of outlying offices which, while retaining their individual identities, worked together. The original Phoenix project had seven local offices which were spread throughout the North. However, some of the local groups have now applied for funding under their own corporate governance arrangements. Not all of the individual groups received funding from the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS). Some received only Peace funding. The total VSS funding for groups that were originally within or came under the umbrella of the Phoenix project in the 2013-15 period is £420,198. Those groups are located in Armagh, east Tyrone and west Tyrone, as well as the overall Phoenix Group, which operates throughout the North. All victims' groups, the Victims and Survivors Service and the Commission for Victims and Survivors have been asked to find efficiency savings of 4-4% in administration. That is also being applied to our Department and all of its arm's-length bodies.

Mr Irwin: I thank the deputy First Minister for his response. As I am aware, the Phoenix Group is in need of gap funding from September to April 2015. A significant number of offices would close in the absence of that. Given the importance of the Phoenix Group's support to victims, will the deputy First Minister give an assurance that every effort will be made to find the gap funding that is needed so that it may continue to do its work?

Mr M McGuinness: To date, the Victims and Survivors Service has been given a budget of £10 million for 2014-

15. A bid for additional resources was not met in June monitoring. That has created pressures. However, I am optimistic that the VSS budget will be restored to its 2013-14 baseline position of £11.3 million following October monitoring. As I have said, the Victims and Survivors Service has been asked to seek to apply efficiencies of 4.4% from the running costs of the service itself and from the groups that are funded under the victim support programme. That is in line with the level of efficiency savings that has been sought by our Department from all of our arm's-length bodies and the Department itself.

Mr Nesbitt: I seek clarification. The deputy First Minister talks of a 4.4% reduction across arm's-length bodies including the Victims and Survivors Service. He talks about its current budget being £10 million. I understand from a briefing from the VSS that its budget this time last year was in excess of £12 million, which means that the current reduction is in excess of 15%, not 4.4%. Would he confirm whether those figures are correct?

Mr M McGuinness: I can go only on the figures with which I have been supplied. Given the Member's contribution to the discussion, I will certainly check the figures that he has provided to the Assembly today.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Tá ceist agam ar an LeasChéad-Aire i dtaca le grúpaí íospartach a bhris téarmaí a gcuid litreacha tairisceana. What action has been taken with regard to victims' groups that have been found to be in breach of the terms of their letters of offer from the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)?

Mr M McGuinness: Those are matters that are obviously under constant review. Over recent years, there has been a number of cases where investigations have been conducted to ensure that funds that are being provided out of the public purse are being properly given to those who are most in need. So, I think that the responsibility of all groups is to work in a good spirit of cooperation with officials and the Victims and Survivors Service to ensure that there is no misappropriation of funds. Where there is any allegation of misappropriation, it will, as always, be investigated.

Victims and Survivors Service: Funding

3. **Mrs Overend** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the level of funding currently available to the Victims and Survivors Service enables it to fulfil its role. (AQO 6535/11-15)

13. **Mr Sheehan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether funding for victims and survivors will remain at the current funding levels. (AQO 6545/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, with your permission, I will answer questions 3 and 13 together.

Funding for victims' services has increased over recent years, with £50 million being allocated for victims during this budgetary round. We fully acknowledge that the needs of victims and survivors are an important legacy of the conflict, and establishing the Victims and Survivors Service was an important aspect of focusing on need. As demand increases, we need to consider the supply of services and the funding available to deliver them.

Due to the restricted financial climate, we allocated the Victims and Survivors Service £10 million at the start of the year. Of course, we always want to meet demand, which is why we have made a bid for additional funding in the October monitoring round. As I said earlier, I am optimistic that the VSS budget will be restored to its 2013-14 baseline position of £11.3 million. I accept that another Member has introduced a caveat that challenges those figures, but it is important to say that we are still pleased that the importance of finding the additional funding was acknowledged by the Finance Minister in the Budget paper and agreed by the Executive.

Mrs Overend: It is 40 years since the beginning of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and only last year did we have the establishment of the Mid-Ulster Victim Empowerment group, which aims to support the victims of terrorism across the constituency. However, in what is only its first full year of running, it is dealing with a severe cut to its budget. What can the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister do to reassure the victims of terrorism in Mid Ulster that their needs will not be forgotten but instead be supported for quite some time to come?

Mr M McGuinness: The responsibility to deal with the situation in relation to all victims falls upon the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the arm's-length bodies. As I said earlier, we recognise that this is a time of economic hardship and cutbacks. People have to remember that the cutbacks are a direct result of the strategy being adopted by the present coalition Government in London, where, in fact, the First Minister and myself met our own finance people, just last week. They clearly indicated to us that, since 2009 — this is now 2014 — there has been no appreciable increase whatsoever in our block grant.

Given inflationary pressures and the need to meet the financial considerations of workers and so forth, that inevitably places a huge burden on the distribution of funds and is a direct cause of the challenges that we, as an Executive, and the Finance Minister face as we deal with the economic situation across all Departments. As I said in this contribution, the victims' sector is a very important and special sector. We have a duty and responsibility, even in the face of a very difficult economic climate, to ensure that those who have suffered as a result of conflict will be supported. That is why, in the October monitoring round, we have pledged to try to ease the difficulties that many of those groups, including the group in Mid Ulster, are facing.

Mr I McCrea: Can the deputy First Minister confirm whether or not Kathryn Stone, who previously was the Victims' Commissioner, is playing a role in appointing a new Victims' Commissioner? Will he assure the victims' sector — certainly the innocent victims' sector — that she is fit to take that job, given the fact that she referred to the current victims' service as not fit for purpose?

2.15 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has clearly gone beyond the funding issue, but the deputy First Minister may wish to reply.

Mr M McGuinness: The Member is correct. The Commissioner for Victims and Survivors, Kathryn Stone, left her post on 12 June 2014. Our officials are working through the processes to appoint a new commissioner.

The appointment will be regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and will follow the code of practice for ministerial appointments. The process will be taken forward by HR Connect, and advertisements have recently appeared in newspapers. The closing date for applications is midday on 12 September 2014. The Victims and Survivors Forum was consulted on the skills and qualities needed for the role, and its views were taken into consideration in finalising the necessary skill sets for the incoming commissioner.

Given the highly respected person that Kathryn Stone was as Victims' Commissioner and the huge amount of support that there was for her within the victims' sector, the First Minister and I took the view that the experience that she gained while she was here would be invaluable in ensuring a successful process of appointing a new Victims' Commissioner. I think that everybody who worked with Kathryn — we received regular reports — had nothing but the fullest admiration for the way that she conducted herself while she was Victims' Commissioner. I do not think that there is any unease in the victims' sector about the role that she is playing in the appointment of the new Victims' Commissioner.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat. In the Minister's response, he indicated that funding for victims' services had increased over recent years. Will the Minister give an indication of that increase?

Mr M McGuinness: As I said, the First Minister and I have allocated £50 million for victims during this budgetary period from 2011 to 2015. In the previous Budget period, 2007 to 2011, £33 million was allocated for victims. The current victims' budget is therefore £17 million higher than in the previous Budget. That represents more than a 50% increase. Our current annual budget for victims sits at around £11.3 million; under direct rule, in the three years between 2004 and 2007, the victims' budget totalled £11.8 million. Our annual budget for victims is close to what victims received for three years under direct rule. Those figures speak for themselves. The support of victims is a huge priority for the Executive and for the First Minister and me. Against the backdrop of a very harsh economic climate, we will constantly ensure that we support victims as well as we can. I think that those figures clearly show the commitment from the Executive and from the First Minister and me.

Mr Attwood: It might be useful, deputy First Minister, if you could confirm what you have just said, that, given the unfortunate comment that was made by the Member opposite in respect of Kathryn Stone, it was a decision taken by both you and the First Minister that she should play a role in the appointment process. At the same time, will you confirm, given that, this time last year, Kathryn Stone formally alerted you and the First Minister in respect of concerns by the VSS, that both you and the First Minister are personally monitoring the implementation of the very wide-ranging recommendations that arose from the report that was commissioned after she formally alerted you and the First Minister about her concerns?

Mr M McGuinness: Anybody who worked with Kathryn Stone had nothing but the highest regard for her capabilities and compassion for victims. She was also very much an advocate for victims, and she was always prepared to discuss with the First Minister and me the challenges that the victims' sector was clearly facing.

Advice from her was always taken very seriously indeed. As a result of some of the things that have happened in the VSS in recent times, in terms of resignations and so forth, there is obviously a huge challenge to ensure that the needs of victims are properly catered for. Some outlandish allegations have been made over the past while that the First Minister and I have totally and absolutely refuted as being without foundation, but I think that we will continue to face into those challenges, as will the Victims and Survivors Service and the new Victims' Commissioner, to ensure that we are delivering for all victims of the conflict.

Child Poverty Strategy

4. Ms McCorley asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the child poverty strategy. (AQO 6536/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: Mr Deputy Speaker, with your permission, I will ask junior Minister McCann to answer the question.

Ms J McCann: The Executive's child poverty strategy, 'Improving Children's Life Chances', was published in March 2011. In 2012, the Executive launched the Delivering Social Change framework to tackle poverty and social exclusion. That framework established a mechanism for cross-departmental action in Delivering Social Change signature projects that have been launched to target action where it is most needed. In October 2013, we published the child poverty outcomes framework, which was the result of several years' work to develop a model in which every Department could understand its role in tackling child poverty.

A review of the current child poverty strategy was carried out from October 2013 to January 2014. We subsequently published a consultation document, 'Delivering Social Change for Children and Young People', in January 2014. It aimed to integrate the child poverty strategy into a wider strategy to improve outcomes for all children and young people. The majority of consultees welcomed the proposals. However, some of our stakeholders wanted more time and engagement to develop an integrated strategy. We have taken the views of our stakeholders fully on board and have decided to lay a separate child poverty strategy and to engage further with stakeholders on the development of a new strategy to replace the 10-year strategy for children and young people post 2016. We plan to lay a child poverty strategy for 2014-17, following Committee referral and Executive consideration, this autumn. That strategy will be informed by the consultation and the child poverty outcomes framework.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for the answers to this point. Will she outline any concerns that she has about austerity measures and the predicted rise in levels of child poverty?

Ms J McCann: I am very concerned about the predicted rise in child poverty levels as outlined in a recent Institute for Fiscal Studies report carried out for OFMDFM and a similar report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. The Institute for Fiscal Studies report shows that, across Britain, families with children are hardest hit by welfare cuts. The report also states that child poverty levels here will rise to 30.9% and 38.5% respectively for relative and absolute child poverty. We have seen how welfare cuts

are affecting families in Britain, particularly families with children. We have even more families with children here, and we have families with larger numbers of children. Reports commissioned by the Children's Commissioner's office indicate that, because the North has a relatively large proportion of households with children and higher numbers of children with a disability, the North will lose more income than any other region outside London. We are, therefore, very concerned about the coalition Government's austerity measures and the proposed welfare cuts.

Mrs D Kelly: I am pleased to hear that the junior Minister with responsibility for children and young people is very concerned at the findings of the reports, but is that concern not a withering indictment of your childcare anti-poverty strategy? Minister, what exactly are you and OFMDFM going to do about it?

Ms J McCann: As I said, we are very concerned. I understand that, even now, we are seeing an increase in the number of families using food banks and in the number of crimes in supermarkets, where people are stealing food. Some work has been brought forward in Departments. OFMDFM, for instance, has made funding of £13.56 million available over the three financial years from 2013 to employ an additional 230 recently graduated teachers through our Delivering Social Change framework.

We developed the Delivering Social Change framework to ensure that poverty is tackled in a holistic way, but all Departments have responsibility for poverty. Indeed, every Member in the House has a responsibility for tackling child poverty.

In one of my earlier answers, I mentioned the launch of the first phase of the Bright Start childcare strategy. The grant scheme is already creating and sustaining childcare places and working towards tackling poverty. DARD also does work through its poverty framework. So, a lot is being done by Departments. Are you asking me whether it is enough? I think that we all need to do more. As we go forward, everybody — all Departments — working together under the Delivering Social Change framework needs to do more.

Mr B McCrea: Will the Minister explain the difference between relative and absolute child poverty? Will she comment on whether absolute child poverty has been improving in recent years?

Ms J McCann: Relative poverty is when your income is 60% below the average household income. Absolute or persistent poverty is when you are in that type of poverty totally. You can measure levels of poverty, and that is what we are trying to do with this new poverty strategy. Rather than getting figures that have been massaged, we are trying to ensure that the indicators are outcomes-based. The slight decrease in child poverty over recent times is the result of the average household income coming down, as opposed to any impact being made on child poverty. That is why we wanted to look at child poverty outcomes. Measuring child poverty is about looking not just at household income but at educational underachievement, educational attainment, health inequalities, access to play and access to services for children. You also need to look at the whole family when you are looking at child poverty, because we cannot see it in isolation. That is what we are

trying to do with this new anti-poverty, or child poverty, strategy.

Delivering Social Change

5. **Mr D McIlveen** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on Delivering Social Change for children and young people. (AQO 6537/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will ask junior Minister McCann also to answer this question.

Ms J McCann: The 'Delivering Social Change for Children and Young People' consultation document was published in January 2014. It sets out proposals to integrate the child poverty strategy with the 10-year strategy for children and young people and to work to deliver our commitments under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The consultation closed on 31 March, and an analysis report was compiled.

Most respondents welcomed the proposals, but some stakeholders wanted more time and more engagement with them to develop an integrated strategy. We have listened to our stakeholders and taken their views on board. As I said earlier, following Committee referral and Executive consideration, we propose to lay a separate child poverty strategy for 2014-17 in the autumn and to allow the 10-year strategy for children and young people to continue until 2016. We propose to work with stakeholders, using a co-designed process to develop a new strategy for children and young people post-2016, and this work will begin shortly.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the junior Minister for her answer. If my memory serves me correctly, one of the key objectives of 'Delivering Social Change for Children and Young People' was improving literacy targets for our children. Given the scenario that you painted of further consultations, where do we see improvements, even in the last six months since the scheme was launched, in literacy targets for our children and young people?

Ms J McCann: I can tell the Member that junior Minister Bell and I visited a number of schools where the newly graduated teachers have been employed through the Delivering Social Change signature programme. From talking to those teachers, I know that they have seen improvements in the classroom, in the children themselves and in the school environment. There has been a lot of positive feedback from that. The strategy is still out for consultation, but I believe that we have seen achievements in educational attainment, which is what the Member asked about.

2.30 pm

Two hundred and sixty teachers are employed for this, and there is a focused, targeted approach towards those children who need support in the classroom. So we are seeing that, and we are seeing it right across the board in some of the signature programmes. But I think we need to go out and see it and to talk to the teachers and to the children and, indeed, to their parents, which we have done.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We will now move on to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Christians: Persecution

1. **Mr Rogers** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what they are doing to improve the plight of Christians in the Middle East and in Africa who are suffering greater persecution than ever before. (AQT 1381/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: I think that OFMDFM undoubtedly shares the Member's concerns about what is happening in other parts of the world, particularly in relation to the activities of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) group, which is wreaking havoc in Syria and Iraq. We have seen, sadly, on the social networks and in the media the outworking of its strategy over recent times, although I think that many people in this part of the world have become familiar with the Islamic State organisation only in recent months. I am told that it has been in existence for much longer than that and has been particularly active in Syria.

I do not think that we have any illusions about our ability to affect the activities of a group so many thousand miles away. I think that the powers that be in the world are, obviously, contemplating how it should be dealt with, but I have a very strong view that the invasion of Iraq provided the opportunity for many groups in Iraq and the surrounding region to plunge that country into even worse turmoil than it was under Saddam Hussein. I recently attended a Chamber of Commerce lunch in Derry, where General Stanley McChrystal, who led the US participation in Iraq, made what I thought was a very compelling contribution to the debate. He sat down beside me at the lunch table, and I asked him whether, if he had been President of the United States, he would have authorised the invasion of Iraq —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Minister's two minutes have been completed.

Mr M McGuinness: — I will just finish — and he said, "Not in a million years". He said that Iraq is worse now than it was then. So, we have only a limited ability to deal with these situations.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Seán Rogers for a supplementary question.

Mr Rogers: I thank the deputy First Minister for his answer. I know that we have only a limited ability, but what discussions have taken place at governmental level with the British or the Irish to ensure that maximum pressure is applied at an international level to stop those who are financing these organisations and to ensure that the people are looked after?

Mr M McGuinness: I have to be very honest: I do not think that the powers that be that are dealing with these situations give one hoot for what our Executive or this Assembly feels about how that matter will be dealt with. They are, obviously, dealing with the situation from their perspective, and, as an observer, I, along with many other people, wonder whether they have even the foggiest notion about how to deal with the situation.

The reality is that, whether these groups are funded or not, it is quite clear that they are well organised, that they have been in existence for some time and that they are totally ruthless in the process that they have been involved in, particularly in recent times, which has been well articulated, where they go to people and tell them that they

have to change their religion. Of course we are all, I think, really annoyed and angry that people, not just Christians but those of other religions, are being threatened, intimidated and murdered in this way by ISIS. But this is something way beyond us, and we should not have any illusions about our ability to have an impact on a situation that world leaders appear to be struggling with at this time.

Lord Chief Justice/Minister Poots

2. **Mrs McKeivitt** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to explain why there has been no written reply to the Lord Chief Justice's correspondence about his concerns regarding Minister Poots's remarks about potentially not getting a fair hearing at the Court of Appeal. (AQT 1382/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: I think that the Member, and I suppose the media as well, should know better. They must know that the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister is a joint Department that requires agreement. It is no secret to anybody in the House that the First Minister and I have a different view of the remarks made by Minister Poots, and not just by Minister Poots but by others even in the last couple of days. My sympathy is totally and absolutely with Sir Declan Morgan. The sooner the matter is resolved, the better. We are involved in discussions at the moment in an effort to get an agreed response to what Sir Declan said.

Mrs McKeivitt: Has the deputy First Minister any plans to lodge the Lord Chief Justice's letter in the Assembly Library?

Mr M McGuinness: I have not even considered that, but we will give it consideration as a result of your question.

Social Investment Fund

3. **Lord Morrow** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of the many questions about the lack of funding for victims' groups, which the deputy First Minister answered earlier, to update the House on the social investment fund and advise whether Members should be concerned about it also. (AQT 1383/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: The social investment fund process is up and running; projects are in motion. From our perspective, we are satisfied that the money that we provided for that was ring-fenced. We are confident, at this stage, that the process will continue to a successful conclusion.

Lord Morrow: I thank the deputy First Minister for his answer, but could I ask him a further question in relation to the distribution of the funding? I understand that that fund was approximately £80 million. Is he telling the House today that he is quite confident that there will be a full distribution of that? Has there been a full application for that amount of money?

Mr M McGuinness: When we made provision for the funds for these vital community-led projects, we did so on the basis that the full funding of £80 million would be provided. We are attempting to stick to that in the face of great challenges. It is clear from the proposals that have come forward from the different sectors of the North that there are many projects out there. In fact, you could spend another £80 million and another £80 million 10 times over fulfilling the requests that have been made from what are

community-led projects. So, we are satisfied at this stage that suitable progress has been made and that we will very soon begin to see the construction of some very important projects that will aid the community in different parts of the North.

Historical Institutional Abuse: Other Victims

4. **Ms McCorley** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they are aware that, although the inquiry into historical institutional abuse is ongoing, there are other victims who fall outside the terms of reference of that inquiry who would wish to be included. (AQT 1384/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: Junior Minister McCann will deal with this question.

Ms J McCann: Yes, we are very aware that there are a number of people who fall outside the remit of the inquiry. Obviously, we are keen to make sure that the inquiry continues. We actually had consultation with a number of people. For instance, women who were over 18 when they entered an institution are not covered by the inquiry. Indeed, anybody affected by wider clerical abuse who was not in an institution is not covered. However, we are certainly very keen. We have asked our officials to bring forward recommendations and to look at them. Judge Hart, who is the head of the inquiry, is adamant that he does not want to widen the terms of reference of the current inquiry. However, I have written to him to see whether there is some way that we can look after those women, particularly those who were over 18 at the time. I think that they deserve justice and truth as well. We are trying our best to look at that.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. Is the Minister aware of comments made by Naomi Long in the media this morning? What are her views on those?

Ms J McCann: Yes, I can tell the Member that I am very aware of the statement by Naomi Long over the weekend. She put out a statement and has said that more people have contacted her in recent days about being abused by members of the British state forces here in the 1970s. I can tell the Member that we have asked for a meeting with Mrs Long to discuss that, but we also want to ensure that any of those women who have come forward are covered and will be able, in some way, to avail themselves of the services of the historical institutional abuse inquiry. I do not want to go into it in great detail, but we have seen the way in which the British state has spent decades covering up the activities of its intelligence service here in Ireland, and we have seen it more recently with the cover-up around the Kincora institution. So, we are very keen to talk to Mrs Long first to see whether there is any way in which we can help those women who have come forward.

Scottish Independence

5. **Mr A Maginness** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they have taken a view on the British-Irish Council and the implications for it if the referendum on Scottish independence on 18 September returns a yes vote. (AQT 1385/11-15)

Mr M McGuinness: Obviously, there will be a lot of focus over the next 10 days on what is happening in Scotland,

and, in the aftermath of that vote, depending on which way it goes, we will all have to deal with all the implications. The implications, no matter what way you look at it, could be quite profound, as many of us will know from listening to the debate in recent times. We have not been involved in any discussions, because to do so would be to pre-empt the outcome of the decision of the people of Scotland. I personally have very consciously stayed out of the debate, because I think that what is happening in Scotland is a matter for the people of Scotland to decide, without outside interference. So, I have no intention whatsoever of contributing to a view that would in any way undermine the rights of people there to make their own decision. We will wait for the vote, and when the people of Scotland decide, whatever way they decide, we will have to deal with the fallout. We will not be the only people dealing with the fallout. It is quite obvious that the British and Irish Governments are very focused on what is happening there and are conscious of their responsibilities in the aftermath of whatever decision is made.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the deputy First Minister for his answer. I understand the position that there have not been any discussions to date, but, in the event of a result one way or t'other, is it not incumbent on the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to enter into discussions with the Edinburgh Government on the outcome, because there will be implications no matter what way the vote goes?

Mr M McGuinness: I am very encouraged by the comments made by First Minister Alex Salmond in the past few days when he said that, whatever way it goes, he will remain a true friend of us here in the North. In all our dealings — those of the First Minister and me — with him, he has always been very positive and constructive, at British-Irish Council meetings, ministerial council meetings and the joint ministerial council meetings that we engage in in Westminster. So, I think that the sensible thing for all of us to do is to wait for the outcome of what will undoubtedly be a very important decision. In the aftermath of all of that, whatever the outcome is, we will engage in whatever dialogue and conversations that need to be had, particularly with the British Government, on how we go forward.

2.45 pm

Regional Development

Mr Deputy Speaker: Question 9 has been withdrawn.

A6: Public Inquiry Report

1. **Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister for Regional Development when he will publish his response to the inspector's report on the A6 dualling scheme public inquiry. (AQO 6548/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): There are proposals to dual two sections of the A6, those being Randalstown to Castledawson and Londonderry to Dungiven. Funding has been provided to advance the A6 Randalstown to Castledawson dual carriageway project to be shovel-ready in 2015 and, when funding becomes available in the future, to allow construction to commence at short notice.

Development of the A6 Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme, which includes a bypass of Dungiven, is well advanced. It has been through a public inquiry and the inspector has produced a report embracing various recommendations. I am considering a response to those recommendations and will issue the departmental statement in due course when I am satisfied that all issues, a number of which are complex, have been appropriately reviewed.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Minister for his answer. Given the fact that your predecessor refused to consider decoupling the bypass at Dungiven from the larger project, have you any views on that? I think that the people in Dungiven are living in the most polluted town in Ireland and they are desperately seeking for that bypass to go ahead as soon as possible.

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. I am happy to confirm that I have taken the decision that the various components of the entire scheme can be decoupled. Subject to the finance being made available and the other issues being resolved, we can proceed. I note the comment made about the air quality in Dungiven. I recently met officials from Limavady Borough Council on that issue, and they see that the solution to the air quality issue is achieving the bypass at Dungiven at the earliest possible time. I understand that and, of course, I have been carrying forward the scheme as quickly as possible.

Mr Campbell: I welcome the Minister's assurance on that issue. Setting aside the funding, which I know that he will probably allude to and the support for the money that he needs to proceed with the scheme, which he will get, can he give an assurance that every step and measure that needs to be taken in advance of proceeding with the A6 scheme will be put in place as urgently as possible, because he knows that some businesses have already closed in anticipation of a road scheme, and they are now wondering whether it will ever be completed?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question and, indeed, the indication of clear support for the financial position that I find myself in. I hope that that carries through on all issues relating to my Department. Certainly, great is the zeal of the convert. Thank you very much indeed for that.

With regard to bringing forward elements of the overall project, as you know, I have indicated that we have put some money into the Randalstown to Castledawson section to make it shovel-ready in 2015. With regard to the issues around the Dungiven bypass, I hope to make progress on the statement arising out of the public inquiry as quickly as possible. It will then be down to the availability of finance and working through the statutory processes that have to be undertaken.

Armagh: Link Roads

2. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made on the east and west link roads in Armagh city. (AQO 6549/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A public information event for the proposed A28 Armagh east link was held on 11 June 2014 in the Armagh City Hotel. The local community's concerns about the impact of the east link were again highlighted

at that event. Therefore, I consider it appropriate now to carry out a review of the preferred option to ensure that local concerns are fully considered and that the proposed Armagh east link will offer the best possible solution for Armagh city. I draw Members' attention to the press release detailing this approach that was issued last week.

The next significant step in the scheme development process will be to undertake the detailed design for the proposal. However, I am very mindful of the concerns of the local community and of the need to ensure that the proposed Armagh east link will offer the best solution. The review will include consideration of the preferred corridor emerging further out the Markethill Road at the Edenaveys industrial estate area.

Consideration of options for a preferred line and junction strategy for the Armagh north and west link roads, based on the out-of-town corridor, is continuing. That has included discussions with Deloitte, which has been appointed by Armagh City and District Council to develop a master plan for the Mullinure area. It would not be appropriate to make a decision on the preferred route pending development of the master plan.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. I welcome the review, because there were complaints about the east link from residents of the Newry Road. Can the Minister give us a definitive timeline? He is well aware of the traffic problems around Armagh city. What is the timeline for the east link? Also, can he —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has asked his question.

Mr Kennedy: I believe that the Armagh east link and the north and west link proposals will provide benefits, including improved journey times, reliability and safety on the strategic road network. Obviously, it is important that we continue to work through the various stages of the schemes, not least on the issue of available finance. It is not possible at this point to earmark specific dates as to when the east link scheme will take place, but I am hopeful that moneys will be made available for it in the new budgetary period. I take the point that the issues of traffic congestion in Armagh need to be dealt with as quickly as possible. That is my objective as Minister.

Mr Irwin: I welcome the review of the east link road. The Minister will be aware of the level of concern about the proposed link road going through a largely residential area of Armagh city. Does the Minister support DRD's current preferred route?

Mr Kennedy: The Member makes a good point about the importance of the Armagh east link and the historic need for it. It has been talked about in Armagh for a generation now. However, if I were completely satisfied with the current proposal, I would not be initiating the review that will look again and make sure, not only that we get it right, but that we take on board the concerns that may be out there. That is important.

I regard myself as a listening Minister. I have been listening to the representations that I have received from people in the immediate area, and we will review the current situation to satisfy ourselves that the route that will ultimately be chosen will offer the best, most sensible

solution for easing some of the congestion in that part of Armagh city.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhúiochas fosta leis an Aire. The Minister referred to finance and to a new budgetary period. Can he indicate what priority this project has in capital spending?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member. I certainly regard both the east link scheme and the north and west scheme as important for the city of Armagh. I have something of an interest, given that I happen to represent the constituency. It is understood that Armagh has congestion issues that can be dealt with through the outworking of schemes, and I intend to pursue those with as much intensity as possible to make progress on them and see them brought to successful fruition.

Road Maintenance: Lisburn

3. **Mr Craig** asked the Minister for Regional Development what impact the recent budget settlement will have on road maintenance budgets in the Lisburn area. (AQO 6550/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As you will be aware, following the recent announcement on June monitoring, my Department's resource budget, which is used for the day-to-day maintenance of the road network, has been cut. This cut applies equally across the whole of Northern Ireland, including the Lisburn area. As a result, I had no option other than to take some tough decisions and stop issuing new work instructions to external contractors, who currently undertake around one quarter of our routine maintenance work and three quarters of the work required to repair street lighting faults.

My Department's operations and maintenance staff will endeavour to keep the road network in as safe a condition as possible. However, as they have resources to complete only around three quarters of the total workload, they will not be able to provide the service that the public would expect in normal circumstances. My Department's operations and maintenance staff have limited street lighting resources. They will endeavour to deal with group faults and single outages on a priority basis. Regrettably, this has the potential to result in many street lights being out across Northern Ireland over the winter.

These have been difficult decisions to take, but they are necessary in order to try to protect areas, such as winter service, where withdrawal of our work would have an even greater impact on the Northern Ireland economy and the public. I realise that these measures will impact on our contractors, road users and the public, but I have been forced to set priorities so that we operate within reduced budgets.

Mr Craig: That sounded like a statement from the Minister that the lights are going out all over Northern Ireland. That said, Minister, there are ongoing contracts that impact on the road infrastructure in Northern Ireland. They are carried out, mainly, by other parts of Departments. I am thinking of the Blaris Road, which has recently been dug up by other companies. Are you going to tighten up on how they resurface such roads? Recently, resurfacing roads destroyed by others has been picked up by your Department.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. I do not take any pleasure in saying that the lights or some of the lights may be going out across Northern Ireland. I view it as a serious departure. I regret it very much. I will continue to press for moneys in October monitoring and later monitoring rounds to ensure that the resource budget is properly funded. I want to do that.

In relation to his point about other agencies, the Member will know that we have a memorandum of understanding with such agencies. We seek to coordinate their work in a proper and responsible way. It is equally important that work carried out by them or on their behalf by contractors is done in a satisfactory and proper way. That is something that I am continually interested in and continue to pursue to ensure that standards all over are consistent and at an appropriate level.

3.00 pm

Mr Swann: The Minister has indicated that the recent budget cuts have left him with only a 75% capacity for grass cutting, patching and gully emptying. Will the Minister tell me how many gullies across Northern Ireland his Department is responsible for? Will he ensure that the flooding hotspots will continue to get priority attention?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. It is an important subject. My Department is responsible for the cleaning and maintenance of over half a million gullies across Northern Ireland. Of those, we aim to inspect and clean, where necessary, all gullies in urban areas twice each year and gullies in rural areas once each year. As a result of the recent budget cuts, I no longer have sufficient funding to pay contractors for gully emptying. That will be a challenge. My Department's operations and maintenance staff will endeavour to prioritise gully cleaning and dealing with known flooding area problems, including some of the very prominent cases that we have heard about over recent times. We seek to prioritise those areas to ensure that they are protected as far as we can.

Mr Byrne: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. Given that the Minister has talked about the road maintenance cuts given the budgetary position, can he give an assurance that the two counties that have no railways — Tyrone and Fermanagh — will not be more adversely affected by the cutbacks in the current road maintenance budget?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. I am not quite sure about the reference to railways in terms of the emptying of gullies etc, but, nonetheless, he makes a point. The Member will know that, to be fair and equitable about it, I will have to share the challenge of the decisions equally and fairly throughout Northern Ireland. As I said earlier, it gives me no pleasure to stand at this Dispatch Box and say that the pressures are here, but that has been forced upon me. My Department has effected savings over the last three years to the tune of £106 million; I have not shirked my responsibility. However, further pressure is being applied, and there are consequences for decisions made and supported by the Member's party at Executive level that will put pressure on the work of my Department, even in the counties that he refers to.

Public Transport Ticketing

4. **Ms McGahan** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the implementation of a new public transport ticketing system. (AQO 6551/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink is finalising a feasibility study to examine the options for a replacement ticketing system. Among the options being considered are the enhancement of the current system; the use of ITSO ticketing, which is an open standards system supported by the Department for Transport in GB; and the use of contactless bank debit or credit cards, similar to that which has been piloted and is about to go live in London. When that study is finalised, Translink will complete an economic appraisal, which will examine the costs and benefits of the various options. That will be subject to approval by my Department and the Department of Finance and Personnel. The Department will want to ensure that any new ticketing system offers the best possible value for money to passengers.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his response. Minister, have you given any consideration to coordinating integrated ticketing with other transport providers on an all-Ireland basis?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for the supplementary question. I think that she is referring to the Leap card system used in the Republic of Ireland. That system was developed specifically for the Republic of Ireland. Its use was considered, but it was concluded that it could not easily be converted to the open standards required for wider use. Other technological developments, such as mobile phones and contactless bank cards, are considered to offer a more up-to-date solution. It is, of course, recognised that Translink works closely with Irish Rail and Bus Éireann on cross-border services, and it is expected that any new system will be sufficiently flexible to handle the tickets involved in this.

Mr Dallat: The Minister will be well aware that there is a pilot scheme — probably completed now — involving integrated transport in the Dungannon area. Will any new system take account of the possibility of public transport in Northern Ireland being shared with the community sector and the private sector?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary question. It is not directly linked to ticketing procedures involved north, south, east or west. Nonetheless, I understand the question that he raises in terms of the pilot scheme that we have been undertaking in the Dungannon area on transportation issues.

We are still working through and reviewing the processes there, working with agencies in health and education. I am sure that useful work and useful outcomes will be provided there. I am not at the stage where I can indicate that we are ready to make wider announcements and extend proposals for Northern Ireland or anywhere else.

Mr Elliott: The Minister mentioned in answer to the substantive question that he had to bring forward an economic appraisal or business plan. Has he any idea of the costings associated with the proposal, and has he had any discussion with the Minister of Finance and Personnel?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his supplementary. No, the work has not yet been completed.

On its completion, we will put forward the business case. Obviously, that will have to be looked at within the Department and with DFP. We will seek to make progress at the earliest point on those matters.

Roads/Street Lighting: Budget Cuts

5. **Mr Lynch** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline any potential alternatives to the proposed cuts in road maintenance and street lighting. (AQO 6552/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As I advised in my response to question 3, following the recent announcement on June monitoring, my Department's resource budget, which is used for the day-to-day maintenance of the road network, has been cut. In order to protect areas such as winter maintenance, which costs, on average, approximately £7 million each year and is vital to the economy of Northern Ireland, traffic light maintenance, which costs, on average, approximately £4 million each year, and contractual commitments for energy, I had no option other than to take some tough decisions and stop issuing new work instructions to external contractors. Those contractors undertake, as I said, around one quarter of our routine maintenance work and three quarters of the work associated with the repair of street lighting faults. I restate that my Department's operations and maintenance staff will endeavour to keep the road network in as safe a condition as possible, but they only have the resources to complete around three quarters of the total workload. Therefore, they will not be able to provide the service that the public would expect in normal circumstances.

They are difficult decisions, but they are necessary to try to protect areas such as winter service, where withdrawal of our work could have an even greater impact on the Northern Ireland economy and public. I realise that these measures will impact on contractors, road users and the public, but I have, as I said, been forced to set priorities so that we can operate within the reduced budget.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. The Minister has, to some extent, outlined some of the amounts involved. Can he provide a timeline for when the cuts will be implemented?

Mr Kennedy: Let me be clear: these cutbacks are immediate. Since early August until last Friday, 4,938 street lights have been reported out, of which 1,134 have been fixed, so we are already in a situation where the front-line services that we would normally be expected to provide are suffering as a result of June monitoring and the financial position. Of course, when faults present electrical or other hazards, they will be dealt with urgently. That important work is not affected by budgetary constraints. We will then prioritise faults in groups of street lights and deal with as many single outages as we can.

This is now a real situation. I also find myself in a difficult and almost invidious position about gullies being emptied and grass being cut back. I hope that the Member, as Deputy Chair of the Committee for Regional Development, will support my efforts to have my budget restored to its full capacity as we move into October and other monitoring rounds.

Mr Spratt: In the press coverage of cutbacks over the summer, mention was made of the winter programme for road gritting etc. Will the Minister give the House an

assurance today that the winter gritting programme will remain intact, given the high number of fatal accidents in the Province already this year?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. I am slightly surprised at the tone of it because I would have thought that he, as Chair of the Committee for Regional Development, would be on the same side of the argument as me and would be expressing concern at any impact that my resource budget would face. I hope that that is the case because I do not want an impact on winter services and winter maintenance. I understand the importance of that service, which, as I said, costs approximately £7 million. I look to other political parties at the very top of the Executive, which seem to be expressing concern in the House. Both the Member and Mr Lynch have expressed concern about the impact of cuts, but their parties brought forward the proposals that have put me in this position.

Dr McDonnell: Has the Minister been able to give any assurances about the future to the external contractors who employ thousands of people in road maintenance? In other words, have you just drawn a blank with them? Have you been able to give them any promises of what it might look like in the future?

Mr Kennedy: I regularly meet and speak to representatives of the road building contractors' organisations. I have an open door policy and have accepted requests to meet a number of their key individuals. I have tried to be open and honest with them about the situation that I find myself in. I have welcomed the support, not least the lobbying, that they have provided to other political parties and Members around the Executive table as to the position that they find themselves in as a consequence of these financial measures.

This is not done by choice or on a whim. It is certainly not done with malice aforethought, but it is the real situation that I find myself in. I must balance my books and therefore have to take these tough decisions. I understand the consequences on the services that I provide and the impact that external contractors will face, with possible lay-offs among staff and everything that goes with that.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That is the end of listed questions, and we now move on to topical questions.

3.15 pm

A5 Western Transport Corridor

1. **Mr Buchanan** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the proposed A5 western transport corridor. (AQT 1391/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his question on the A5. He will know that a public consultation on three of the four reports to inform appropriate assessments of the potential impacts on the various designated sites arising from the A5 project scheme concluded on 13 June. Consultation on the fourth report is expected to begin in October 2014. Letters informing landowners of the way forward were issued on 30 April, and landowner meetings are ongoing.

Mr Buchanan: I thank the Minister for his response. Where does the scheme now sit in your list of priorities,

and what impact might the Sinn Féin/ SDLP refusal to sign up to welfare reform have on this and other large projects?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful for the Member's supplementary. Clearly, there are ongoing issues that we have to deal with on environmental statements and the appropriate assessments, and I outlined those in some detail. In a letter to ministerial colleagues in February, I provided an outline programme whereby the environmental statement and the draft orders would be published for consultation in November 2014, with the possibility of a public inquiry in spring/summer 2015.

Of course, the Member refers in part to the uncertainty in the overall financial position of whether there will be sufficient capital money going forward. I am not in a position to confirm that situation, and, therefore, I am processing the work that is necessary at this time. Clearly, however, the financial scenario here could well impact on this scheme and, indeed, other capital schemes.

Cutbacks: Legal Claims

2. **Mr McMullan** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department will accept all legal claims relating to personal damage or damage to motor vehicles that are proven to be direct results of his cutbacks. (AQT 1392/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his question. He should be aware of the process involved when someone makes a claim and that claim is investigated etc. It seems to me slightly rich that a question of this nature should come from a member of a party whose actions have forced me to take decisions on cutbacks in my resource budget. Nevertheless, I will try to overlook that. Of course, we will continue to investigate claims made against us and respond accordingly.

Mr McMullan: I thank the Minister for that enlightening response. Have the Minister's divisional managers been instructed to draw up a list of how much they can save through making cutbacks in each divisional area? How much has he saved to date?

Mr Kennedy: The Member starts with the wrong premise. These are cutbacks forced on my Department. I do not go to senior officials and ask them whether it is possible to trim back and save some money on either resource or maintenance issues. These are real decisions that are impacting on street lights. As I said, there are nearly 5,000 street lights out in a month, and, at this stage, we have the ability to repair only 1,100. Those repairs will be effected as quickly as possible. We are not abandoning those lights; we are simply saying that it will take longer to fix them. However, there is a suggestion that somehow this is a cunning plan to save money on behalf of my Department. It is not. It is the consequence of the voodoo economics of the Member and his party.

Street Parking

3. **Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the transfer of off-street parking to local councils. (AQT 1393/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for the question. My officials have been engaged with their counterparts in local government to ensure the smooth transition of the transfer of those facilities. I am not aware of serious issues

arising out of that, and I very much hope that we will be able to agree the necessary changes in time for the take-up of the new councils in April 2015.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for his answer. Will the Minister also indicate whether there will be a requirement for uniformity on policies and procedures for all councils?

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member again. We are seeking to provide as much uniformity as possible. Obviously, we are dealing with the 11 new councils, but a consistent approach would certainly be a desirable outcome to all those discussions, and that is what we hope to have.

A8: Update

4. **Mr Girvan** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on progress with the A8 and the timing of its opening. (AQT 1394/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. I am happy to say that significant progress is being made on that scheme. We do not yet have a definitive timescale for the opening, but we are very hopeful that we can meet in advance the target that we set ourselves. I think that it will be of huge benefit to that area, not least the Port of Larne. I am very grateful that my Department and my staff, and, indeed, the contractor and their staff, have been working steadily to the benefit of everyone. I very much hope that we will be in a position to cut the tape at the earliest possible point.

Mr Girvan: I thank the Minister for his answer. In the light of the response, I do not know whether the Minister has been made totally aware, but we are aware that a large area of that road, which had been surfaced, is now being lifted at additional cost — we are hearing a figure of £1 million — because the compound or the surface was not of the right standard. Who set the standard? Will the Department be made to foot that bill or will the contractor?

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. Obviously, it is a more detailed question that deserves a fuller answer, and I will undertake to write to him on the issue.

Fish Poaching: Seagahan Dam

5. **Ms Fearon** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he is aware of concerns about fish poaching at Seagahan dam in Armagh and, if so, does he have any plans to tackle the issue. (AQT 1395/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for the question. I am aware of issues surrounding Seagahan dam and the contention that there has been over the rights of those who want to use it as a major leisure facility for angling. I am also cautious in my approach to the issue and am mindful that there have been letters of a legal nature floating about — not in Seagahan dam but into my office — so I want to be cautious in any response. I hope that agreement can be found by all appropriate and valid users and that they can set aside some of the issues that are there today and that, at this point, are unresolved. I hope that we can resolve those and move forward into calmer waters.

Ms Fearon: I thank the Minister for his answer. Keeping in mind the legal issues, can the Minister at least concede that such poaching could lead to long-term damage in the fishing reserves in the dam?

Mr Kennedy: I am not in favour of poaching. Let me be absolutely clear about that. I am not giving anybody the green light to say that it is right to poach or anything like that. Where individuals have evidence or information, they should bring those allegations for full investigation to the proper authorities. If the Member is in receipt of such information, I hope that she will do likewise.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Jonathan Craig is not in his place.

Magilligan to Greencastle Ferry

7. **Mr Brady** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has looked at the funding required for the Magilligan to Greencastle ferry, given its obvious tourism potential. (AQT 1397/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for his question. I take it that he means the Greencastle ferry in County Down.

Mr Brady: The Magilligan to Greencastle ferry.

Mr Kennedy: There is at least one Magilligan and at least two Greencastles. If it is Magilligan, it is the project that, in the past, Limavady council has been associated with. My Department has no direct role in that. If it is the County Down one, that project is being managed by a private operator. We have no direct link into that except as a consultee in the planning process. If the Member wants to clarify that, I will be happy to consider it.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Mickey to clarify in his supplementary question.

Mr Brady: I thank the Minister for his answer. The question was about your possible input into that particular Magilligan to Greencastle ferry, but I will clarify that for the Minister in writing. This is the supplementary question: has the Minister had any input into the idea of an extension of the Wild Atlantic Way trail to the north coast and its tourism potential?

Mr Deputy Speaker: That may be another Minister's responsibility, but I will allow the Minister to respond if he wishes.

Mr Kennedy: That sounds rather like the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment's responsibility, although Roads Service may have been asked for an opinion through various consultations. I am happy to check that and confirm in writing to the Member whether there has been input from my Department.

Car Parks

8. **Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister for Regional Development what assessment has been made of the condition of off-street car parks, which will be transferred to the new councils in April 2015. (AQT 1398/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for her question. Generally, as the Member will know, Roads Service, which is now Transport NI, has regularly maintained all those facilities over the years. My knowledge of them suggests that most are in reasonably good condition and would still be considered an asset in their transfer. If she is aware of particular cases, perhaps she will write to me on them.

Miss M McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his answer. The supplementary question might contradict what he has actually said. There are a number in my constituency

that are in extremely poor condition and which require significant investment. Does the Minister intend to invest in those prior to the transfer or leave it to local ratepayers to foot the bill?

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for her supplementary question and ask her to provide me with a list of those that she considers to be defective. We may not agree on that assessment; we will have to leave that to professional judgement, but we can look at your list and see where we go from there.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That is the end of Question Time. Our time is up. I ask Members to take their ease for a few moments.

Mr McElduff: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was listening carefully to Minister Kennedy, and he referred to a number of Greencastles.

He left out Greencastle in County Tyrone. It is between Creggan and Gortin in the Omagh district in mid-Tyrone.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has made his point.

I ask Members to take their ease for a few moments while we change staff at the top Table.

3.30 pm

Ministerial Statement

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

Business resumed.

Mr Deputy Speaker: We will now return to the Environment Minister's statement on the adoption of the Belfast metropolitan area plan (BMAP).

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Since taking up office, I have received many letters from various organisations expressing concern over the continued delay in the adoption of BMAP. Many in the construction sector see the adoption of BMAP as critical to the recovery of their sector and believe that their workforce can be sustained only by a continuous supply of planning approvals.

*(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker
[Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair)*

Landowners have been frustrated by the uncertainty that has been experienced in the absence of an adopted plan. Many housebuilders who have been supported by their banks through the most severe recession are now under considerable pressure to deliver on sites and to recover significant sums invested in the BMAP process. Local communities are also frustrated by the lack of certainty regarding development proposals in their area.

Since October 2013, when the Department received from DRD the certificate of general conformity with the regional development strategy (RDS), all statutory and procedural requirements necessary to allow for the adoption of the plan were complete. Since then, I have engaged fully with the Executive on the matter. I circulated Executive papers and associated comprehensive documentation on 13 December 2013, 17 December 2013 and 6 March 2014. I had requested that successive versions of the Executive paper be tabled at meetings on 16 January, 13 February and 27 February 2014. I then invoked the three-meeting protocol so that the paper would be tabled for decision at the Executive meeting on 6 March 2014.

At that Executive meeting, it was agreed that I would chair a subgroup to examine the BMAP issues. That subgroup met on 6 May. Following that, I circulated a further version of the Executive paper, dated 1 July, requesting that it be tabled on 8 July.

It was clear that the only issue that was raised about a plan that covers a very substantial part of the area and population of Northern Ireland related to the bulky goods restriction on the further expansion of the Sprucefield site near Lisburn. I have repeatedly explained my rationale on the matter and given it the fullest consideration. I remain of the view that the approach is the right one for the plan area as a whole, which is the perspective that I must adopt in making judgements on such matters. I do not believe that it is reasonable that differing views on that one issue should continue to delay the adoption of a plan that is necessary to attract investment, create jobs, secure economic growth and support local communities in this significant part of the North.

I have a clear ministerial responsibility to provide the certainty for communities and businesses that can be

achieved only through the final adoption of the plan. The plan is the primary mechanism to reconcile any potential conflict between the need for development and the need to protect local communities and our environment. In advance of the transfer of planning powers to local government, it would be remiss of me not to provide to local government that level of certainty for everyone who will be involved in and affected by the future economic and social development of this significant part of the region. I have therefore authorised and directed my Department to adopt the plan, which will become operative tomorrow morning. The plan and adoption statement will be available for viewing on the Department's website, and copies will be available for inspection in local council offices within the plan area.

Ms Lo (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment): I thank the Minister for his statement. I understand his frustration with the long and protracted process for producing BMAP. However, without Executive agreement, the Minister could face a legal challenge and have this dragged out through the courts. What assurances can he give that his decision will stand up to any judicial review and not cause more uncertainty for investors?

Given that he has approved out-of-town developments in Newry and Strabane, but seemingly not with his activation of BMAP, will he outline how current planners and potential new planners can act with any degree of certainty and consistency?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank Ms Lo, the Chairperson of the Environment Committee, for her questions, and, indeed, her recognition of my frustration. However, I must say that the frustration faced by me, and other Ministers before me, is nothing compared to the frustration that has been experienced by potential developers, communities and social housing providers over the past years at the fact that the plan had not reached this stage.

The current position is that the plan has lawfully been adopted by my Department, acting under my direction and control. Any decision made by my Department, or any other Department for that matter, may be subject to review by the courts. However, unless and until the courts rule on the merits of any potential challenge to the adoption of the plan, the plan remains valid.

The adoption of BMAP is about creating certainty for a significant portion of the area and population of the North. I believe that it would be perverse to seek to reintroduce uncertainty for such a significant proportion of our community by attempting to challenge adoption of the entire plan on the basis of concerns about the future potential development of a single shopping centre in the area. However, if any such challenge were to emerge, the Department would defend its position and decision robustly in the courts. I am sure that no Executive Minister would condone the waste of public money on a protracted legal battle at any time, let alone at this time of huge budgetary pressures.

On the issue of Newry and Strabane; when I approved planning applications for mixed-use developments, other considerations were taken into account. Those were mixed-use developments, albeit with major retail elements. The fact is that, when I am looking at an area plan, I

cannot adopt it or not adopt it on the basis of an application that does not exist. Therefore, I have proceeded with the adoption of the plan.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for his statement. Given the importance of BMAP to effective planning decisions in the greater Belfast area, including Newtownabbey, and the controversial nature of some of its proposals, why is the Minister refusing to take it to the Executive and, in doing so, risking judicial review of his decision, which would cause further delay in the adoption of this important policy?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mrs Cameron for her question. As I have stated, the plan has now been adopted. There is no further delay.

Any legal challenge may cause delay, if a judge or our courts decide that I have been wrong in the adoption of this. As I have said, the Department and I will defend any such case robustly.

As I outlined in my statement, I have not refused to bring this to the Executive; I have brought it to the Executive repeatedly. However, the authority to adopt BMAP is vested by statute, under article 8 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991, in the Department of the Environment acting under my direction and control. Nothing in the ministerial code alters that position. As Minister of the Environment, authority to take the decision on whether to adopt BMAP rests with me. The decision to adopt the plan was one that I did not take lightly, and it was reached only after very careful consideration.

Mr F McCann: I thank the Minister for his statement. Earlier, he spoke about the levels of housing that would be required over the next number of years. Usually, that means that more land is provided for private housing, but in areas like west Belfast, where there is a waiting list of 3,500, availability of land never keeps pace with the number of houses built, which is low. Will the Minister tell us whether he is considering the release of more land and looking at the Matthew stop line to ensure that land is available for building social houses for that community?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr McCann for his question. He is well aware of my commitment to the provision of social housing. The providers of social housing, be it the Housing Executive or the housing associations, have all been keen to see this plan adopted for the sake of the certainty that it will provide for them. Personally, I would like to see more land dedicated to the provision of social housing within the plan. The fact that there is more land designated for general housing, however, does not mean that it cannot accommodate social housing; often, it will become available for social housing. The land that I spoke about as designated for social housing is specifically and solely for the development of social housing in the future. I have spoken with the housing associations and the Housing Executive. I will work with them and the Department for Social Development on how we can supply more land for much-needed social housing, not only in west Belfast but right across the plan area.

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for his statement, and for his courage in making this decision in relation to BMAP, which is long overdue. There seems to be much in the plan for investors, but what is in it for those who are suffering from social deprivation? That is a question that many people will be asking.

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. It is important to outline that this plan is not solely for investors. It does, however, provide certainty for investors, which, in turn, will provide opportunity for all people within the plan area. The plan proposals seek to promote equality of opportunity and to tackle disadvantage for all sections of the population in the metropolitan area. Lands for housing and employment are zoned throughout the plan area to provide a wide range of opportunities for housebuilding, including much-needed social housing, which we have touched on, and job creation.

The plan resists the spread of commercial uses into areas of city and town centres, which have a useful longer-term residential life. Such areas provide a valuable housing stock and are homes for established communities that contribute to the variety and vitality of our town and city centres. Protected town centre housing areas are designated, and that will prevent any change of use from residential. The plan has made specific provision for social housing and accommodation for the Traveller community.

Whilst it is not the role of the plan to create jobs, the plan's proposals seek to promote and facilitate job creation by establishing a framework that is supportive of employment and business need and responsive to the needs of the community. The promotion of Belfast city centre and the development of opportunities within Belfast harbour will support the provision of new job opportunities in central locations accessible to all sections of the community. This major priority to facilitate job creation within and accessible to disadvantaged areas is in line with the Executive's anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy. Opportunities for job creation through the zoning of new sites and the protection of existing employment land will help promote regeneration.

3.45 pm

Transportation proposals seek to improve and develop public transport to assist in providing safe and equitable access to services, facilities and employment opportunities for all the community. The plan contains policies for arterial routes that service the main transport corridors into and out of the city centre. They have an important part to play, not only in upgrading the physical appearance of the city but in providing regeneration opportunities close to and accessible by inner city communities and areas of high multiple deprivation.

Mrs Overend: Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, it is my understanding that this plan has been on the cards for some 10 to 14 years and, therefore, has largely lost some of its relevance, especially considering the reform of local government and the change in boundaries. Can the Minister explain his rationale as to why the BMAP was not updated to reflect the new area plan boundaries?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mrs Overend for her question. She is right: this has been in and around here since 2001. BMAP was actually unveiled by her party colleague the late Sam Foster. It is a matter of deep regret to all of us in the House, I am sure, that he is not here to see or hear of its adoption at long last. The end date, 2015, is notional, and, as previously stated, the plan will provide the necessary policy framework, certainty and stability until such times as the relevant local authorities in the new local area plan areas prepare their own development plans, and it remains a material consideration until it is replaced. I prefer to see

2015 as very much a best-before date; it is not necessarily a use-by date. In any event, I think that it was vital that we got it off the shelf before it reached that best-before date.

Mr Weir: I thank the Minister for his statement. BMAP is very cross-cutting; indeed the Minister, in his statement and answers to questions, has made reference to transport, employment, economic development and housing issues, all of which touch upon a range of Departments. What legal advice did the Minister seek before going ahead with this without the approval of the Executive? Will he make that legal advice available to the House?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. He rightly identifies the fact that this is cross-cutting. By bringing it to the Minister for Regional Development and seeking the certificate of conformity with the Executive-approved regional development strategy 2035, it certainly ticked the box of cross-cutting. However, I have gone beyond that, as I have said. I have repeatedly attempted to bring this paper to the Executive, and I have chaired a subgroup at which one element of it, largely, has been the subject of debate. Therefore, I did not think that we could justify delaying its adoption any further.

In response to the question on legal advice, I have previously given undertakings to fully adhere to the convention concerning legal advice. Therefore, I am not in a position to reference any legal advice that may or may not have been taken on the matter.

Lord Morrow: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. It has been a very long and wordy statement from the Minister here today. When some of us see that, we think, "What's going on here?" Minister, you acknowledge the impact that this will have on Belfast and the greater Belfast area. I suspect that you have gone to great lengths to obtain the necessary legal advice. Did you go to the same lengths to get the assistance of your ministerial colleagues? I cannot get to the bottom of what you are saying. You keep referring to the fact that you have attempted to bring this to the Executive. Who is prohibiting you from bringing it to the Executive? What did your Executive colleagues say to you when you brought it to them? Thank you.

Mr Durkan: I thank Lord Morrow for that question. As I said, I have attempted repeatedly to get Executive agreement on the adoption of BMAP. That is probably how I should have framed that earlier answer.

When I chaired the Executive subgroup on BMAP, Ministers were generally receptive to the idea that it should be adopted and that it should be adopted soon. There was, however, a concern raised in relation to one item in the plan, and that was the restriction on a condition on one area of the plan. As I said, I had to weigh that up against all the advantages of adopting the plan and all the reasons why not just my ministerial colleagues but many MLAs have continually asked me and pressed me about when the plan will be adopted, and the balance came down in favour of adoption.

Mr McKinney: I agree with my colleague Mr Alban Maginness in praising the Minister for making this long-overdue decision, and I thank the Minister for his statement. Specifically, how will BMAP help to deal with dereliction in Belfast city centre?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. As outlined in earlier answers where I referred to specific elements in the plan that will deal with inner-city areas, this will be part of a collective and holistic approach to tackling dereliction not solely in Belfast city centre but in town and city centres right across the plan area.

Under my predecessor, the Department initiated a dereliction fund, which has been a huge success. However, we have been unlucky in the past couple of monitoring rounds, and with huge competing demands, we have not been able to secure more funding. I believe that this plan will give certainty to the new councils, and they will use that to form their own local area plans and community plans. The responsibility for tackling dereliction will lie primarily and chiefly with them.

Mr I McCrea: A number of Members asked questions about whether this is contentious or not, and I think that it is important that we get to the nub of that. I heard the Minister say that he tried to get Executive approval, but he was not able to get it. So, is the Minister telling us that, because he did not get that approval, he decided to go it alone, regardless of whether this is contentious or not. Is it the case that, because the SDLP is against this development at Sprucefield, it is not going to approve it?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. As outlined in earlier answers and, indeed, in my statement, I have made every effort to fully comply with all requests from the Executive in relation to BMAP, and all my Executive colleagues have had the fullest opportunity to consider the content of the plan. However, the Executive have not brought and were not bringing the matter to a conclusion, and I had no reasonable expectation that they would do so. Therefore, I reached a point where I had to balance my responsibilities as a member of the Executive with my duty to exercise my ministerial authority in respect of the powers and functions of the Department on a matter of significance for the future economic and social development of a considerable portion of the North. I concluded that, in the run-up to the transfer of planning powers to local government next April, it would be unreasonable and, indeed, a dereliction of my ministerial duties to allow the lack of certainty that was there to go ahead and to continue to seep into the planning framework.

Mr Craig: To use the words of a permanent secretary from 'Yes Minister', this is a very, very brave decision that you have taken, Minister. That always strikes with a follow-up, and the follow-up is very simple. You admitted to the House today that this is a cross-cutting and contentious issue and that you did not get Executive approval for it. You also admitted that you chaired a subgroup, which studied this issue and made very clear recommendations to you, including the removal of bulky goods at Sprucefield. You ignored all that and went ahead on your own. Minister, you know full well that this will end up in a judicial review, so why did you do it?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question and for his recognition of my courage. I have outlined quite well and quite clearly why I made this decision. I balanced my duties as a member of the Executive with those as Minister of the Environment. I had, in my opinion, no option but to proceed with the adoption of this statement rather than wait for an Executive approval that would not come.

Mr Lunn: Sometimes the only way to move things forward in this place is to take a bold decision, so I will compliment the Minister with faint praise for bringing this forward in the way he has done. If it was not for the decision that he keeps referring to as being a contentious one, which is obviously about Sprucefield, I would be reasonably content with the whole thing. However, Sprucefield has gone from being designated a regional shopping centre to having some sort of complementary status and the emphasis is now on Lisburn town centre, where his Department has just turned down an application to extend Bow Street Mall.

I really wonder where Sprucefield is going with this. It has been relegated in status, and it has a bulky goods restriction. It is a pity somebody had not told John Lewis about 10 years ago that it never had any chance of getting its development through, because that seems to be the way of it. How do you see the future of Sprucefield in these circumstances?

Mr Durkan: Sprucefield retains an important role in the plan area and in the whole region. The Member referred to John Lewis and regretted the fact that no one informed it of this restriction around 10 years ago. The fact is that the restriction was imposed 10 years ago in 2004. The Department has never received a planning application from John Lewis; there is certainly no current application from or in any way related to John Lewis. I would very much welcome, as would many if not everyone in this House, a store of the calibre of John Lewis coming to the North, and it is important that we send out the message that we are open for business and good for business. However, if John Lewis wants to come, its application is somewhere only it knows.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his statement. Does he agree that although BMAP originated in 2001, it is now 2014 and its shelf life was to finish in 2015? Does he intend to review the plan next year and would he agree that the whole exercise was cumbersome and has proved to be ineffective and inefficient?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. I do not think that anyone could argue that the whole process has been cumbersome. It has been the most extensive and, I would say, the most expensive piece of work carried out by the Department of the Environment. The end date, as I mentioned earlier, is notional. However, with the transfer of planning powers to councils next April, work will start on new local area plans in the new council areas. The adoption of this plan will give them a framework in which to proceed with that work.

Mr Attwood: I welcome the statement and acknowledge the exhaustive efforts made by the Minister and his ministerial colleagues in relation to this matter. He indicated that there was one big bone of contention. Could I tempt him to agree with me that, whatever about the concerns of people in Lisburn, including representatives and including the DUP, about the decision that has been made in respect of Sprucefield and the fight that they have made of that issue, a sham fight is being fought? The sham fight is that while some in the DUP in Lisburn fight to get John Lewis to Sprucefield, there are others in the DUP in Belfast who fight to get John Lewis to the Titanic Quarter. Does the Minister agree that the DUP should be honest with its own members and acknowledge that there is a sham fight and that, for many of them, the real game is

John Lewis in Titanic and not in Sprucefield, which would also be bad for Belfast city centre?

4.00 pm

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. What I agree with the Member on is his assertion that all politicians should be honest, not solely with their own parties but particularly with the voting public.

Mr Allister: May I ask the Minister to clarify one matter? Is the adoption statement on foot of a ministerial direction? Does it come in the normal process whereby officials recommended that it could be done, or did you, as Minister, intervene and directly decide to do it? Secondly, can you tell us whether you had you the advantage of any advice from the Attorney General — I am not asking what the advice was — about your capacity to make this decision?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. As regards legal advice received from the Attorney General, I have already outlined to the House the convention that I cannot state where I got legal advice from. However, I can assure the Member and, indeed, the House that I have every confidence that my decision is legally sound.

As regards a ministerial direction, certainly I sought and got advice from my officials as to the state of readiness of this plan for adoption. It had hurdled every statutory obligation in its path since the signing of the certificate of conformity with the regional development strategy last October. Therefore, it was ready to be adopted. I, as Minister of the Environment, was able to adopt it then. However, I did bring it to the Executive in recognition that it was cross-cutting. I might say that it is the first and only area plan that has ever been brought to the Executive. The Banbridge/Newry and Mourne area plan was adopted last October with no hullabaloo whatsoever.

Mr Allister: Has it been adopted on foot of a ministerial direction?

Mr Durkan: I, as Minister of the Environment, have the final say as to whether or not it is adopted, and I have directed that it be adopted.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: We cannot get into cross-questioning. It is one question and one answer.

Mr B McCrea: Would the Minister care to expand on his earlier statement to Ms Lo that nobody would look forward to a “protracted legal battle”? Surely it is the entitlement of every citizen or organisation to take whatever legal steps they think are appropriate to look after their interests. Will he clarify whether he has received legal advice from the Attorney General? Finally, does he agree with the statement that he will go down in history as the man who stopped John Lewis once and for all?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his three questions, two of which —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: You should answer only one.

Mr Durkan: — I answered in the not so distant past, chiefly that around legal advice. Obviously and of course, any decision made by my Department or any Department may be subject to review by the courts. Anyone or any organisation that disagrees with a decision is welcome

to appeal or to take legal action against it, and that is all well and good. All that I said about the cost is that, at this time of great austerity — we hear enough about it and see enough of it — I am not sure that any Minister around the Executive would condone the waste of public money on a lengthy protracted legal battle.

There was another one:

“the man who stopped John Lewis”.

As I stated quite clearly earlier, we would very much welcome John Lewis to the North and any application from John Lewis to come to the North. There has never been an application, and there certainly is no application currently. That shows its level of interest in coming here.

Mr Givan: The statement is from a maverick Minister who has taken a cavalier approach to an issue that, because it is controversial, requires cross-community support at the Executive, and he shows contempt for private investors in the way in which he has treated the designation of Sprucefield. I read in the statement that Lisburn will be promoted because of its key transport routes, yet Sprucefield is on an arterial route that connects not just Northern Ireland in a way that no other part of the Province does but the island of Ireland, and the Minister has now sought to thwart the efforts of John Lewis. I think that the Minister should hang his head in shame for the way that he has conducted himself, particularly when a subcommittee of the Executive was dealing with the matter and he did not take it to the Executive. My question to the Minister is this: will the new councils, including Lisburn, have the power, through their new area plans, to deal with the cavalier approach taken by the Minister, or will it have to be left to the courts to put right the breach of the ministerial code that Minister Durkan has embarked on?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his statement and question. As I outlined in earlier answers, I clearly believe that there has been no breach of the ministerial code on the matter. Should there be a legal challenge, I firmly believe that the Department will be able to robustly defend my decision to adopt BMAP.

What was the other one?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call —

Mr Givan: [*Inaudible.*]

Mr Durkan: Oh, yes.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Sorry. I call Mr Steven Agnew.

Mr Durkan: Gabh mo leithscéal. Sorry.

Mr Agnew: I, for one, welcome the move, finally, towards plan-led development in the Belfast metropolitan area and find it bizarre that Members who say they put the economy first are willing to hold back the whole economy of the area on the basis of one proposed application that has never come forward.

Minister, there is much in your statement on economic and social development, but the third key pillar is, of course, the environment. What measures are in BMAP to prevent urban sprawl, specifically into former green belt areas opened up under PPS 21?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question and for welcoming the adoption of the plan. Indeed, the

environment and the protection of our valuable resource of open space and the natural resource in the area are central to the plan as well. It is important that that is recognised. I knew that I could trust Mr Agnew to recognise that element of it. Following the publication of PPS 21, 'Sustainable Development in the Countryside', the Department withdrew the proposed green belt designation in the draft BMAP. The policies and provisions in PPS 21 take precedence over the policy provisions for all green belts in existing statutory and published draft plans, with a limited number of exceptions. The plan protects the countryside through a number of designations such as rural landscape wedges, coastal policy areas, areas of high scenic value and the Lagan Valley Regional Park.

Mr Wilson: The Minister has admitted during these questions that this is controversial, cross-cutting and cross-departmental, that he has not sought the advice of the Executive's law officer and that he has overridden the advice of his officials in the Department. Will he not agree that this plan is now a shambles because of the way that he has mishandled it and that it will not promote development but will finish up in the court, resulting in a plan that will be delayed for years? Does he agree that it will be detrimental to the economic development of the greater Belfast region because he chose to pursue SDLP planning policy rather than what was good for the whole of Northern Ireland?

Mr Durkan: I again thank the Member for that question. However, of the things that he said that I had admitted — I think that there were four — I may have admitted to one of them; I certainly did not admit to the other three. This plan is not a shambles. This plan will not be delayed. This plan becomes operational tomorrow.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Joe Byrne, if he still wishes to ask a question. His name was listed earlier.

Mr Byrne: I thank the Minister for his statement. Will he state whether there will be any resource implications for the Department in implementing the plan?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his question. In fact, there have been huge resource implications for the Department as we have drawn up the plan, consulted on it and gone through all the processes necessary to get it to this stage. To date, the plan has cost in excess of £10 million. Therefore, it is my opinion that not only would it be a dereliction of my ministerial duty not to ensure that it was adopted but it would be a dereliction of my moral duty.

Committee Business

'Spotlight' Housing Executive Programme: Inquiry Report

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to two hours for the debate. The proposer will have 15 minutes to propose the motion and 15 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes. As a valid petition of concern relating to the motion was presented on Friday 5 September, the vote will be on a cross-community basis.

Mr Maskey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the report of the Committee for Social Development on phase 1 of its inquiry into allegations, arising from a BBC NI 'Spotlight' programme aired on 3 July 2013, of impropriety or irregularity relating to NIHE-managed contracts and consideration of any resulting actions (NIA 157/11-15), which deals specifically with allegations that the Committee was misled by the Minister for Social Development over his decision to seek a review of the specification for the supply and fitting of double glazing.

Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. First, I commend the report to the House this afternoon. I thank all the Committee officials, the members and all the witnesses who have participated so far in the inquiry over a lengthy period. Obviously, this will continue for the next number of weeks and perhaps months.

Members will recall that the inquiry was initiated following a 'Spotlight' investigation in July 2013 that made allegations about the actions of the Minister for Social Development. The House was recalled from summer recess last year to debate it, and the Committee subsequently agreed to hold an inquiry to establish the facts of the matter.

The first evidence session was held on 14 November 2013. The process was that the Committee adopted a phased approach and broke it into three separate phases. Phase 1 concerned the allegation that the Committee was misled by the Minister for Social Development over his decision to seek a review of the specification for the supply and fitting of double glazing. The Committee opted to deal with that matter first, as it was viewed by the members at the time as a relatively straightforward allegation that could perhaps be clarified in a short time. That, of course, did not prove to be the case. For Members' information, the Committee intends to conclude the inquiry by the Christmas recess.

Allegations that a Minister has misled a Committee of the House are extremely serious. For that reason, the Committee was committed to gathering all the relevant evidence to ensure that this was very much an evidence-based inquiry. That resulted in hundreds of pages of documentation, with the large majority of it coming from the Department itself. It included internal briefing papers, emails, letters, diary entries, copies of minutes etc. The Committee also received written evidence from witnesses and took oral evidence on six separate occasions, including taking evidence under oath or affirmation — a serious step, given the potential and legal implications of giving false evidence under either.

4.15 pm

The Committee initially had significant problems in getting information from the Department, which contributed to a delay in progress. There was little, if any, proactivity, which resulted in repeated requests by the Committee for information. Indeed, the Committee wrote to the head of the Civil Service on these matters and brought the permanent secretary to the Committee to explain what appeared to be the almost obstructionist approach adopted by the Department in respect of papers and so on. Members should also note that, before papers were provided to the Committee, they were passed to the Minister. That again appeared to many members to be unusual, given that the Minister was the focus of this phase of the inquiry. However, that crucially resulted in further significant delays.

The Committee also encountered problems in getting information from the BBC. We eventually received the information requested, but not before a long engagement with the BBC's litigation department. It is also worth noting that the BBC chose not to appear before the Committee to give evidence. The Committee was very disappointed that, having raised the allegations in a very public way, the BBC chose not to assist the Committee by appearing before it to give evidence. The Committee also reviewed the evidence on four separate occasions before drawing its conclusions, all of which were based on evidence.

Because of the seriousness of the allegations, the Committee established guidelines on procedural fairness, underpinned by legal advice, to ensure that witnesses had an opportunity to state their case. In accordance with these guidelines, the Committee agreed to forward the draft report to those who were adversely referred to in order to allow them to provide comment to the Committee prior to publication. The Department and the Minister did not provide comment within the time frame that the Committee deemed reasonable to ensure consideration prior to publication. Notwithstanding that, the Committee agreed to publish comments from the Minister and the Department as an addendum to the report.

As Chairperson, for the benefit of the DUP members who were opposed to the key conclusions, I offered the opportunity to have a minority report produced. Support in its production was given by the Committee Clerk. A number of members liaised with the Clerk to produce a minority report, which is included in an appendix to the report.

Over recess, I noted that some members, including the Minister, referred to the inquiry as a "witch-hunt". Such comments are not only unfounded, as they fly in the face of all the evidence, but they are, in my opinion, contemptuous of the Committee's process and these institutions overall. I am confident that any objective, reasonable person would agree that the process that I have just outlined reflects the Committee's aim to be fair and accommodating to witnesses and that, far from being a "witch-hunt", there has been a painstaking and detailed process of evidence-gathering, prolonged discussion on the evidence, and careful consideration of different views around the Committee table.

There has been no rush to judgement; there has been no political motivation in reaching the conclusions; there has been no "witch-hunt"; just a plain, old-fashioned, objective,

rational consideration of evidence. It is my view, and the view of the Committee, that, for five of the six parties represented there, the evidence speaks for itself. It is our view that the weight of the evidence is such that coming to any conclusion other than that the Minister deliberately misled the Committee would have held the process and the Committee up to ridicule.

I now turn to the events that ultimately led to the position that the Minister now finds himself in. On the 8 May 2012, in a written response to an Assembly question, the Minister stated his concerns about the value for money of the Housing Executive's specification to contractors for window installation and noted that a substantial amount of money could be saved in relation to this programme. He also informed the Assembly of his decision to request that the Housing Executive rigorously review the specification. As Chair of the Committee, I wrote to the Minister asking him about this decision and specifically who had advised him of the potential savings to be made. The Minister replied, in a letter of 24 May 2012, that his decision to review the specifications came about as a result of meeting representatives of the Glass and Glazing Federation (GGF), a trades body that represents the industry. In parallel, my colleague Daithí McKay tabled a question on the 10 May 2012 asking the Minister to detail the meetings that he had had in relation to the double-glazing scheme. Again the Minister replied that he had met representatives of the GGF.

The 'Spotlight' programme alleged that the Minister had not met representatives of the GGF, but had, in fact, met representatives of Turkington Holdings Ltd — a company that it said had links to the DUP — and referred to a draft letter addressed to me as Chairperson of the Committee, which it said had originally stated that the Minister had met Turkington Holdings Ltd. The implication was clear: the Minister had met a company known to support the DUP and, as a result of that meeting, had initiated action to change the specification of the double-glazing programme.

I point out that no one on the Committee disputes that it is perfectly reasonable for a Minister to meet organisations in relation to programmes for which he or she is ultimately responsible, whether they are known supporters of that Minister's party or not. However, it is absolutely the responsibility of the Minister in question to be open, transparent and honest about such meetings. In the face of the evidence, the Committee had difficulty in accepting the Minister's explanation as to why he stated repeatedly that he had met representatives of the GGF when in fact he had met representatives of Turkington Holdings. The Committee ultimately rejected his explanation.

After all the evidence sessions and in-depth questioning and discussions, it boiled down simply to this: on the one hand, the Minister stated to the Committee that, at the time of the meeting on 16 April 2012, it was his genuine belief that he was meeting representatives of the GGF, and that was why he reported it as such, while, on the other hand, the Committee unearthed a considerable volume of evidence that indicated that the Minister, his special adviser, Mr Brimstone, and senior departmental officials knew that the meeting on 16 April was with Turkington Holdings Ltd.

However, according to the Minister, he maintained that genuine belief from April 2012 up until the point that he read the transcript of the oral evidence that was taken

from the two Turkington employees on 14 November 2013. It was only at that point, the Minister claimed, that he realised that he was wrong in his understanding that he had met representatives of the GGF. Consequently, during his evidence on 12 December 2013, the Minister advised the Committee that he had:

"inadvertently and unintentionally misinformed the Committee about the attendees of the meeting that was held on 16 April."

One might accept the Minister's word that he had genuinely laboured under that erroneous belief for a year and a half, but only if one is prepared to set aside all the evidence that the Minister had at his disposal, which clearly stated that the meeting was with Turkington's.

I will deal with some of the written evidence. On page 347 of the report, Members will see that the letter requesting a meeting with the Minister clearly came from Turkington Holdings Ltd. The internal DSD emails on pages 348 to 353 refer quite clearly to an invitation to meet Turkington Holdings. Members will note that those emails were cc'd to a wide range of DSD officials and the SpAd. A briefing paper was also prepared for the meeting for the Minister and his special adviser, and that also clearly stated in bold that the meeting was with Turkington Holdings. It is only mentioned that Turkington's were "active members" of the GGF. Nowhere in any of this material does it say that the meeting is with representatives of the GGF. Importantly, it is evident that DSD officials treated it as a meeting with Turkington's.

The Committee was told that neither the Minister nor Mr Brimstone had read the letter from Turkington's requesting a meeting; nor did they read the briefing paper prepared for the meeting; nor, indeed, did Mr Brimstone read the emails that he was cc'd into regarding the meeting. Frankly, the Committee found that evidence hard to accept.

Mr Brimstone did say that he first saw the letter from Turkington's in July 2013 and was "shocked" that it was not from the GGF, yet that evidently did not prompt him to seek further clarification from officials, even though the Minister had just threatened the BBC with legal action over the matter.

The Committee considered whether something was said at the meeting of 16 April that may have convinced the Minister and his SpAd that they were hearing from the GGF rather than Turkington's, but, in oral evidence to the Committee, the Turkington representatives were adamant that, although they referred to being active members of the GGF and to discussing GGF guidelines at the meeting, they never suggested that they were representing the GGF. That is supported by evidence from former Housing Executive chief executive Dr John McPeake, who stated:

"They [Turkington's] never purported to be representatives of the Glass and Glazing Federation."

He said that it was also the understanding of his colleague that they were there purely as representatives of Turkington Holdings.

Mr McPeake also noted that the invitation to attend came from the Minister's private office and that it was entered into his diary by his PA precisely as she was told on the phone:

"Meeting with Minister McCausland and Jim McKeag and Ian Young of Turkington Holdings to discuss double glazing in NIHE houses".

So, the Minister's private office was also issuing invitations, on the Minister's behalf, for a meeting with Turkington's. Given the written material that he was privy to at the time and the attendees' evidence regarding how Turkington's introduced and represented themselves during the meeting, it was hard for the Committee to accept the Minister's evidence that he had a genuine belief at the time of the meeting that he had met representatives of the GGF.

The Committee therefore considered from where the Minister's stated genuine belief that he had met the GGF could have arisen. That matter was addressed by the Minister's SpAd in his evidence to the Committee on 9 January. Mr Brimstone stated that he met Trevor Turkington and Ian Young on 25 January 2012 to discuss possible cost savings to the double-glazing programme. Mr Brimstone stated that it was his recollection that, as a result of the meeting, a letter would be forthcoming:

"from Ian Young requesting a meeting as the Glass and Glazing Federation, speaking on behalf of the wider industry."

Mr Brimstone also stated that he had told the Minister to expect a letter from the GGF requesting a meeting. However, when it was put to Mr Brimstone that his belief that a letter would be forthcoming from the GGF was:

"not rooted in anything, according to Turkington's evidence of what it said to you."

Mr Brimstone replied: "I accept that."

Therefore, the Minister's stated genuine belief that he met the GGF was seemingly based on Mr Brimstone's impression of the meeting, which he admitted was "not rooted in anything".

The Minister said that a letter from Trevor Turkington was not considered properly by the Committee. However, Mr Young, who also attended that meeting and gave oral evidence and wrote the letter to the Minister, was clear that it was never suggested that they were representing anyone other than Turkington. Furthermore, when asked during their evidence session whether, at the meeting of 16 April, they held themselves as representing, being there on behalf of or speaking on behalf of the GGF, the managing director of Turkington Holdings replied "Absolutely not". Given the written evidence and hard facts — not impressions or beliefs — that I have outlined and which were provided to the Minister and the SpAd at the time of the 16 April meeting, I hope that Members can see the difficulty the Committee had in accepting —

Mr Campbell: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. This is an important subject. I do not know whether others had speed-reading courses in the Assembly, but it is exceptionally difficult to follow what is being said at the rate at which it is being said by the Chairman of the Committee. I do not know whether he is trying to cram 35 minutes into 15 minutes —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Campbell: — but it is very difficult to follow the extent and speed of the contribution.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That is clearly not a point of order.

Mr Maskey: I apologise to all Members, but, as the Member will be aware, quite a lot of evidence was gathered. It is very difficult to try to cram it in, but I urge Members and the general public to read the reports. The reports and the evidence will speak for themselves; I am very satisfied about that.

As I said, the evidence provided by staff of Turkington Holdings stated that they had absolutely not referred to themselves as anything other than representing Turkington Holdings. Given the written evidence and hard facts — not impressions or beliefs — that I have outlined and which were provided to the Minister and the SpAd at the time of the 16 April meeting, I hope that Members can see the difficulty the Committee had in accepting the Minister's explanation that it was his genuine belief that he met the GGF.

I do not want to deal with the role of the Department, given the time constraints that we have. The Deputy Chair will refer to it in the winding-up speech later. Suffice it to say that the Committee was very concerned about the role of the Department in the duration of phase 1 of the inquiry in relation to the provision of materials and how it described things. The Department's permanent secretary and Mr Michael Sands appeared before the Committee. Michael Sands said that, even though he had given a factual record to the Minister as to who the meeting was with in April, when the Minister requested changes to the drafts:

"if the Minister requests that, I have to acquiesce to what he wants".

Further, the evidence from Mr Will Haire, the permanent secretary, referred to the Minister being the head of the Department. He said that, when the Minister wishes something to be done, the Department will facilitate that.

It is very important to state that the Committee took a substantive body of evidence. It was delayed in presenting and dealing with that evidence by a long-term project of trying to get relevant material from the Department. We eventually got most of that material. I thank the officials for their diligence in collating, analysing and presenting the evidence to members in a very cogent fashion. As far as the Committee was concerned — five out of the six parties on the Committee —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member should bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Maskey: — the members were absolutely sure that they could not accept the explanations of the Minister or the SpAd that they had inadvertently misled the Committee. In fact, the Committee very assuredly came down on the view that the Minister deliberately misled the Committee.

Mr Wilson: First of all, I will make something very clear: despite what the Chairman said, this was not a public inquiry. It was a public witch-hunt. It was not a gathering of evidence; it was an opportunity to express already declared public and political prejudices. It did not seek to highlight an injustice or throw light on some shady dealing; it was a political show trial that would have made Pol Pot proud of the way in which it was conducted and the way in which the conclusions were reached.

Let us just look at the people involved. Were they approaching it with an open mind? They certainly were not. On 8 July, the main players in this had already expressed their views. Mr Allister was so convinced that the Minister had misled the House that he wanted him to resign immediately. Mr Dickson said that the House would be done a service if the Minister stood aside.

Mr Maskey said it was the biggest scandal to affect the Assembly, and Mr Copeland said that the Minister had misled the House. Is that really a picture of people who were going to approach the inquiry with an open mind, look to where the evidence led them and come to an objective conclusion? I suspect that most objective observers would come to the conclusion that I have come to, which I will give evidence for in a moment or two: people entered the inquiry with their mind made up. They had to justify the outrageous allegations that they had made on 8 July 2013.

4.30 pm

Let us look at what the inquiry found. First, it found that the meetings that the Minister had had resulted in savings to the public purse of £15 million. When I moved in the Committee that we should at least acknowledge that in the report, the answer was, "No we can't, because we don't know for certain that the savings have been made because the contract is not over". Is that a picture of somebody with an open mind? I doubt it very much.

When it came to the evidence, the officials indicated that it really would not have mattered who the meeting was with, because they would still have recommended that it go ahead. Is that contained in the conclusions of the report? No, it is not.

If you were going to mislead the House and mislead the Committee, you would at least expect there to be no trail left. Yet, what did we find? It came out in the inquiry that, first of all, the Minister had left in the records a letter from Turkington's. There was a minute in which it was recorded who the meeting was with: Turkington's. There was an answer given in the Assembly — a public answer — and what did it say? The meeting was with Turkington's. Yet we are expected to believe that, somehow or other, the Minister had misled the Committee and misled the House. We had a letter, a minute and an answer, all of them public documents and all of them quite rightly recording who the meeting was with.

When it comes to the inquiry itself, we even had a situation where the Chairman was so desperate to get a name that he pleaded with one of the people giving evidence, "Just give us a name". He was prepared to badger him.

We have, quite rightly, put down a petition of concern, because this is not a proper inquiry; it is a witch-hunt. We are not prepared to allow a Minister who is guilty of nothing and is innocent to be publicly pilloried by a bunch of poisoned, prejudiced and point-scoring political predators.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Wilson: That is what this is all about. As far as we are concerned, the report does not justify the conclusion that has been reached.

Mrs D Kelly: I begin by placing on record my thanks to the Clerk and the Committee staff for their diligence and hard work in helping the Committee through this report. I also put on record my thanks to the Committee Chairperson for

the way in which he applied the principles of procedural fairness and the impartial manner in which he conducted himself as Chairperson. That is something that the Members opposite have already tried to dispute, but any impartial observer and anyone who attempts to read and digest over 500 pages of evidence that was presented to the Committee and the Committee's deliberations could only come to one conclusion. The simple question posed was this: "Did we believe the Minister or not?". The answer is that I did not, and neither did the majority of members of the Committee.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mrs D Kelly: I will not at this stage because there are a couple of things that I want to put on record and my time is short.

There is, of course, the circling of the wagons. We have seen the robust, outrageous and, one might say, unprincipled defence of the Minister by his colleague Mr Sammy Wilson. Other conclusions are being drawn, given the weight of the evidence against the Minister and the lengths to which the Minister and, indeed, his special adviser went in order to change minutes and letters. If it was a simple error from the outset, why did they not put their hands up at that stage? Even when the BBC was asking, why not just say, "Oh my goodness. Yes, you are quite right: we have made a mistake"? But no, that is not the case. We have gone through this charade and have had to come to the conclusion. It is also worthy of note that the Minister threatened legal action against the BBC, and it is my understanding that, until this day, that action has not been tabled.

There are other conclusions, and one is that the Minister is doing the bidding of his party. There were concerns raised that Turkington's was a funder of the party. Let us be quite honest and explicit: in no other jurisdiction in a western democracy would a Minister found by the majority of his Committee to be guilty of misleading that Committee be in position today. Further, the use today of a petition of concern by the DUP further sullies the Assembly and the principles of the Executive in the eyes of the public and all other jurisdictions. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs D Kelly: Nowhere else on these islands would a Minister get away with so much failure and still be in position — not only that but have the robust support he currently enjoys from his party colleagues. There are questions around all that.

It is unfortunate that we have come to this conclusion today. I have to say that there are two further strands to the report and the whole inquiry that the Committee will be engaging in over the next number of weeks. I, for one, am quite confident of the impartiality of the Chairperson and, indeed, of my other colleagues — the majority of them — and their integrity and objective examination of the facts that stand before them.

Turkington's and others who presented to the Committee were clear that in no way could anyone have misinterpreted who they were or whom they represented at the meetings. The Chair, in his opening remarks, drew Members' attention to the initial letter from Turkington's requesting a meeting. That stands as a public record and a public indictment of the Minister. How on earth he ever

got to where he ended up is beyond me and beyond many in the House. The DUP has done further damage to the integrity of democracy here in the North of Ireland.

Mr Copeland: I rise with little joy. It is probably obvious to most in this Chamber that I did not benefit from a university education, and I would not describe myself as the sharpest tool in the box, but I can read, I can write, I can understand and I can form judgements. Contrary to what anyone else in the Chamber thinks or thought, I listened to the evidence as presented, and I was — regrettably, perhaps, by some — driven to the inescapable conclusion that the Minister was guilty as charged.

Every Committee of the Assembly that I have served on has, in its membership, particularly the Public Accounts Committee, set aside party allegiances and done what was right by the people who sent us there. This affair, for want of a better word, has descended into a ping-pong match of petition of concern and petition of concern across the Chamber.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr Copeland: No. It is a useful warning to us to understand the mechanism that the petition of concern was originally designed to be. The petition of concern itself could, if used by the two greater parties, put any brake on any progress that we could ever make on behalf of the people in this Chamber. The relationship between the Executive and this legislative House is worthy of examination. The power may reside somewhere else, but the authority — the moral authority and the democratic authority — resides in this Chamber. When a Committee comes up with a finding that other Members may disagree with, it is a dangerous notion to put out that some Ministers — particularly those of both of the larger parties, given their numbers — could be, essentially, untouchable.

We are teetering on the edge of turning the principles of democracy on their head in this place, and the people outside do not get the opportunity to rig a jury. They do not get the opportunity to ignore the findings of a judge, except in some cases. I really believe that the issues and the ramifications of this affair will spread far and wide.

Mr Dickson: Very briefly, I add my thanks not only to the Chairperson but particularly to the Committee staff, who worked so hard and so diligently and so impartially on our behalf in delivering the report.

During the first phase of the inquiry, the Social Development Committee was asked to accept the Minister's account of whom he met on 16 April 2012, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. We essentially had two options: either we accepted that the Minister had deliberately misled us or we had uncovered a staggering level of incompetence. On the weight of evidence considered and because the Committee could simply not believe that the Minister could display this level of incompetence, we found that the statement on whom he thought he had met was deliberately misleading. I go further in saying that, given the overwhelming evidence that the meeting was with Turkington's, asking the Committee to accept that the Minister believed otherwise is insulting to Members' intelligence, to the House and, most importantly, to the public.

Records were also changed to reflect the Minister's position, seemingly with no challenge from departmental

officials. Yet, the Civil Service competency framework lists "allowing inaccurate records" as an example of ineffectual behaviour, even at the most junior levels. It is therefore difficult to understand why senior officials allowed the Minister's position to be sustained. There was no ambiguity about the facts and no options. I find it extremely alarming that the Department would adopt a position based on the Minister's beliefs, especially when they fly in the face of clear, factual evidence.

Following the events of the last several months, this looks like the final brush strokes in the picture of an utterly dysfunctional Government on top of the failure to manage budgets and effectively agree on ways forward for the most challenging issues in our society. We can now add "Minister found to have deliberately misled Committee". Such behaviour would trigger serious repercussions for Ministers in other parts of these islands. Sadly for Northern Ireland, the public and many of us in the House have come to expect petitions of concern rather than proper accountability, and, once again, the DUP has used the former to protect one of its own.

Today's motion simply calls on the Assembly to note the contents of a first phase report, which includes an unfettered minority report. The use of a petition of concern raises more questions about DUP Members and what they are trying to hide and suppress. If you have a valid and reasoned case to make, why not come to the House and do so without resorting to an unnecessary veto? I suspect that Members to my left have nothing more to add to the Minister's account of events, which the Committee found unbelievable.

The report's findings and the DUP's concerted effort to suppress them demonstrate the need for an urgent reboot of these institutions. The petition of concern mechanism, which now frequently makes a mockery of Assembly oversight, should be abolished and replaced by a majority-weighted voting system as part of a process towards achieving the level of accountability expected in a normally functioning democracy.

A single party should not be able to override the wishes of the Assembly as a whole.

4.45 pm

Finally, behaviour of that kind by a Minister should be neither condoned nor tolerated. Ultimately, it is for the public to judge the content of the report, regardless of any petition of concern. The Assembly should strive for a higher standard, because the people of Northern Ireland deserve better. I will support the noting of the report today.

Ms P Bradley: I rise as a member of the Committee, and I am pleased to be given the opportunity to speak on this important matter for which I also have great concern. Following the many hours of evidence that we received as a Committee, I am not convinced that the Minister in question deliberately misled the Committee. It is the word "deliberate" that I have great issue with. There is no question that there was a miscommunication between the Minister and the Committee. That is not in doubt, but did the Minister really do that in a conscious and deliberate manner?

In order to have that fully answered, it is important to seek out any gain that the Minister would have had by miscommunicating to the Committee. In examination of

the evidence, I can see no benefit that the Minister would gain, either politically or materially, by not fully disclosing the facts. It is clear that the Minister believed that he was meeting representatives from Turkington's in their capacity as representatives of the Glass and Glazing Federation. Members of federations often wear numerous hats. They have the hat in which they represent their own company and the hat in which they represent the industry. It is clear from the evidence that that was indeed an easy mistake to have made.

So, who did benefit from that misunderstanding? It is clear that the Minister was at all times driven by desire to save the public purse money. In these times of economic challenges, I believe that that action shows appropriate leadership. It is clear that the review of the scheme was needed, as significant savings occurred as a result of the review. That can only benefit people in social housing within our communities, as the savings can be used elsewhere. The Minister also had no role in the review, nor did the Department reap any monetary benefit from the review. Furthermore, Turkington's did not financially benefit from its attendance at the meeting. It appears, therefore, that the only people to benefit from the findings of the meeting were the Housing Executive tenants, who we represent in order to get better value and less disruption.

I also note that the Minister sought to correct the Committee as soon as he was aware that the mistake had been made in the attendees of the meeting. It was certainly not a back-door meeting. It was also attended by members of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, including the head of procurement. I believe that the issue is not, as other Members have stated, about the integrity of the Minister but rather is a cheap political game by other parties that, for reasons best known to themselves, want to see a political hunt occur. I do not agree that any impropriety occurred, nor was there a deliberate attempt to mislead the Committee. The Minister told the facts as he understood them at the time and, when he realised his mistake, he sought to rectify it as soon as possible.

As I previously stated, I do not agree with the report that claims that the Minister deliberately misled the Committee. No man or woman is infallible. We all make mistakes, and the Minister has shown us real leadership by admitting when he was mistaken.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I have to say, I must have been at a different meeting from Paula and Sammy. Amnesia seems to have settled in.

I rise in support of the Committee motion before the Assembly. Obviously, a lot has been said in the debate up to now. For me, the first stage of the inquiry was an eye-opener. Sitting through weeks of evidence left me particularly concerned that the Department for Social Development could hold the Committee in such low regard. That was clearly evidenced in the supply of documents and other materials to the inquiry. I would have thought that it would be in the Department's interest to ensure the smooth running of any Committee inquiry. I also believe that the Committee inquiry was significantly delayed by the actions of the Department.

I was also surprised that the BBC, which brought the subject to light through its 'Spotlight' programme, would then treat the Committee inquiry with such disregard.

The Minister, commenting in annex A of the addendum to the report, attempts to play down the significance of the meeting with Turkington's. He states that the Committee:

"focuses entirely on whether the people I met, at one meeting on 16 April 2012, were representing themselves or the glazing industry."

This was a company that was known to the DUP. In fact, it was said at the inquiry that it provided material for one of its election campaigns. It was also a company that was airbrushed out of the official documentation, and an attempt was made to give the impression that it was somebody else. In its evidence to the Committee, Turkington's was very clear and precise on whom it was representing.

The Minister also made a big play about the savings made due to his actions. At the Committee, we have always said that any savings to the public purse must be welcomed, but let us look at those savings. The savings that the Minister spoke of were not due to any technological breakthrough in window technology; they were purely down to the withdrawal of redecoration grants from people who depended on them to deal with the aftermath of window installation, many of whom live in the most socially deprived communities across this state.

I also understand that, in the aftermath of the Minister's meeting with Turkington's on 16 April 2012, the Minister announced a review and a suspension of the installation of double glazing. It is also my understanding that several other glazing companies that had a different perspective on the issue had requested a meeting with the Minister, and those requests were refused. That was made all the more alarming when it was established that Turkington's had provided resources to the Minister's party, although the Minister was at pains to point out that Turkington's did not get any of the new contracts as a result of their meeting. That is irrelevant. The fact that the meeting took place, and an attempt was made to cover up the fact that a meeting took place with Turkington's, is the pressing matter.

In the Minister's evidence to the Committee, he invited us to believe that misleading the Committee was unintentional. Let us look at the facts. First, the Minister received briefings from officials prior to the meeting on 16 April, which made it clear whom he would be meeting. Did the Minister not understand or read the briefings provided? Secondly, the Minister informed us that another group was in attendance at the meeting: Fusion21. In fact, that was a red herring, no doubt in the hope that people would be thrown off the trail of the fact that the meeting was with Turkington's and Turkington's alone. In fact, many people whom we spoke to outside the Assembly were completely baffled. In all the proceedings, the Committee's only interest was to get to the truth. The tactics used by the Minister's party at the Committee were at times shameful and at times disruptive, and they made accusations that the Chair and the Committee had a bias against the Minister. At one stage, the Chair, Alex Maskey, had to halt proceedings.

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr F McCann: No.

The Chair had to suspend the meeting because order could not be obtained from the DUP. Members on the

Committee have drawn their own conclusions about why they behaved in such a manner. I thought that the Chair was not only fair in his running of the inquiry but at pains to ensure that everyone, including members of the DUP on the Committee, were given a fair hearing during the proceedings. It was quite clear that they have a different agenda. The Committee wants nothing but the truth and wishes for transparency, something that I thought all Members of the Assembly would want.

Mr Clarke: Unlike those from the other side of the House, I welcome today's debate. In the last 12 months, tens of thousands of pounds have been spent, and time, money and energy have been wasted when there are much more valuable things that we could be doing in the Assembly. Some of the people opposite should focus their minds on some of those tasks as opposed to wasting valuable time today on whether it was the GGF or Turkington's. It is interesting that a representative from the Craigavon area can sully the good name of that company, which is a large employer in that part of the Province. She and others in the Chamber are quite willing to damage the reputation of the company. The company came forward and made a suggestion, and Fra McCann, in his recent comments —

Mr Wilson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Clarke: Yes, I will.

Mr Wilson: Will the Member accept that this kind of sectarian behaviour from the Member is not unusual and that she is well known for it?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Clarke: That intervention is very useful. The behaviour is sectarian in its nature. I am sure that the cameras will not focus on it because the BBC has been interested in only one aspect of the issue and has not been particularly interested in the inquiry.

Maybe, if the cameras had focused on the representative from that area, they would have seen that she laughed when I commented on the reputation of that large employer in the Craigavon area.

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way and I will deal with it?

Mr Clarke: No. I asked for an intervention when the individual was on her feet — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Clarke: She failed to give way when I asked.

It is also interesting to note that the previous Member to speak said that it was irrelevant. So, to Sinn Féin, a £15 million saving is irrelevant. I hope that the general public who take time to listen or, as others have encouraged, to read the report, note Sinn Féin's comments today. When Departments are struggling because of that party's inaction on welfare reform and a company such as Turkington's has the foresight to come forward with a suggestion that would save Northern Ireland £15 million, its suggestion is abysmal.

It is also interesting to note that Mr McCann talked about those deprived areas and said that there seemed to be just decoration grants for repairs. That was not the case. It is obvious that the outcome was predetermined by some of the Members opposite. The suggestions put forward

by those individuals related to the method of fitting the windows. The suggestion for the glazing and not fitting the units in their entirety came afterwards.

Mr F McCann: On a point of order, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. At no time did I say that the saving of £15 million was irrelevant.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr F McCann: I have been misquoted.

Mr Clarke: The Member referred to the redecoration grants in those areas. What he did not say was that the individuals came forward with a suggestion for how that could be done, a suggestion that also protected the workforce fitting the windows. Therefore, not only are those Members not interested in saving £15 million, they are not concerned about the individuals who carried out the contracts or how they fitted the windows in the first place.

Turkington's came forward with a suggestion and the contract was suspended, but none of the Members opposite noted that the company did not benefit by one shilling. The contract was re-advertised and re-awarded, and the company that put forward a suggestion to save Northern Ireland £15 million got nothing. What that says to me and, I am sure, to many other contractors out there today, is that, if they have a suggestion for how to bring about savings for Northern Ireland, they should just keep it to themselves. What this company has done is talked itself out of work. It has given the representative of the Craigavon area time to sully a very large employer in Northern Ireland. I think that it is disgraceful.

It is also interesting to note comments by those who said that they did not come with a predetermined outcome. I think that Mrs Kelly was one of them. She talked about the second stage and the third stage. If she had given me the intervention, maybe she would have answered my question, which would have been this: can you tell us now your predetermined outcome for stages two and three? We already know what the outcome will be. I could put that question to Sinn Féin, Michael Copeland and, I am sure, Jim Allister. I am sure that it is worth noting that Jim will back Sinn Féin today in the lobbies on this motion.

I make no apologies for standing beside the Minister, who was prepared to come forward with the suggestion to halt a contract. It is interesting to note that, in the past —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member must bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Clarke: In the past, contracts were under the Ministry of the SDLP. I have no problem standing beside the Minister when he comes forward with a suggestion, whether it be from the GGF or Turkington's, and advances an idea that can save £15 million.

Mr Hussey: I would like your permission to remain seated, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Absolutely.

Mr Hussey: Thank you.

I took part in the BBC 'Spotlight' programme broadcast in 2013. It was clear to me, based on the information that was provided, that the serious allegations being made about the Minister, his special adviser and their party needed

to be investigated. After the furore of the broadcast, the only decision that the Committee for Social Development could take was to commence the inquiry. Others have called the process a witch-hunt. To me, that sounded like a guilty man's cries to deflect from the inevitable verdict. The background has already been well talked through, so —

Mr Weir: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hussey: No, I will not. Thank you all the same.

Instead, I will look at the broad observations from reading through the Committee report. Essentially, the entire issue has come down to two widely conflicting accounts: that of a Minister, his foolhardy special adviser and a Department; and the opinion of the company involved.

5.00 pm

The Minister's supposed evidence in his defence to the Committee was implausible. For instance, are we really to believe that he became aware that the attendees at the meeting on 16 April 2012 were Turkington employees only when he read the evidence that they gave to the Committee in November the following year? That would mean that the Minister sat with his eyes closed and his ears covered during the ensuing alarm when the BBC sent a freedom of information request to the Housing Executive about the meeting and continually sent letters to the Department between November 2012 and June 2013. The Minister's claim is most unlikely, however, given that, if we are to believe him, he did not watch the BBC 'Spotlight' programme.

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hussey: No, I will not.

That is just one of the claims that I simply do not believe. There is a raft of other areas of concern. Paragraph 82, on page 10 of the report, raises a very serious issue. In it, the Minister states that his adviser had no role in rewriting the note of the meeting on 16 April 2012. Throughout the rest of the paper it is clear that the only two people who could have made that change were either the Minister or his adviser.

The entire exercise has raised very serious issues about the actions of the Minister's special adviser. Having read through the evidence sessions, I find it impossible that Mr Brimstone could have thought that Turkington's would be writing to the Minister as anything other than Turkington's. Indeed, Mr Young from the company is emphatic that that was the case.

I am concerned that the Minister's former private secretary Ms McConaghie could not recall who instructed her to make fundamental changes to the minute of the meeting, as well as retrospectively to the Minister's diary. Finally, I am concerned that a number of officials in the Department failed to speak out against what they clearly knew to be factually incorrect records. I did not take much reassurance from reading Will Haire's response to that when challenged.

Every Minister and his adviser is allowed to meet whoever they want. What they are not allowed to do is mislead the Assembly or one of its Committees and members of the public. That is a red line that should not be crossed. A clear majority of the Committee found that the Minister deliberately misled it. What are other words for

"mislead"? The dictionary states: "misinform", "deceive" or "lie". If I were to stand up in the Chamber and accuse a Member of lying, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, you would immediately rule me out of order and ask for the remark to be withdrawn, as it was unparliamentary. So, logic dictates that, if a Minister has been found to have misled or deceived the House, they have acted in a clear unparliamentary fashion. Instead of an apology, however, the Minister and his party have shamefully cloaked themselves by once again misusing their tool of choice — the petition of concern.

The arrogance and sheer political manipulation displayed by the DUP this afternoon is enough to make a dictator blush. Whilst the Minister's party leader clearly has no intention of sacking him, and it is clear that he does not want to see another split in his party, a politician of conviction would have done the honourable thing by now and resigned. Every day that you remain in office, you bring your office and the Assembly into disrepute.

Mr Dallat: Many months have been spent going into the details of this, and I do not intend to regurgitate them. In fact, I am not a member of the Committee. My only concern is that it is not just the Minister for Social Development who is on trial. This Assembly is on trial. The public's confidence in this Assembly is at an all-time low. It could not be worse. We will face terrible times in the future if this Assembly does not mature, wise up and stop the nonsense that is going on.

We are being asked to accept that a Minister, flanked by top civil servants and well-paid advisers, attended a meeting of one group, as he thought, but that it was, in fact, a different group. I ask myself this with all sincerity and sadness: where in the civilised world would you find a Minister making a claim like that? That he and his entourage — backed by the ministerial car and the big briefcase and the phones and all the rest of it — thought they were speaking to one group when, in fact, it was a different group. That is laughable. Sorry, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, it is not laughable; it is sad. It undermines overall the respect that the public might have for this Assembly.

Even at this late stage, there is an opportunity to be sensible and to start taking seriously the needs of the wider community and, dare I say, the 50% who do not even bother to vote any more because they have lost confidence in the shenanigans that go on here week after week. All you have to do is look at the Order Papers for today and tomorrow. At a time when hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people involved in the construction of roads and so on are about to lose their jobs, here we have a Minister —

Mr Wilson: Thanks to you lot.

Mr Dallat: I would have thought that the former Minister would have known the protocol of this place: you do not make statements from a sedentary position. He had his chance and he blew it big time.

The pantomime season is long over, but here we have a Minister — I would not describe him as Cinderella by any means — who still wants us to live in a world of make-believe: that he was doing one thing when in fact he was doing another. I have thought of many honourable people, much more powerful and important than our Minister for Social Development, who made mistakes and who had the decency, let us say, to resign when they made the

mistakes rather than drag down a whole government in the process.

The Minister can do the Assembly a great favour and give us the oxygen and breathing space to start anew and move on. He has outrun any usefulness that he ever had in the Assembly, and, with hand on heart, I make my plea to him: for God's sake, go.

Mr Weir: It is difficult to follow such ringing sincerity from across the Chamber. *[Laughter.]* If we are concerned about the people who do not vote, certainly on the basis of the last European elections, it is the party of the Member opposite in particular that they were not voting for. That party got its lowest ever vote on that basis.

Like the Member who spoke last, I am not a member of the Social Development Committee, so I just want to make a few general comments. I agree with the Member on one thing. He is right when he says that this goes beyond the issue of the Minister and towards the credibility of the Assembly. However, the credibility of the Assembly is ill served when, to use his image, we have a pantomime of a report brought by a Committee that operated with a predetermined outcome. I use the phrase of Mr Hussey, the last member of the Ulster Unionist Party to speak, who said that the Minister should have faced up to "the inevitable verdict".

That is a very interesting phrase: an inevitable verdict is one that is predetermined, and that goes to the heart of this report. My colleague Mr Wilson, in opening for my party, indicated a string of quotations from various members of the Committee, who seem to have passed sentence beforehand. Indeed, you might as well have walked into a courtroom, in days gone by, to see a row of judges, each wearing the black cap, before the trial had even started. If not a judicial execution, we are certainly seeing an attempt at political execution before we even reach day one of this report.

Various parties have indicated that the Minister should resign. Indeed, it seems to me that Mr Allister is relishing that; he, at least, is not backing off from that earlier assumption. One wonders, therefore, what level of open mind was brought to this report. Indeed, it is clear that there was no open mind whatsoever. There was a predetermined outcome that the Minister, because politically he does not suit other parties in the Chamber, was to be strung up and foisted on the scrapheap of political life.

Mr Wilson: Kneecapped.

Mr Weir: Kneecapped, indeed. One would have been almost happy at the level of kneecapping, but that would not have satisfied the blood thirst that there is in the Chamber towards the Minister.

Indeed, when you look at what happened, there is a phrase that is quite often used in any case, which is: "Who benefits?" If you are looking for a motive, you ask: "Who benefits?" From that point of view, there was no personal financial gain for the Minister, and, from the meeting, there was no financial gain for Turkington's, which did not receive a single penny as a result of this. Those who did benefit were the public and the purse of Northern Ireland.

Mention has been made in my constituency, as it has been in others, of the need for greater provision of social housing and better provision, particularly for those most

deprived. Surely if we are to get the best possible delivery for all those people, which is something that I would have thought, tacitly, we should all acknowledge, we need to ensure that we get the best possible bang for our buck from public expenditure. That was the appropriate response taken by the Minister when he heard of the prospect of many millions of pounds of savings being made from the way in which the windows were installed. Indeed, the public would get a better and more cost-effective service. Every penny that is saved in one sphere of social housing can ensure that more people benefit from social housing. However, that is not the priority for Members; rather, it is to don the black cap and carry out the witch-hunt against the Minister.

The Member who spoke previously said that the honourable thing to do for Ministers who are mucking up is to resign or to throw themselves on their sword. If there is culpability, the current Minister's predecessors in the SDLP should have resigned a long time ago, as they presided over millions of pounds worth of mistakes that were made in contracts. A blind eye was turned, and, clearly, there was a lack of drilling down into the details of the Housing Executive on that basis. *[Interruption.]* Sorry, was the —

Mrs D Kelly: I was wondering, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, whether the Member opposite was referring to Gregory Campbell, when he was the Minister for Social Development.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Weir: No, in case there has been a lack of understanding, I was referring to the SDLP Ministers who, in the previous Assembly, presided over a farrago of mismanagement of the Housing Executive, which this Minister is trying to clear up, not for the benefit of himself but for that of social housing tenants, time and time again. This Minister should be commended for that. Indeed, it is noticeable that the Member opposite is accusing with her usual level of accuracy. She accuses Gregory Campbell of being the guilty man.

Mrs D Kelly: I did not. I just asked.

Mr Weir: You specifically mentioned Gregory Campbell. He was never even the Minister for Social Development. He was in DRD. You cannot have it both ways in that regard.

This is a clear witch-hunt; it is a farce. Yes, the Assembly is on trial, but it is on trial because of the pantomime of a motion, which seems to be act one in a series of pantomimes that some of the parties opposite are bringing. Consequently, I am very happy to stand beside the Minister today and say that the House should reject the report —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Weir: — but there is not a prospect of the House rejecting the report, because it was a predetermined outcome from day one.

Mr Allister: There is no dispute or issue but that the Minister misled the Committee. The issue is whether he did so inadvertently, as he now claims, or did so deliberately. The answer as to which it is lies, I suggest,

in the very significant and very determined efforts that the Minister and his right arm — his special adviser — made to cover up with whom the relevant meeting had been. It is clear that everyone else at that meeting was abundantly in no doubt that they were meeting Turkington's. Indeed, anyone who had read the letter of invitation would have known that. The civil servants there knew that it was Turkington's, and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive knew that it was Turkington's. But, in this wonderland, the Minister and the special adviser believed that it was someone else.

To sustain that pretence, they set about a concerted effort of writing Turkington's out of the record. So, the Minister's diary was changed. The Minister's diary for 16 April, or whenever, stated, "Meeting with Turkington's", but, retrospectively, it was changed to write Turkington's out of it. It was changed to, "Meeting with the Glass and Glazing Federation".

5.15 pm

The special adviser, in his own hand, changes an answer to the House to write Turkington's out of the record. Then, we have the letter to the Committee Chairman changed not only to write Turkington's out of the record but to write somebody who definitely was not at the meeting, namely Fusion21, into the record. Then, to crown it all, the minutes of the meeting — the official record of the meeting — are changed to write Turkington's out of it, in the headline of with whom — with whom — the meeting had been held.

Anyone ask themselves this: why were those determined efforts made? The Minister says, "Oh, I didn't realise any of that. It was only when I heard the evidence and read the evidence from Turkington's many months later that said that it was actually them I'd met that I realised that it was Turkington's I'd met." Had he not got a letter from the BBC challenging him that he had met Turkington's? Yet here he was saying, "The first time that I ever heard or knew it was Turkington's was when they gave evidence". Had he not watched the 'Spotlight' programme in which Mr Young from Turkington's refuted the suggestion that the meeting was with the Glass and Glazing Federation?

The truth of the Minister's position is that he ran out of road in maintaining the pretence once Turkington's gave the evidence, and he was not prepared to challenge them. Turkington's behaved honourably in front of the Committee. They threw no lifelines to the special adviser, who wanted to misrepresent a private meeting they had back in January in the Radisson hotel. He threw no lifelines to the Minister. The Minister ran out of road and then came up with this combination: "I inadvertently, unintentionally misinformed the Committee". He did no such thing. He calculatedly, deliberately misled the Committee, and all the changes that were made point to that. Sadly, neither he nor his special adviser has been man enough to face up to it.

The private secretary —

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: Yes.

Mrs D Kelly: I just wanted to ask the Member whether he has given any consideration to the claims from those on the Bench opposite about the £15 million in savings and whether or not that is an accurate and evidenced point.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Allister: This debate is not about savings. No one is disputing whether or not making savings is a good thing.

We heard very important evidence from the Minister's private secretary — the lady who changed the minutes and changed the diary. When she was pressed, "Who asked you to make the change?", she said, "I certainly didn't do it of my own volition." She suggested that the two most likely people were the Minister and the special adviser because it was their belief that they had met the Glass and Glazing Federation. Sadly, she was not prepared to be more emphatic than that. Even more sadly, those we expect most of — the Minister and his special adviser — were not man enough to say, "Yes, it was me who gave the direction." Instead, they took refuge in "I can't recall" and such things — the ever-present refuge of the dissembler. I think that it was a very poor reflection indeed upon the Minister and his special adviser —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Allister: — that they were not even man enough to face up to that.

Mr Agnew: It is clear that what is at stake here is not whether or not the House has been misled but whether or not it was deliberately misled. The Minister's claim that it was inadvertently and unintentionally misinformed lacks credibility when we look at the timeline and the number of queries that the Minister faced around the issue. The first of five letters from the BBC to the Minister, as well as one to his special adviser, was sent on 7 June. Every Member of the House will know that, if the BBC or any journalist is asking questions about their work that suggest they have done anything untoward, it is given the highest degree of importance.

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. He mentions the BBC. Given the resources the BBC put into the 'Spotlight' programme and the fact that investigative journalists worked on it for months, why did it not come in front of the Social Development Committee?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I am afraid that the Member will not have the customary extra minute, because we are running out of time allocated for this debate.

Mr Agnew: OK. I will learn not to give way in future.

I cannot speak for the BBC. I am not here to represent it; I am here to present facts that challenge the Minister's statement of events.

The Minister had ample opportunities to check his records and the details of the meeting, and took none of them to correct the misinformation he had provided to the Assembly. In fact it was not until 12 December, five months after this query was first raised, that he finally made that admission, when it was very much in the public light and when the scrutiny and the public eye was on him. He then realised that he had no other option but to apologise for, in his terms, an inadvertent mistake.

As many Members have said, this goes beyond the individual issue to the credibility of the Assembly. There are serious issues at play here, including one that I have raised on many occasions, which is the issue of transparency in party political funding. There has been much speculation about the links between Turkington's

and the DUP. There will always be speculation, and it will grow until there is evidence to prove or disprove it. When we have no public record of who gives money to political parties — until parties such as the DUP choose to support legislation to require them to make that transparent to the public — we will always have this speculation, and those parties can have no defence because there is no record of who gives money to them.

Mr Clarke suggested that we should not challenge big employers. I would say that the real issue at stake for the party opposite is that we should not challenge big donors. That is not good for democracy or for faith in democracy, as has been highlighted by other Members.

The institutions have been further undermined by the attempt to undermine the Social Development Committee and its investigation. The Members across the Floor may disagree with the conclusion of the report, but what is vital is that after the 'Spotlight' programme, the interviews, the evidence and every scrap of paper that the Committee could gather is put into the public domain so that the public can decide for themselves what their views are. The Committee came to a conclusion; that may have been political, but there is transparency for the public now as to the facts of what happened and what should have happened but did not happen.

Furthermore, we now have a petition of concern. We had an investigation and we have had a conclusion, but we then have the party whose Minister is under investigation saying that it will not accept that conclusion. How would that be perceived if it was a judiciary case where the defendant stands up and says, "Me and my mates say I didn't do it, and there are enough of us to put our stamp on it and make sure it does not happen"? That is what is going on here. The Minister and his friends behind him have said that they do not and will not accept any judgement and, therefore, they are going to stop any judgement from being made. That is a disgrace. It undermines our democracy and it will further increase public cynicism as to the legitimacy of decisions taken in the House.

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to this debate, and I want to thank those who have contributed to it. If my response fails to address any specific points, I will, of course, write to Members separately.

I have already put on record my concerns about the process for this inquiry. It is a process that, I believe, would not meet the requirements that would be applicable if the inquiry were a public inquiry conducted, for example, under the Inquiries Act 2005. Indeed, the departmental solicitor has written to the Committee Clerk in relation to this. His letter was sent to the Committee on 10 July. We are now well into the month of September, and there has been no reply. However, in his letter — writing of course from a legal perspective — he highlighted a number of issues about the manner in which this inquiry has been conducted.

I have also put on record my concerns that the actual content of the report falls short of the standards expected in relation to any inquiry and is fundamentally flawed in relation to its analysis of the evidence and its conclusions. This debate therefore provides us with an opportunity to note the work of the Committee and debate whether this is the way to proceed.

I do not believe that the evidence, both written and oral, provided to the Social Development Committee was given due regard, and I fail to understand how the Committee considered the evidence and the facts appropriately in line with its own terms of reference for phase 1 of the inquiry. The Committee's conclusion that I deliberately misled it is, in fact, totally and utterly unsubstantiated. The report does not set out in what way the Committee believes I misled it in relation to my decision to seek a review of the specification for the supply and fitting of double glazing.

The report claims to be an objective assessment of my decision to seek a review of the specification for supply and fitting. However, it is anything but that. The actual review of the double glazing specification is hardly even mentioned in the report, and, had it focused on this review, it would, in fact, have confirmed that I was not involved in that process. The process of review was carried out entirely by the Housing Executive's own technical advisers. The resultant decision reflected the guidelines. Those who raised the issue did not benefit from the changes, and the subsequent changes led to estimated savings to the public purse of £15 million. Indeed, instead of these significant points, the report focuses entirely on whether the people I met at one meeting on 16 April 2012 were representing themselves or the glazing industry.

I have said many times in relation to that meeting on 16 April 2012 that it was not important who I met but that what was important was the fact that I was being advised that, if the Glass and Glazing Federation guidelines were followed, this could lead to significant savings —

Mr Allister: Will the Minister give way?

Mr McCausland: — to the public purse and indeed provide a better standard of service to tenants, a fact —

Mr Allister: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member knows not to persist.

Mr McCausland: — that was then further confirmed to me by my professional and technical officials. The savings to the public purse were subsequently estimated to be around £15 million. That is what led to my decision to seek a review of the specification for supply and fitting, not who was at the meeting or who they were representing.

Mr Campbell: I thank the Minister for giving way. Does he agree with me that it appears that Mr Allister, who came onto the Committee only after being in consultation with the late David McClarty, did so for one purpose and one purpose only, which had nothing to do with saving £15 million? Having walked away from confronting Sinn Féin in 1987, he decided to come back in 2004. He spends more time asking about the price of mint imperials than he does about saving £15 million to the public purse; that is what he is concerned about.

Mr McCausland: I thank the Member for that point. I would also say to the Member who made the point that it is interesting that the Member to whom he has referred has such a sudden interest in housing because, when it came to the last election and you looked at the manifestos for all the political parties, you saw that all the parties around here said what they were going to do in relation to housing. They were concerned about their constituents, and they were concerned about practical issues and matters such

as this. That was except for one person, one party and one manifesto.

After the meeting with my special adviser on 25 January 2012, I genuinely believed that the Turkington representatives were attending the meeting in April in their capacity as representatives of the Glass and Glazing Federation. Indeed, whilst the report refers to Mr Trevor Turkington's written evidence, it does not, in fact, quote that Mr Turkington's written evidence in relation to that meeting on 25 January 2012 with my special adviser actually stated:

"The Glass & Glazing Federation was referred to on numerous occasions".

It also stated:

"I can only presume that the references to GGF during the meeting led Mr. Brimstone to conclude that the letter was to be issued by the Federation rather than Turkington's."

5.30 pm

Those are the very words that were used in the written evidence to the Committee but, of course, that was omitted from the Committee's report.

In addition, the report states, in relation to changes to the minutes of the meeting on 16 April:

"The Committee would also put on record the Minister's position that these changes were made in order to reflect his genuine belief at the time that the meeting had been with representatives of the GGF."

Indeed, in the BBC Northern Ireland 'Spotlight' programme that aired on 3 July 2013, the reporter actually stated:

"It is possible Mr McCausland thought that the men from Turkington's were there as representatives of the federation".

Those are the very words of the BBC reporter.

I had nothing to hide in relation to the meeting on 16 April, and that was demonstrated by the fact that I ensured that the Housing Executive's chief executive and its head of procurement also attended that meeting. I also point out that the review of the specification and the subsequent tendering process for new double-glazing contracts were handled by the Housing Executive, as the contracting authority, and not by me or my Department. I also never sought to hide or deny who was at that meeting, which is, in fact, a matter of public record, as I answered an Assembly question for written answer on 7 September 2012 that clearly stated that the managing director and general manager of Turkington Holdings were at the meeting on 16 April.

Taking account of all that, how did the Committee come to its conclusion? I do not know, and the report does not enlighten me in that regard. It does not set out a logical set of arguments. It is hard, therefore, not to see it as anything other than a basis for political point scoring. That, of course, is not what an inquiry is meant to be about and is not what the public expects, and it is the sort of flawed process that brings the Assembly into disrepute. However, I readily accept that, on foot of this inquiry and the oral evidence provided to the Committee by the Turkington

representatives in November 2013, I was wrong in my assumption that they were representing the Glass and Glazing Federation. I therefore acknowledged to the Committee on 12 December 2013 that I had "inadvertently unintentionally misinformed the Committee" but that that was not in any way deliberate. I said at the time that we are only human and are all fallible, and I acknowledged that I had made a mistake but said that it was not in any way deliberate. I therefore fail to see and understand how the Committee can come to the conclusion that, based on my genuine belief at the time that the meeting had been with representatives of the GGF, I deliberately misled the Committee in relation to my decision to seek a review of the specification for the supply and fitting of double glazing.

I want to pick up on points that were made by some Members. Some important points need to be made. I will start with the Chairman, Mr Maskey, whose chairing of the Committee was very generously applauded by his party colleague Mr McCann. Mr Maskey said that it was about establishing facts. That is the problem: the Committee failed to establish facts and based its conclusions on supposition and innuendo.

Mr Maskey: Will the Minister give way?

Mr McCausland: No.

He said that the allegations were extremely serious —

Mr Allister: [*Inaudible.*]

Mr McCausland: I know that it is difficult for Mr Allister to contain himself, but he might try.

He talked about criticism of the provision of information. The problem for my officials and my Department was simply that, when the information was being sought, the questions were being framed in such a vague way that it was very difficult for officials to know what exactly was being sought. In many ways, that is why you ended up with a situation where the Committee was flooded with information.

I am actually amazed that some people, who were not even on the Committee, obviously think that they have read through hundreds and hundreds of pages of documentation that were given before coming to a conclusion that the Committee was right.

Secondly, he went on to talk about the BBC. He acknowledged, quite rightly — he is absolutely right — that it is interesting that the BBC was happy to put out the programme but would not appear before the Committee. If the BBC were man enough, it would come to the Committee. In fact, it went away and refused to appear. Conclusions should be based on evidence. The fact is that the evidence was not produced.

This is fact. This is a Committee where five out of six parties are political opponents. That is cutting to the chase of the matter. You have five parties that are political opponents, and they simply take the opportunity, as they are able to do with the sort of system that we have, to produce a report and have a political attack.

I was interested in what Mrs Kelly said. She said that the Committee was impartial, and she said that she was impartial. I refer to the 'Irish News' of 23 July 2014 — a paper that I am sure she reads. Mrs Kelly may have forgotten what she said to that newspaper reporter:

last night, the SDLP's Dolores Kelly, a member of the Committee, said that she believed that I should consider my position. She said that there were two more inquiries coming up. She has not just settled for this one: she is away on to stage 2 and stage 3 — right down the road to the very end. She said that there were two more inquiries coming, so it will be death by a thousand cuts.

She has not even seen one bit of evidence — not one scrap, not one page — and already she has not just come to a conclusion in the way that a jury would come to a conclusion; she has actually gone the whole way and has signed us all up for a death warrant. It is absolutely appalling. In fact, if anybody should be thinking of stepping down, she should be thinking of stepping down from the Committee, because her prejudice, her partisanship —

Mr Wilson: Don't worry: she never attends.

Mr McCausland: Oh well. Her prejudice, her partisanship and her partiality have all been amply demonstrated, and if she, who talked about impartiality, can say something like that and stay on the Committee, her presence on the Committee does damage to credibility. She is not the only one. I just picked out the one out of the 'Irish News' for Mrs Kelly. We could go through other newspaper reports and pick out what other members of the Committee said at the particular time. The partisanship and the prejudice there amongst those parties was amply demonstrated when they said it — it is not something that I produced. The words out of their own mouths condemn them. When Mrs Kelly says that the Committee was impartial, that is an absolute joke. The fact is that the whole report was based on smear —

Mr P Robinson: Will my friend give way?

Mr McCausland: Indeed.

Mr P Robinson: Is it not even more absurd that you have on that Committee, as members of the Committee, people who were on the programme making the accusations, and then they sit on the Committee pretending that they are going to impartially judge what the outcome should be?

Mr McCausland: I thank the Member for his point, which is very significant. One of the fundamental issues here is this: you have a flawed process. I am waiting to see what the answer will be in response to the letter from our Departmental Solicitor's Office, because we have been waiting a couple of months already for an answer, and we have not got one. The fact is that it was a flawed process, with a predetermined outcome, that produced a flawed product.

I have talked about the prejudice and the partisanship of certain members, and I can easily go through other newspaper reports for other members. However, as Mr Robinson, the First Minister, said, quite rightly, not only is it what they said in the press, it is what they said in the very programme. I think that all of that raises serious questions about the credibility of it.

The fact is that we could look at the evidence of what happened in regard to double glazing and in regard to other matters. Let us just have a quick look at that. I have a record for delivery in the Department for Social Development that is far better than what there was in terms of delivery by predecessors. I know that it is difficult for Mrs Kelly, as she cannot even remember who was in the office. She thinks that —

Mr P Robinson: Senior moment.

Mr McCausland: It could be a senior moment, indeed.

Let us think about it: in Northern Ireland at the moment, we have 32 tower blocks under the control of the Housing Executive. There has never been a strategy for the maintenance of those tower blocks. The situation now is that finally, under the DUP, there is delivery on that. Within a matter of weeks, we will have a strategy for the first time. People who live in those conditions, with mould growing on the walls, who complained about the conditions when the SDLP Minister was in place, saw that nothing was done about it. It is only now, under the DUP, that there is delivery. There was no concern for tenants. My intention was not only to deliver double glazing with £15 million of savings but to deliver double glazing within the term of this Assembly, not through a 10-year programme as was previously considered.

Thousands of Housing Executive properties with no cavity wall insulation — no-fines properties — are finally being addressed, and there is delivery on external cyclical maintenance (ECM) schemes, which, year after year, had been slowed down. There is better management and monitoring of contracts. We are now seeing a Housing Executive that is far superior to what was there under the SDLP and under the direct rule regime.

The Committee, on the other hand, has failed to address such issues. So much time has been eaten up with this type of inquiry, and so much energy has been spent on trying to come to a predetermined conclusion, that these sorts of issues have not been on its agenda. I have not been getting letters from the Committee on what we are doing about tower blocks. I have not been getting letters about all these issues. The Committee would do a much better job if it looked at such problems.

I will go back to some of the other points made by the Chairman. One key issue is that, when the meeting took place, it emerged that the Housing Executive had already started a review of the specification for fitting double glazing. Even before that meeting, it had already started the review process. It was not something that I conjured up out of thin air or that someone told me I should do: the Housing Executive recognised that the way in which it was being done needed to be looked at. Of course, that sort of thing simply gets thrown out of the way and ignored.

I believe that the report falls far short of the standard that you would expect in any other part of the United Kingdom or British Isles. It is a report from a Committee that used a flawed process. It has produced a flawed product with a flawed outcome, and I think that it is the sort of document that is best dispensed in a waste bin.

Mr Brady (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Social Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I add my voice to those of Members who have shared concerns about the use of a petition of concern today.

The Committee members who spoke today in support of the report referred to the evidence that was collated and reviewed. They were all clear that the weight of the evidence was such that it could not have possibly come to any conclusion other than the one that we reached: the Minister deliberately misled the Committee regarding the meeting of 16 April 2012. Contrary to this, those

Committee members who supported the Minister's position made a number of points to underpin that support. Naturally, the Minister also made his opposition to the report clear. I will try to reflect all those positions over the next few minutes.

The Chair of the Committee gave a comprehensive overview of phase 1 of the inquiry. He said that the evidence was based on the inquiry and talked about the difficulty in getting papers from the Department and the obstructive approach that it adopted, with papers being passed to the Minister first. He also commented, as did others, on the BBC choosing not to appear before the Committee. That was certainly a grave disappointment.

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Brady: No; I do not have enough time.

The Chair also described the process of the guidelines on procedural fairness, the fact that the Department's and the Minister's replies were included in appendices to the report, and he also mentioned the minority report.

5.45 pm

Dolores Kelly thanked the Committee team for their efforts and noted the Chair's adherence to procedural fairness. She noted that any objective reader of the report would agree with its conclusions. She referred to the defence raised by Mr Wilson as unprincipled. Mrs Kelly also noted that the Minister threatened legal action but did not follow it up. She emphasised that any Minister anywhere on these islands who was found to have misled a Statutory Committee would have already left his post. She went on to say that evidence heard by the Committee was a public indictment of the Minister.

Michael Copeland stated that he based his decision on the evidence presented before the Committee. He referred to the petition of concern and what its application was originally aimed at. He noted that the issues raised and the ramifications of this affair will go far.

Stewart Dickson stated that the Minister was either guilty of incredible incompetence or had deliberately misled the Committee. He found it extremely alarming that officials allowed the Minister to sustain the belief that he had met the Glass and Glazing Federation, when they had evidence that made clear whom he met. Mr Dickson lambasted the DUP for its use of the petition of concern. He noted that the Committee found the Minister's evidence unbelievable.

Fra McCann spoke in support of the Committee motion. He noted that the Department held the Committee in disregard, given how it addressed its responsibility to provide information. He stated that Turkington's was brushed out of the record; however, Turkington's was clear that it had represented no one but itself. Indeed, that was borne out by the Glass and Glazing Federation, which also gave evidence. Mr McCann noted that requests from other double-glazing firms were rejected. He said that the evidence was clear that the meeting had been with Turkington's. The Committee's only interest was, he said, to get to the truth, and he criticised the behaviour of DUP members at some of the meetings.

Ross Hussey noted the serious allegations made by 'Spotlight'. He made some broad observations on the report. He questioned the Minister's claims that he did not realise that he had met Turkington's until after the first

evidence session. He noted the concern about the inability of the Minister's former private secretary to recall who gave her instructions. He suggested that the Minister should apologise, and he referred to the arrogance of the DUP.

In supporting the report's findings, John Dallat stated that the Assembly was on trial as public confidence is at an all-time low. He considered that the Minister asking us to believe that he was not aware whom the meeting was with was sad and undermined the Assembly. He called on the Minister to resign.

Jim Allister said that there was no disputing that the Minister misled the Committee, and he noted that significant and determined efforts were made to change the records to show that he had met the Glass and Glazing Federation rather than Turkington's. He stated that changes were made to the Minister's diary and that the special adviser had instructed that changes be made to Assembly Questions and the letter to the Chair. Importantly, he noted the significant changes to the minutes of the meeting of 16 April 2012. He noted that the Minister had been challenged by the BBC, yet he maintained his pretence. He said that the Minister "ran out of road" and "calculatingly and deliberately" changed the record. He noted that the former private secretary stated that it was likely that either the Minister or the special adviser had instructed her to change the minutes of other records, and neither of them was man enough to admit who did that.

Sammy Wilson, who was one of the Members who spoke in support of the Minister, said that there was a public witch-hunt, during which established political prejudices were aired. He said that people entered the inquiry with their mind made up, as was evidenced on 8 July in the House, and the inquiry was a means of sustaining that. He recalled that the Minister's meetings had resulted in savings of £15 million, but that was not recorded in the report as Committee members argued that these savings were not conclusive. He recalled that officials were clear that it would not have mattered whom their meetings were with, it would have gone ahead. He recalled that the minute of the meeting, a letter and an answer to a question in the Chamber show that it was with Turkington's. He said that the petition of concern was tabled because this was not a public inquiry but a political witch-hunt, and no party would allow it to go ahead.

Paula Bradley expressed grave concerns about the findings. She stated that she was not convinced that the Minister deliberately misled the Committee. She said that the Minister told the facts as he understood them at the time, and, when he realised his mistakes, sought to rectify them. She highlighted the savings that would have been realised as a result of the meeting and stated that the only beneficiaries were Housing Executive tenants — not the Minister or the party. She stated that this was a cheap political move by other parties.

Trevor Clarke highlighted the cost and the time that the Committee wasted on the inquiry. He expressed concern about the reputational damage caused to the company Turkington Holdings. He reiterated the £15 million cost savings that the alternative fitting method that Turkington's suggested at the meeting could realise. He recalled that Turkington's did not benefit financially in any way from its suggested cost savings. He expressed concern that some Committee members have already predetermined outcomes for phases 2 and 3.

Peter Weir agreed that the debate goes beyond the Minister and said that it is about the Assembly's credibility. He reiterated his colleagues' views that there was a predetermined outcome to the report before the inquiry had begun. He also reiterated that there was no financial gain to the Minister or to Turkington's, only to the public of the North. He stated that the Minister was seeking to ensure that the public were getting a better and more cost-effective service. He also stated that the previous Minister should have resigned over his handling and mismanagement of contracts in the Housing Executive. He was happy to stand by the Minister and reject the report.

The Minister, in referring to the process, indicated that the inquiry does not adhere to the principles of the Inquiries Act. I will point out that it is not a public inquiry, so the Inquiries Act does not apply. Maybe the Minister could take note of that. However, the Committee is considering a response, and it aims to have that with the Department this week.

The Minister referred to the savings of £15 million that arose as a result of the meeting, and he said that it was immaterial to him who he met. Obviously not, because, presumably, if it was immaterial, he would not have changed the record. He noted that the Committee's report did not refer to this. The Minister referred to Mr Turkington's letter as evidence that the special adviser was under the impression that a letter was coming from the Glass and Glazing Federation. He stated that he had nothing to hide about the 16 April meeting and that the tendering process for double glazing was handled by the Housing Executive. He also said that he had referred in a previous Assembly question to a meeting with Turkington Holdings. He accepted that he was wrong in his assumption that he had met the Glass and Glazing Federation, and he stated that he had already admitted that. He said that he did not see how the Committee could reach the conclusion it did.

He then went on to address comments that other members made, but I will not go into that. He also noted the BBC's refusal to attend to give evidence, and he said that the Committee's process was flawed and that it produced a flawed outcome. The Minister should note that the Committee considered the DSO letter at its first meeting but after the summer recess, and as I said, a response will be agreed this week.

I will now speak as a Sinn Féin member of the Committee. The Minister has consistently — or maybe inconsistently — stated that he wanted to put the record straight. Why, then, does his evidence conflict with that of every other person at the meeting? It conflicts with Housing Executive officials, Turkington's — everybody but him and his special adviser. I suppose that there are only so many ways to itemise how the Minister tried to cover up.

Some Committee members said that it is a Sinn Féin-led Committee, and they spoke about the make-up of this particular Committee. My understanding is that all Committees in the Assembly have a similar make-up. Sinn Féin has three Committee members; the DUP has four. Are they seriously suggesting that we Sinn Féin members are able to influence Mr Allister?

Some Members: Yes.

Mr Brady: Could I say —

Mr Campbell: Quoting approvingly.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Brady: When the playground antics have finished, let me say on that point that, having sat on Committee with Mr Allister, I very much doubt that I could influence him on anything.

Mr Campbell: You are quoting him approvingly, though.

Mr Brady: Could we influence Dolores Kelly, Michael Copeland or Stewart Dickson? I think not. I do not think that that is a serious suggestion from the DUP; it is made to deflect from the real nature and cause of the inquiry.

The Minister and some of his party colleagues went into great detail about the reason for the meeting, and they said that it was about contracts. The inquiry was not about that; it was simply to find out whether the Minister deliberately misled the Committee. The majority of the Committee, in a democratic fashion, came to the conclusion that the Minister deliberately misled the Committee. That is the stark fact. You can dress it up whatever way you want, but that is the stark reality. It is accepted by the majority of the Committee, including other parties, not just Sinn Féin. If you look at it logically, you can see that Sinn Féin has the Chair and the vice-Chair, but we certainly cannot influence other party members. That is for sure, and I think that they would all agree with that. So, the Minister is being disingenuous when he goes off on a tangent and talks about all these contracts and the money that was saved, because the reality of the savings — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Brady: My colleague Fra McCann rightly stated that the only savings were in redecoration grants. The Minister is not great with figures because he has gone from talking about £18 million at one stage down to £670,000: maybe his maths is not that good. On this occasion, we do not know. The Committee was advised in May 2014 that the savings would not be known until the double-glazing schemes had been completed. The £15 million in savings that has been referred to is, therefore, speculation. I want to make that point.

The Committee came to a democratic decision. All the evidence was clear. Every person who gave evidence was asked very clearly by the Chair at the end of their evidence whether they were happy that they had been given the opportunity to state everything that they had wanted to state to the Committee. There was no equivocation from any of the witnesses.

The representatives from Turkington's were unequivocal that they were there to represent themselves and not the Glass and Glazing Federation. The person from the Glass and Glazing Federation who attended the Committee stated very clearly that Turkington's did not represent them. Indeed, he stated that if someone wanted to represent the Glass and Glazing Federation, they would have to have an endorsement from the organisation.

The simple fact is that the Committee did a comprehensive report.

Mr McCausland: Will the Member give way?

Mr Brady: No, I will not, because I want to finish up.

The Committee came to an unequivocal and democratic conclusion that the Minister deliberately misled the Committee.

Mr Clarke: The majority of the Committee.

Mr Brady: I said, "the majority of the Committee". I reiterate that it was the majority of the Committee.

Mr Wilson made much of there being a witch-hunt and used a number of Ps. However, it was a democratic decision. The DUP had the opportunity to vote, as it would have had even if it had not tabled a petition of concern. This was simply a motion to note the report; bringing in a petition of concern seems absolutely ludicrous. *[Interruption.]* A majority decision was reached on very definite conclusions that were based on the evidence, not on what people made up, not on what Sinn Féin thought and not on what Mr Allister or anybody else thought: they were based exclusively on the evidence presented.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that the vote on the motion will be on a cross-community basis.

Question put.

The Assembly divided:

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

Ayes 57; Noes 36.

AYES

NATIONALIST: Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mr Dallat, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

UNIONIST: Mr Allister, Mr Beggs, Mr Copeland, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Elliott, Mr Hussey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCallister, Mr B McCrea, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mr Swann.

OTHER: Mr Agnew, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Ford, Ms Lo, Mr Lyttle.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Flanagan and Mr Ó hOisín.

NOES

UNIONIST: Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

<i>Total Votes</i>	<i>93</i>	<i>Total Ayes</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>[61.3%]</i>
<i>Nationalist Votes</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>Nationalist Ayes</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>[100.0%]</i>
<i>Unionist Votes</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>Unionist Ayes</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>[28.0%]</i>
<i>Other Votes</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>Other Ayes</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>[100.0%]</i>

Question accordingly negatived (cross-community vote).

Adjourned at 6.12 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 9 September 2014

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Speaker in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr Campbell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. It relates to the debate yesterday on the 'Spotlight' programme. I do not wish to reopen any debating points that were made, but I have a copy of yesterday's Hansard, and, during a contribution by my friend the Member for North Down Mr Weir, Mrs Dolores Kelly from the SDLP made the following intervention:

"I was wondering, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, whether the Member opposite was referring to Gregory Campbell, when he was the Minister for Social Development." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 97, p42, col 1].

I was never Minister for Social Development. I thank you for the opportunity to correct one of a number of inexactitudes.

Mr Speaker: First of all, I thank the Member for the point of order. Can I inform the Member that that has now been corrected and the record put straight in Hansard?

Private Members' Business

Ardoyne Fleadh

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. Two amendments have been selected and published on the Marshalled List. Fifteen minutes have been added to the total time. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. The proposer of each amendment will have 10 minutes to propose and five minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Before we begin, the House should note that the amendments are mutually exclusive. If amendment No 1 is made, the Question will not be put on amendment No 2. As a valid petition of concern was presented on Monday 8 September in relation to the motion, the vote will be on a cross-community basis.

Mr McCausland: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes with grave concern the remarks made by the Druids and the leading of young people in pro-IRA chanting at the recent Ardoyne Fleadh; and calls for all public funding to be withdrawn from the Ardoyne Fleadh event.

The Ardoyne Fleadh is an event that has been running for a number of years, and, over that period, it has received very substantial public funding. Indeed, if one goes back to the era of direct rule, one sees that it was one of a small number of festivals that received very substantial public funding. There were issues about the inequality of the funding mechanism at that time that some of us raised.

This year, in particular, the fleadh has come very much to the fore and has received extensive headline coverage in our newspapers, particularly because of some comments that were made on the final night of the event by one of the participants. Those comments were then posted on YouTube. For those who are not regular attenders there, the final night of the Ardoyne Fleadh is very much the culmination and climax of the event at the end of the week. It is usually described by the organisers as "the Irish rebel night" or, as one committee member was quoted describing it in a newspaper, "chucky night", which is obviously a reference to the pro-IRA phrase "tiocfaidh ár lá". So it is interesting that the nature of the night is indisputable: it is about support for Irish republicanism, particularly militant, violent republicanism.

It is an extremely popular event. We can see that by the size of the crowd that turns up each year to the grounds

of the Holy Cross Primary School. Its pitches are used for the event. It is a popular event that draws people from a wide area. Even if you do not go to it, you can hear it quite easily. If you live in large parts of the Woodvale and Shankill area, in Ballysillan or in upper Ardoyne at Glenbryn, you can sit in your house and hear the event because of the level of amplification. As I said, this year, it reached a wider audience because it is now on YouTube.

Let us start by looking at the comments that were made by that individual. The group are the Druids, from Kildare. They claim to be Ireland's number-one live rebel band: I will not argue with that. Their lead singer, Mick O'Brien, told the Ardoyne crowd — I will abbreviate some of his terminology, although he did not abbreviate; he used the full form of it — that it is about time that the British Army and their Orange comrades all effed away back to England. His statement was racist and sectarian, and so was the action of the crowd. Their reaction was to cheer those comments and to roar out their approval of what he had said. After that, the crowd sang a song that begins with the line:

"Go on home British soliders, go on home.

Have you got no" —

I have removed the next word —

"homes of your own?"

Clearly, it is a group that specialises in high-quality literature and lyrics. It also includes such memorable lines as:

"So" —

I have removed the next word again —

"your Union Jack, we want our country back."

I think we get a picture of the sort of music, lyrics and songs.

If you are not familiar with the group, you can also sample on YouTube one of the other songs in its repertoire, 'The Sniper's Promise', which is about an IRA man picking up his Armalite rifle and shooting a British soldier. The reason why I mention that is that we are not talking here about songs about 1916 or songs that go back to the 17th century, the 18th century or 100 years ago; we are talking about songs that relate to the recent Troubles and to the terrorist campaign inflicted on this land by the IRA. One of the other bands, Fianna, were the authors or co-writers of a song called 'New Lodge Pride' about the Provisional IRA in the New Lodge area. Of course, they would be well known to members of Sinn Féin because they advertise themselves as having appeared at the party's ard-fheis to perform those sorts of songs. They also say that they appear regularly at Sinn Féin events. It is clear that audience participation is a key element in this. One can pick up in the media, on YouTube and so on people shouting things like "Ooh aah, up the Ra" and other similar sentiments. So, we are clear about the type of event that we are talking about.

If that is the case, is it the sort of event that should be funded by DCAL? Should it be funded by the Community Relations Council? Is this what public money should be spent on? I suggest that Irish rebel music of the type that was performed that night promotes sectarianism, endorses violence and romanticises the IRA. That is what it is about. The issue is not the comments of one individual, which

lasted for a matter of minutes, but the entire programme on that night. It is the climax, the culmination, the final event of the night. In fact, for many people, it is the most important part of the fleadh. It is certainly integral to the fleadh. It is advertised in the programme. It is organised by the organising committee that books the acts. The committee knows what it is booking and what it is getting. They have heard these people before. Yet, there it is, in receipt of public money. It is not something extraneous. It is not something peripheral. It is central; it is core; it is essential to the fleadh. Therein lies the problem when it comes to giving public money to that type of event.

I want to pick up on a comment made in response to that evening by the Culture Minister, Ms Ni Chuilín. There was a dissident republican shooting a short distance away on the night. She said that it was terrible that there had been a dissident republican shooting, because people were at the concert enjoying their culture. I suggest that there is a connection between the two. It is the culture of such songs and the ethos of that sort of event that help to encourage people into the ranks of the dissidents. Such songs validate the use of the gun and the use of murder. Therefore, how can you, on the one hand, say, "That's great. That's the culture to be celebrated" and, on the other hand, condemn people a short distance away for doing almost the very thing that the groups there are singing about?

There are three issues. First, there is an issue and a question for the fleadh committee and a question, too, for nationalist and republican politicians from the SDLP and Sinn Féin. This is the sort of thing that one might expect from Sinn Féin, but the SDLP has backed the fleadh. I assume that some Members from the SDLP have signed the petition of concern; there certainly are not enough Members from Sinn Féin to do that on their own, so somebody other than Sinn Féin has signed the petition of concern. Is it not time for the fleadh to move on? Is it not time for Northern Ireland to move on? If Northern Ireland is moving on, is it right that this sort of event should be supported with public money? That is the question for the fleadh committee and nationalist politicians: is it not time to move on?

There are also questions for the funders, such as DCAL and the Community Relations Council, and the sponsors. Those questions need to be pursued with those individuals over the next number of months until we get to the bottom of exactly what was applied for, what conditions were attached to the grants and sponsorship, whether those people think that there have been any breaches of those conditions and whether there should be any future funding for this type of event. That is a question for DCAL, the Community Relations Council and the sponsors, including Ladbrokes.

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Does he agree that questions also have to be answered by CCMS and the trustees of Holy Cross boys' school? I do not think that any comment has been made about the continuation of that school facility being used for such hate-filled events.

Mr McCausland: I thank the Member for his question, which is indeed the third point that I am going to make. The rebel night takes place on the Holy Cross boys' school pitch. Therefore, there is this question for the school governors: is this in keeping with the ethos of your school premises? Roman Catholic schools — maintained schools

— have a Catholic ethos. Is this sort of thing in keeping with that ethos? If it is not, it should not happen on pitches that are the property of the school. The question for them is this: will you continue to make your school property available for such rebel nights? There are questions for the organisers and the politicians, questions for the funders —

Mr Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr McCausland: — and questions for the school. Those questions deserve an answer. I encourage the Assembly to back the motion and pursue the matter. If we are to move Northern Ireland forward, this is not the way to do it.

10.45 am

Mr Allister: I beg to move amendment No 1:

Insert after first "Fleadh,":

"deplores the lack of action by the investigative and prosecuting authorities in respect of the criminal offence of incitement to hatred;"

I concur largely if not entirely — I think, in fact, that I concur entirely — with what the proposer of the motion said about this matter. It was quite a shocking incident. It may be acceptable to some who for years have wallowed in that sort of "Brits out" approach, with all the attendant force and violence that they gave to that message, but, across Northern Ireland, I think that many right-thinking people were aghast when they viewed it on YouTube. They were aghast at the virulence of the wording, at how it was delivered and at the deliberate whipping-up of the young crowd into a frenzy. That being so, I found it amazing that the police and the prosecuting authorities took such a sanguine attitude and that, within days of the complaint by Councillor Jolene Bunting and others, they had dismissed the matter, sought to sweep it under the carpet and decreed that there would be no prosecution. It begs the question: what is the law of the land supposed to be on these issues? The law of the land on these issues is supposed to be set out in the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987, which states:

"A person who uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour ... is guilty of an offence if—

(a) he intends thereby to stir up hatred or arouse fear; or

(b) having regard to all the circumstances hatred is likely to be stirred up or fear is likely to be aroused thereby."

That is often characterised as incitement to hatred, which, of course, had its origins in a 1970 Act.

Let us think about those words. Think about the words that were used by a member of the Druids:

"It's about time that they got all their Orange comrades together."

That is an all-embracing classification of anyone of the Orange tradition. He also said:

"It's about time that they loaded up the bus, and it's about time that they all effed off back to England where they came from."

I have to say this, Mr Speaker: I did not come from England, and many people who would be categorised as "Orange comrades" by these nefarious folk did not come from England. We were born here, live here and are entitled and determined to stay here. The suggestion that we should eff off back to England is not just "insulting", which is one of the words of the Act, but threatening and abusive. I think that the first test of whether the words used were "threatening, abusive or insulting" is demonstrably met when you think of those words.

The second limb of the test is whether, having regard to the circumstances, hatred was likely to be stirred up. I think that you got the answer to that when you watched on YouTube the whipped-up frenzy of those to whom the words were addressed — those who were wallowing and rejoicing in the hatred that those words stirred up.

I have to say that I find it amazing that the police, faced with a complaint, simply wanted to wipe it under the carpet, whereas their obligation was to investigate the complaint. How can you investigate a complaint of incitement to hatred, when the words were so demonstrably abusive, threatening and insulting, without seeking to interview those who had uttered those words?

Immediately, there was reasonable suspicion of the commission of an offence — obviously, there had to be reasonable suspicion of the commission of an offence. Immediately that arose, there was a duty and an obligation to arrest and to interview. It is by interviewing that you then put to the test somewhat whether there was intent to stir up hatred. It is beyond doubt that someone who used words of that nature required to be taxed in interview about what they thought they were doing, what they intended by what they were saying and what they thought the likely consequences were.

It is not the easiest offence in the world to get a conviction on, given the requirement for intent to stir up hatred, but it no longer is just that. The law also provides that, if, having regard to all the circumstances, hatred is likely to be stirred up, that is enough. I find it astounding that the police did not even interview and did not even seek to arrest but rushed to say, "No action on this matter".

As for the Chief Constable, when there was a little controversy, he said, "Oh, we can very quickly put a file together and send it to the DPP". No, they cannot. A file properly constructed on this issue would require an arrest, an interview and the inclusion of that interview. It cannot simply be wrapped up and thrown into the DPP to give us the answer that we are looking for.

I think that this rankles so much with so many people in, to use their language, "the Orange community" because, in recent times, many in the loyalist community have witnessed the enthusiasm — the relentless enthusiasm — with which, for example, some flag protesters were pursued. Take some of the people prominent in that. Take the case of William Frazer: he may not be everyone's cup of tea in the House but he is a citizen with the same rights as everyone else. He was arrested and charged under the Serious Crime Act 2007, held for weeks in custody, then given bail and arrested twice for an alleged breach of his bail conditions, once upon returning from this Building after attending a debate. He was pursued relentlessly by the PSNI until, 15 months' later, shamefaced, the police had to drop every last charge of a public order nature. Anyone

who knows anything about the law knew that the offences were always incapable of sticking in those circumstances.

So where was the parity of approach when it came to dealing with William Frazer, for example, as opposed to the indecent haste with which the Chief Constable and the director wanted to sweep this matter under the carpet? It is because of such contrasting approaches that there is a growing gulf of disrespect, sadly, amongst many in the loyalist community for police and police actions. I have to say that the police have stoked that situation by —

Mr Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Allister: — their approach to this matter. It is deplorable that there was a failure to take adequate investigative and prosecutory steps.

Mr Lyttle: I beg to move amendment No 2:

Leave out all after first "Fleadh;" and insert:

"denounces sectarianism of any kind; and calls on the Executive to work to ensure that all publicly funded events remain free from sectarianism or hatred of any kind and to implement measures to ensure such events remain open and shared for everyone."

I regret that it is necessary for us to devote such a length of time of Assembly attention to the actions of one individual, albeit that they were extremely sectarian, ignorant and misguided, especially when the Assembly has so much serious work on social and economic issues to be getting on with to demonstrate clearly that it is fit for purpose for the public and the wider community in Northern Ireland.

It is, however, an important opportunity for us to send out a clear and united condemnation in response to these actions. Sectarianism or discrimination of any kind is a poison that divides and blights our community. We believe that our amendment presents an opportunity for the Assembly to make a clear, united condemnation of these particular actions.

Indeed, it is also an opportunity for us to acknowledge the widespread and real anger across our community from people of all different backgrounds at the sheer recklessness of the sectarian language that the Druids band used at Ardoyne Fleadh, especially in that particular context, where community tension is heightened. This has the potential to cause real damage to community relations in the area. It has also, unfortunately, given somewhat due cause to those who would perpetuate fears, which I would not agree with, around cultural war being waged. Unfortunately, it has also caused real confusion about how the offending words did not constitute an offence of using words or actions with the intent of inciting hatred.

On those grounds, I sought assurances from the PSNI that it would rigorously pursue all alleged hate crime without fear or favour of anyone. Indeed, I welcome that the PSNI has submitted a file to the PPS and DPP to respond to. Hopefully, we will get an adequate explanation of whether this meets the test for prosecution. I think that it is regrettable that Mr Allister has used this situation to table an inaccurate amendment that does not accurately reflect the PSNI's actions on this issue. Indeed, it is a deplorable act to bring into any disrepute the impartiality of the PSNI in upholding the rule of law in our community.

I think that it is also regrettable —

Mr A Maginness: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lyttle: Yes, I will.

Mr A Maginness: I am quite surprised by Mr Allister's remarks today, but they parallel the remarks made by Mr Poots, and we all note the very vigorous reaction by the Lord Chief Justice.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for his intervention. I think that the clear message is that we respect the impartiality of the PSNI and the judiciary and the role that they have to play in upholding the rule of law and order in our community as a bedrock for us to build on community relations here.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lyttle: I will give way briefly.

Mr Allister: Is the Member seriously contending that either the judiciary or the PSNI are above criticism? Has it not always been the case that, in any democratic society, there is a right of citizens to criticise the decisions of the judiciary and the PSNI, which is quite different from challenging the validity of the institutions?

Mr Lyttle: Yes. I absolutely recognise the right to criticise, but with that right comes a responsibility to be accurate in that criticism. Unfortunately, Mr Allister's amendment does not, in my opinion, accurately reflect the actions of the PSNI in this case.

I also think that it is unfortunate that we have an imbalanced condemnation — it is pick-and-mix condemnation at times — of acts of sectarianism. Indeed, a quote from Herbert Butterfield that was brought to my attention comes to mind for some of these situations. He said that the greatest menace to our community is the conflict between large groups of self-righteousness, each only too glad that the sins of the other give it pretext for still deeper hatred. I also heard someone saying recently that sectarianism thrives when people are actually alike, as people need to manufacture difference for their own ends.

11.00 am

I fear that we are getting into that territory in relation to some of these cases. It is about time that we focused on a sensible response to these issues. Yes, I agree, as Mr McCausland put forward, that we have to examine what the preconditions were in relation to public funding for events where these types of sectarianism occur. We need to see whether there have been breaches and, absolutely, people need to be held to account.

Indeed, I welcome comments from the organisers, who wholeheartedly —

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lyttle: I will just finish this point quickly — who wholeheartedly clarified that those actions did not reflect their vision or aspirations for their community festival. That is helpful. We need to examine the preconditions to see whether breaches were made.

That is what Mr McCausland said. Unfortunately, however, his motion goes further than his contribution today. It suggests that all public funding should be withdrawn for the entire event, penalising everyone with good intentions to

promote positive cultural expression. That goes too far, and our amendment presents an opportunity to correct that.

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Given what was said by the Druids, after a long list, as Mr McCausland said, of speeches like that being made on the final night, the rebel night, of this fleadh, does the Alliance Party believe that there were serious breaches that CRC, DCAL and other funders need to look at?

Mr Lyttle: That is exactly what I just said. I have made it clear that it is wholeheartedly to be condemned. The words were reckless, sectarian, ignorant and misguided. I do not think that I can be clearer than that, and there absolutely is a task for people to examine how that may or may not have breached conditions.

However, the Assembly, the Executive and the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister need to take responsibility in order to tackle the root causes of sectarianism in our community. Where is the Together: Building a United Community strategy? What impact and actions does that have? What investments are being rolled out?

In that area of north Belfast an exciting, effective, cross-community project has been taking place between Holy Cross and Edenderry nurseries called a buddy system, which is bringing young children, and men and women, from interface communities, together in a real and meaningful way. The project is bridging divides, tackling sectarianism and promoting a shared future in that area, yet it is struggling for funding, despite buddy systems being an explicit target of the Together: Building a United Community strategy. There is no funding and no clear message from OFMDFM as to how such an effective programme is to be continued.

That, for me, is the real travesty that we should be talking about today. Those are the types of issues that the Assembly should be working on. Those are the types of issues that the media and the biggest show in the country should be giving airtime to: to the people who are working at grassroots level to improve community relations and who are struggling for long-term, sustainable funding to have a meaningful impact to ensure that this type of isolated, ignorant sectarianism is a thing of the past.

We absolutely agree that measures should be implemented to robustly tackle this type of sectarianism, but we must also take responsibility to ensure that the context is there for a truly safe and shared society to be built in order for all events to be open and welcoming for all. I will give way.

Mr Beggs: The Member indicated that he could not support Mr Allister's amendment because of its inaccuracies. Can you explain in what way it is inaccurate? Would he not agree that, if such an investigation were carried out, it would prevent further actions from occurring elsewhere?

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for his intervention. Again, however, I think that I made that clear already. Assurances were sought from the PSNI and the Chief Constable that all alleged hate crime would be rigorously and robustly investigated. We received assurances that that has been the case and that a file will be submitted to the PPS.

It is unlike Mr Allister to commit this type of error where, clearly, the amendment was submitted prior to those assurances being received. The honourable thing would

have been to retire the amendment, but Mr Allister has used this opportunity to put forward his views, which are well known to the community.

There is an opportunity for the Assembly to make a clear, united response condemning a seriously sectarian action and to support a united way of moving forward.

Mr G Kelly: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Beidh mé ag labhairt in aghaidh an phríomh-rúin. I will be speaking against the motion and amendment No 1, but we are prepared to support amendment No 2 from the Alliance Party.

It might be worth starting off by saying what I think we can all agree on: the remarks about Orangemen were not only wrong but offensive and insulting, and they should not have happened. I, as a republican, have spent a lifetime trying to get British soldiers out of Ireland, so I will not be hypocritical on that aspect of it. I would be less than honest if I did that. However, let me emphasise that I would not articulate it in the same way as the individual did on that night.

It is important to say that the person who spoke for the Druids on the stage does not speak for anyone but themselves. In a statement made almost immediately after, the chair of the fleadh said:

"We regret any offence caused by this incident. It was wrong, regrettable, disappointing and should not have happened. These comments do not reflect the views of the organisers or the people of Ardoyne."

He went on to say:

"The organising committee will be reviewing guidelines in relation to performers and acts to ensure this does not happen again."

So, action was taken immediately.

Nelson McCausland said that the fleadh has been going on a long time. It has been going on something like 24 years. I think that it is worth saying that it is there to celebrate culture in a positive way. That is what it was set up for, and that is what it continues to do. It is there as an alternative to bonfires, for instance, and the negativity and antisocial behaviour that they produce. I have to say that it has been very successful in doing that. Of course, we have just come through one of the most peaceful summers that any of us can remember. I think that, to put this in context, we need to remember all of that. This is a very successful alternative to what we have faced in previous summers.

The Ardoyne people are a very proud and law-abiding people, and, of course, the fleadh is a cross-community grouping. Nelson McCausland, who was here earlier, was one of the first unionist politicians whom I remember sitting with me on a panel on the Ardoyne Fleadh to debate these things. The fleadh has always reached out and tried to bring in other people from outside the area to hear their points of view, and that continued this year.

The motion calls for a collective punishment. People across the Chamber have got up many times and argued against collective punishment, collective condemnation and all of that, yet the motion is full of that. I think that we have to be careful that we do not get too high on the horse.

Are unionists here going to argue that the money for bonfires should be taken away because of the sectarianism that we see at some of them, or even that those particular bonfires should be banned on that basis? There is funding that goes to bonfires as well. Are they arguing that, if bands sing sectarian songs, all the funding should be taken away from bands, or even from those particular bands? I have never heard that from the unionists before. Are they going to take funding away from those particular bands because of what someone may have said? There are plenty of sectarian comments made in bands. Are they arguing for collective punishment for that?

Orange Order figures have made sectarian remarks. Should the whole of the Orange Order be punished because of someone who says such things? I would hope that some of the people across the Floor would condemn some of the remarks made on those occasions.

So, it is the issue of communal punishment that I entirely disagree with. Of course, the examples that I have given are not even comparable with the Druids. The Druids are a band that were invited here. The organisers are going to review guidelines. The Druids had nothing to do with organising the fleadh and are not involved on —

Mr Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr G Kelly: — the fleadh's committee. I would argue that we should not do that and that people should take a more sensible approach to this. Yes, it was wrong. Yes, it should not have happened. The fleadh serves the people well on a cross-community basis.

Mr Speaker: The Member's time is gone.

Mr G Kelly: William Humphrey will know that the Hammer and the youth club in Ardoyne do many things together.

Mr A Maginness: First of all, it is a bit rich for Nelson McCausland to be criticising sectarianism. There have been many instances in north Belfast when there have been acts of sectarianism on the part of the Orange and on the part of loyalists that have either been ignored by Mr McCausland or, indeed, have resulted in equivocal comments. I think that it is a bit rich, and I think that the people of Ardoyne and north Belfast will recognise that.

I think that Mr Allister should know better, particularly in relation to his remark that the police and the PPS have swept this issue under the carpet. That is an unacceptable comment by him and it undermines faith and confidence in the PPS and the PSNI. I believe that all of us have a duty to support the PSNI and the PPS. I do not suggest at all that it should be done in a slavish way; there is room for robust criticism but not for undermining the institutions of the PPS and the PSNI in the exercise of their duties. I believe that they carried out a proper investigation into this matter. If there is to be any change —

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr A Maginness: I will take you in a moment.

If there is to be any change in relation to this investigation, let it be and we will deal with the consequence of that.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Member for giving way. Will he agree that, clearly, when the police prepared the first file that went to the PPS, what he said was done was simply

not done? I have doubts that it was done on the second occasion.

Mr Speaker: The Member has a minute added on to his time.

Mr A Maginness: Thank you very much. I do not know the detail of the file that was presented. I do not know the ins and outs of that, but I know that the police, in coming to their decision not to prosecute in this instance, took the advice of the PPS. That is clearly stated by the PSNI and the PPS. Indeed, in a public statement, the Director of Public Prosecutions said that it did not meet the threshold for prosecution. We have to accept that the director carries out his duties in an impartial fashion, and we have to accept that the police carry out their duties in an impartial fashion. If we do not accept that, where are we? We verge on anarchy.

Mr Allister: Will the Member give way?

Mr A Maginness: No, I am not going to accept you. You made your point twice. The Member should reconsider what he said and, in fact, withdraw it because I think it causes serious damage for a public representative and learned counsel to make the statement that he made.

I agree entirely with the forthright statement made by the fleadh organising committee. Remember that they are volunteers and people who work for nothing. They work for the community because they see a value — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order, Members.

Mr A Maginness: They see a value in developing and enriching the community and helping young people, and part of their function is to create a cross-community interaction. Many young people from the Shankill Road, for example, have been invited to fleadh events. In June, there was a sleepover by young people in the open air to highlight the problems of homelessness in Belfast. That was a very positive thing and is the type of thing that they do. It is done on a cross-community basis. The fleadh committee have said, in a very forthright manner, that they did not accept the remarks. They said they regretted any offence caused by a sectarian comment made at the concert on Sunday night:

"It was wrong, regrettable, disappointing and should not have happened."

11.15 am

There could not be a more forthright condemnation by the fleadh committee, and I think that it is important for Members to take that on board. They further said:

"These comments do not reflect the views of the organisers or the people of Ardoyne".

I believe that that is an accurate statement. I also believe that the fleadh committee have taken on board the challenges that have arisen out of this incident. They said that they will be:

"reviewing guidelines in relation to performers and acts to ensure this does not happen again."

Finally, withdrawing all public funding for this series of events — this valuable community enterprise — would effectively punish everybody. It is a punitive step. It is disproportionate —

Mr Speaker: The Members should bring his remarks to a close.

Mr A Maginness: — and it should not happen. I believe that the people who organise this event should be encouraged and not condemned. They have taken the right steps to remedy something that was wrong.

Mr Speaker: I call Mr Ross Hussey.

Mr Hussey: Permission to remain seated, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Yes.

Mr Hussey: Thank you. Living as we do in the United Kingdom, we are fortunate to be allowed what in some countries would be regarded as the luxury of the right to free speech. We can criticise the Government, we can criticise politicians and we can expect the law to represent us all without fear or favour. I believe that Mr Allister got it right in proposing his amendment, which:

“deplores the lack of action by the investigative and prosecuting authorities in respect of the criminal offence of incitement to hatred”,

because we are entitled to protection under the law.

With that right to free speech we must also accept that there is a limit to what we can say publicly. In our society, we cannot decide to launch attacks on somebody simply because of their political affiliation, their religion, their race, their nationality or their gender. We have a duty as politicians to criticise those who launch offensive statements in public, because nobody is above the law.

I can trace my Irish roots back many generations through my mother's family and have no problem calling myself Irish. I was born in Omagh, and I am as Irish as anyone on this island. But I am a British citizen, the proud son of a Welshman — an ex-serviceman who fought for his country during the Second World War — and the grandson of a Ballybay-born British soldier who served from 1905 until 1926. There are many alive today because of the fine work of British soldiers who served here throughout the Troubles and because of the bravery of soldiers stationed here, who have responded to emergency calls when suspect devices have been abandoned by dissidents and bombs have been brought into towns and cities by those cowards.

My preamble is important because of the odious remarks made by an odious man who sings with an Irish republican group known as the Druids. I had not heard of that group before the fleadh, but I know of it now. The lead singer of the group uttered the words:

“there are still over 5,000 British soldiers parading around the streets of Ireland ... It's about time they took down their little Union Jacks, it's about time they got all their Orange comrades together, its about time they loaded up the bus and it's about time they all”

— returned —

“back to England where they came from.”

He did not use the word “returned” but another word, which I do not intend to use because you might regard it as unparliamentary.

I am an Orangeman, I am a British citizen and, as I have said, I have the right to live peacefully in Northern

Ireland, a state that is recognised in international law. The comments made by that lead singer were racist, sectarian and offensive, and the person who uttered them and his colleagues certainly did not benefit from one black penny of public money.

Some have said that the people of Ardoyne did not support those comments. The roars, cheers and yahoos that went up following those statements are an indication of what the people who were there thought. Had those comments been responded to by stony silence, you could say that the people of Ardoyne did not support them. They were not met with stony silence. They were met with cheers and roars of approval. Sectarianism, racism and sexism are all wrong, but those people shamed the fleadh and its organisers.

My understanding of the Irish language is virtually non-existent, but I understand that “fleadh” means “festival”. They are very much part of the Irish culture and, generally, are warmly received in the community, but the Druids brought shame on themselves and on Ardoyne with this vitriolic outburst.

I am not from England; I am from Tyrone. No republican has the right to suggest that I leave my birthplace because I choose British citizenship. Again, it must be remembered that the 5,000 soldiers referred to are here because we are part of the United Kingdom. That we are part of the United Kingdom is accepted by everybody in the Chamber, so we have the right to have British soldiers stationed in this part of the United Kingdom. As I said, those soldiers have provided a service. They have been present and have defused bombs left in republican areas by dissident republicans. Who would do that, if the British soldiers all went home and took their Union flags with them?

Finally, I am disappointed that some have decided to sign a petition of concern. We have had very many debates in this place about petitions of concern. I am concerned that, by signing a petition of concern, the Assembly can be seen as supporting the caustic remarks of this band. They were wrong —

Mr Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Hussey: There is no justification for blocking the House from making a reasonable conclusion. There should be a penalty for them as a lesson to others to ensure that any act that they book complies with common decency.

Mr Easton: Many Members of the Assembly and the wider public have been left shocked, hurt and bewildered by the comments made at the Ardoyne Fleadh on Sunday 24 August by a member of the Druids who said to the audience that British soldiers in Ireland should get together with their Orange comrades and go back to England. I do not want to use the other word that was included. In fact, I could not believe what I heard, and I actually had to play the YouTube video three times just to make sure that I heard what I heard. Those comments are a disgrace. As a member of the Orange Order, am I being told that I have to go and live in England? If you are one of the 5,000 soldiers based in Northern Ireland, are you seriously being told that, even though many of those soldiers are bomb disposal officers who are busy on a daily basis risking their life to deal with real bombs and hoaxes left by so-called dissident republicans? I do not believe that that is right. If I were to make comments of a similar nature about the Ancient Order of Hibernians or Irish citizens, Members from the Benches across the way would be calling for my

head, and I believe that I would be prosecuted for those comments.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Member for giving way. Just on that point, the Member will recall that, a number of months ago, we took a lecture from the deputy First Minister around how issues in east Belfast had been handled — in essence, issues about people saying that foreign nationals should go home. Would you agree, Mr Easton, that the deputy First Minister should come to the Chamber and explain why he is being so hypocritical in allowing his signature to go on a petition of concern that effectively blocks a motion that is about the same thing?

Mr Easton: I thank the Member for his intervention. I wholeheartedly agree with his comments. Maybe the deputy First Minister needs to come and explain himself.

The Community Relations Council supported this year's Ardoyne Fleadh by means of a £5,000 grant towards infrastructure costs and marketing. The grant was subject to conditions, one of which was that it should be used to support the values and aims of the Community Relations Council. The CRC will be following its usual process in these circumstances by asking the event organisers to respond to the reports to determine whether the conditions of the grant have been complied with.

The purpose of the pathfinder project scheme is to be a mechanism that can respond to needs and address urgent community relations issues. The scheme is aimed primarily at projects that seek to address difficult and contentious issues that require an immediate or innovative response. The scheme can provide support to young people where there is a significant impact on the prevention of community conflict, particularly during key times of community tension. The grant criteria are as follows: to enable groups to provide emergency diversionary activities that reduce the potential for community conflict; to support initiatives that enable immediate dialogue and discussion to take place to address contentious community relations issues; to support programmes that seek to engage with hard-to-reach groups and involve them in community relations activities; to support mediation initiatives that are aimed at addressing key community relations issues that arise unexpectedly; to support information exchange networks between community activists involved in addressing and reducing the potential for community conflict at times of heightened conflict; and to support community safety initiatives aimed to reduce the potential for community violence as a result of civil unrest. They were not to lead young people in bigoted, pro-IRA chanting and the incitement of sectarianism at a music festival.

It was also reported that the event could be heard from the Shankill and that the volume was turned up considerably at around midnight. People could clearly hear the pro-IRA songs and chanting in their homes. That was not only provocative but particularly distressing for the elderly residents and people who live in those areas. The fact that these comments were made in an interface area where people are trying to build cross-community relationships has made this even more difficult.

In my opinion, the PPS has let us down greatly by failing to prosecute for these words. The DPP should also be ashamed for defending the "no prosecutions" ruling. We are supposed to be living in a country of peace with a shared future and equality. I am beginning to have doubts

that we are. I fail to see the equality that is said to exist in this country when a band makes comments about soldiers going home and Orange members going to live in England.

I feel that the decision needs to be reviewed and future funding withdrawn from sectarian-fuelled events such as the Ardoyne Fleadh, which simply promotes hatred towards the Protestant, unionist and loyalist people. The funders were the Department of Foreign Affairs in the Republic of Ireland, DCAL, the Community Relations Council, Atlantic Philanthropies, Flax Trust and Ladbrokes. I will be personally writing to them to bring to their attention what was said at the fleadh and ask whether they are happy to have their money spent in this way.

What future do our young people have when they are being brought up and taught to hate in this way through the actions of this band? I was born in Northern Ireland, and nobody is going to tell me to move to England. I am here to stay, and so is my community.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Beidh mé ag labhairt in aghaidh an phríomh-rúin agus an chéad leasaithe agus ar son an dara ceann. I will speak against the motion and the first amendment but for the second amendment.

Fleadh Ard Eoin is like many other community festivals that have taken place over many years, often in very challenging circumstances. Indeed, Fleadh Ard Eoin has been going for 24 years now. It has attracted thousands of people from every community over the years and has enjoyed participation from all hues of political and religious opinion and none. The programme contained over 70 events that took place over the five days of the fleadh.

What happened this year at one particular performance was the subject of an investigation. Sectarian and racist comments at any event are wrong. Sectarianism at any musical or cultural event has no place.

Mr Clarke: You say that sectarianism is wrong. Would you then say that the comments of the act at that event were sectarian and were wrong?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Ó hOisín: Thank you, a Cheann Comhairle. I was going to get to that further on, if you had waited.

The implication that the Orange Order, with its unique origins on this island, should go home contains the same implication as the so-called 'Famine Song' contains, which says that many Scottish people of Irish origin should return to this island forthwith. Both are wrong. That said, republicans have a right to strive for a united Ireland and the peaceful removal of over 5,000 British Army personnel from this island. This can now be done peacefully and democratically.

The motion calls for the removal of funding from the fleadh because of this unfortunate and widely condemned incident. It was widely condemned by the Minister and by the organisers. Will those who tabled the motion also call for funded loyalist bands to halt playing provocative tunes outside places of worship or breaking Parades Commission determinations?

Over 20 years ago, I was in Germany — East Germany, to be exact — and I was out with a group of German friends of mine. We turned a wrong corner and were met by some graffiti that read, "Deutschland ist Deutschland.

Ausländer 'raus". Roughly translated, it means, "Germany is Germany. Outsiders out".

I saw my friends' hearts drop. I saw the disappointment, anger and concern in their faces, because they belong to a generation whose parents came through the worst excesses of the Third Reich. I had that same feeling years ago, when I saw, in this city and across parts of this island, signs such as "Poles out" or "blacks out". I put that in the same category as seeing "kill all Taigs" or "kill all Huns". I abhor that and think that the burning of national flags, of whatever colour, religious symbols or political materials, including election posters, is wrong. I condemn it and wish that others would do the same.

11.30 am

In south Derry, we saw a coded message come across that contained the numbers five, seven, one, one. It took some time to work out —

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member will know that I give some latitude in and around the business of the House, but I am afraid that the Member just might be moving away from the motion.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I was trying to make the point that there are many places across this island, and particularly in the North, where there are issues with symbolic flags, parades and offensive language. I do not want to single out any, but some that I experienced this summer included Carrick, Coleraine, Limavady, Larne and elsewhere. We were told all summer that Derry was different, and, to a certain extent, it was. However, we saw the ritual burning of flags, symbols and emblems at a number of events in Derry, and there was no condemnation. To use a biblical reference: there are some who look for a speck in others' eyes while missing the beam in their own.

Nelson McCausland said that it was time to move on, but that requires leadership on all our parts. The motion also states that it is time to stop funding. I just wonder what criteria could be applied to that. I therefore refute the motion and the first amendment and call for support for the second amendment.

Mr Wells: Imagine a state-controlled school being used for a loyalist band concert and several thousand people, perhaps some a bit the worse for drink, listened to speeches calling for all the Hibernians and all the Irish to get out of Northern Ireland and go back to where they came from, to go and live in the Irish Republic. No one would regard that as an acceptable comment. There would be an outcry. The police would be in like a shot. There would be an investigation. The DPP would rush to scrutinise the file and ensure that those responsible were prosecuted.

Mr Campbell: I thank the Member for giving way. I am glad that he used that analogy, which was accurate and to the point here, because people are talking about music being played where it should not be. This was an attack and assertion that people should leave where they were born and where they live, and it was used in the context of a hate-filled speech. Does the Member agree with me that not only is the analogy that he paints correct but the condemnation, welcome as it is, needs to be followed now by action to ensure that it does not happen again?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr Wells: Of course, the only way that that action can mean anything is if public money is withdrawn from this so-called cross-community Ardoyne festival.

There would have been an immediate reaction. Let us be honest with everyone here today —

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Member for giving way. As someone who can hear from his home the bile and hate that comes from the last night — the rebel night — at the fleadh, I assure him and the House that the last night at the Ardoyne Fleadh is in no way a cross-community event. No one could seriously argue that that is the case.

Mr Wells: Indeed, the honourable Member for North Belfast is absolutely correct. What let the cat out of the bag on this occasion was the electronic media. This has been going on for years, but there has never been the evidence to prove it. Unfortunately, the Druids, who, I understand, are from the Irish Republic, rather misjudged the situation and put on their website material that they put to people in that school. Therefore, the cat was out of the bag, and we got a real sense of what the Ardoyne festival is.

Let us look at this so-called cross-community event. It was launched in a GAA club. Well, that is bound to have attracted a lot of the area's minority Protestant community. It was launched in a GAA club and lauded by 'An Phoblacht', the IRA newspaper. It had that well-known cross-community band, the Wolfe Tones, which, when they came to Downpatrick, performed one of the most disgraceful concerts ever held in the leisure centre. It was nothing but a front for republican terrorism. So the Wolfe Tones have form. Then, of course, we have the Druids. What did the organisers think that they were doing when they booked the Druids? All you had to do was to go to their website and read it long before the event was held to see exactly what the Druids' *raison d'être* is. They are a republican nationalist band; they make no bones about it, so you book them for the main event at a so-called cross-community event. The reality is that it has all the similarities of what was going on in west Belfast when a certain lady from south Down used to run it. It was a waste of public money; it was an absolute waste of £5,000 of Community Relations Council money and, of course, DCAL money.

The issue that has not been dealt with adequately this morning is this: what was it doing in a school funded by the taxpayer? I have never been to Holy Cross boys' primary school, but why on earth was a concert of that nature held in a state-funded primary school? Can you imagine if that happened in any state-controlled school? There would be pandemonium. The board would have an emergency meeting, those responsible would be told never to let it happen again, and there would be an immediate investigation. Immediately after the event, the honourable Member for North Antrim Mr Mervyn Storey called for the CCMS to investigate. What is happening there? Where is the condemnation from that authority? What is going on? Where was the board of governors? Where was the principal? Where were the staff, when they knew full well what the event was going to be like? There was nothing cross-community that night. There is a minority Protestant community in the Ardoyne, and I am sure that not one of them was at the event. Had they attended, they would have

had to leave very quickly because of the bile and hatred being heaped on the Protestant minority in that way.

What is the SDLP playing at? The SDLP, quite rightly, condemn what went on, but it is not prepared to back a motion that has teeth and says, "If you're going to behave like this, you will not receive a penny of public money".

Mr Copeland: Will the Member give way?

Mr Wells: Certainly.

Mr Copeland: The word "money" has repeatedly raised its head. I understand that the organising committee derives public funds and that it spends them engaging that particular group, which is based in the Irish Republic. I presume that that group did not travel here for free; the group will have received public money. Can we have an assurance or an examination so that, despite what they have done, any public money they received is taxed either in Northern Ireland or in the South? Or was it money paid in a brown paper bag? We do not know.

Mr Wells: Yes. There is, indeed, a need for a full investigation as to where every penny of public money went into that so-called cross-community festival.

Also, Ladbrokes has shops —

Mr Speaker: The Member should bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Wells: — in many parts of Northern Ireland. Is it going to continue to fund what is clearly a sectarian Ardoyne festival, or is it going to pull its money as well? I hope that it does.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I support the comments made by my colleagues Gerry Kelly, Cathal Ó hOisín and Alban Maginness, and I distance myself from any comments that are sectarian. As an Irish republican, the Irish republic that I am working to build is an Irish republic of Catholic, Protestant, Dissenter and the new communities that have come to make their homes on our lovely island.

I note the leadership shown by the fleadh committee, and I pay tribute to it. It is very publicly challenging the comments made. I also note the comments from the Benches opposite. It is slightly hypocritical because this is an old agenda. Jim Wells referred to me as the lady from south Down; he did not say my name. Jim Wells and other Members will know that I was the director of Féile an Phobail for a number of years. I was also the chair of the Belfast St Patrick's Carnival. For the years I was involved in both of those, I saw the agenda that many of the people opposite were personally involved in, including Nelson McCausland, as a Belfast city councillor, and other former Ministers from the DUP and the UUP. I noted how often and how consistently they voted against funding for children's festivals if they had an Irish name like Draíocht. I noticed how often they voted against funding for the summer festivals, not just in Ardoyne but in west Belfast, south Belfast, north Belfast, New Lodge — Lóiste Nua — and all the different parts of the city. So let us not pretend that this is not an old, tired agenda.

I join Gerry Kelly, Alban Maginness and Cathal Ó hOisín in stating that good work is done in some of the most disadvantaged areas in the city. The reason that many of those festivals and féilte came into being was to avoid very difficult situations that arose from precisely the toxic

mixture of drink, soldiers armed to the teeth, the old RUC, and children and others getting killed by plastic bullets. So, what happened? These festivals changed the dynamic in the city, and the least that I ask people on the opposite Benches to do is to understand that in the same way as I want to support grass-roots festivals in all areas of the city. Indeed, during my time as director of Féile an Phobail, I went out of my way to reach out to the Shankill Festival and all festivals. Also, it is important to put on record that all the festivals are reaching out, trying to work together and trying to deal with some very difficult issues. So, let us get real about the funding of féilte and festivals throughout the North of Ireland, and let us understand —

Mr Wells: Will the Member give way?

Ms Ruane: I will. I will give way to my colleague from South Down.

Mr Wells: I apologise for calling the honourable Member a lady. Will she accept that, for many years, this concert had form? This is not the first time that the concluding concert at the Ardoyne festival was used to heap militant republican bile upon the Protestant community. It is not the first time; let us hope that it will be the last.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Ms Ruane: I hear the Member's comments, but I have to say that he also has form: making attacks on things to do with Irish culture and language. I think that we all need to understand that we live in a very divided society, so we now need to respect each other's right and celebrate diversity and difference. Also, while we are doing that, remember that many people from different countries, about whom my colleague Cathal Ó hOisín spoke eloquently, are making their home here, and, together, we need to send out messages of welcome and support; not messages of racism and hate. I pledge to work with all of you to build much more intercultural communities in which all feel safe.

Beidh mé ag labhairt in aghaidh an phríomh-rúin agus leasaithe uimhir a haon, ach beidh mé ag tabhairt tacaíochta don leasú ón Alliance Party. I will vote against the motion and amendment No 1, but I will support the Alliance amendment.

Mr Attwood: Mr Wells asked:

"What is the SDLP playing at?"

I want to answer that question by, first, acknowledging that I have no doubt that unionism's hurt and upset at what happened are genuine, because the hurt and upset in nationalism at what happened are genuine. I want to put on the record that I accept that Mr Wells is upset, as I was upset and as everybody should be upset. However, the answer to Mr Wells's question is in his speech: he takes this incident and goes down the traditional route of the politics of demonisation. He named the fleadh, the GAA and the CCMS, which is responsible for the school, and demonised each and all of them on the basis of what was not just a reckless remark — I think that it was a deliberate remark by the man in that band — made in response to the people in that hall.

That is what is wrong, Mr Wells, and that is why the SDLP is right. You do not take the comments of that individual and the response of that audience and then demonise those in the fleadh who are well intentioned, or the people in the GAA, the schools estate and the CCMS. That is why

we are taking the position that we are taking. You do not demonise the good because of the actions of the bad. That is what is wrong with this debate.

11.45 am

What is also wrong with this debate is that it says to nationalism and republicanism that, when unionism takes offence, its response is disproportionate, calling for withdrawal of funding. It also says that its response is selective, because it does not apply the same standards to other expressions of cultural identity, and it draws the conclusion that all your cultural expression is right and proper and that that of others is somehow in error.

Mr Campbell: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: I will let you in in a second.

That is what Mr Nelson McCausland said. He talked about the recent Troubles inflicted on the country by the IRA — not by the loyalists or by the state; just by the IRA. He talked about the culture of songs and that sort of event, referring to the Druids, without talking about the culture of songs, other events, murals and the sectarianism of other parts of this society. You cannot have the politics of demonisation on one hand and be selective on the other. I will give way.

Mr Campbell: I thank the Member for giving way. I thought that some of our contributions on this side were trying to show the extent of any similar analogy on the loyalist side, but the Member seems to have missed that. Is this not a rightful condemnation of people who say that the other side should “get out”? That is effectively what the speaker in the Druids band said from the stage — that we, people from Ulster, should leave Ulster and go to England. If anybody says that about people in the Irish Republic, it is equally wrong and to be condemned, and if any action can be taken by the police and the prosecution service, they should do that. Does the Member not see the equality there?

Mr Attwood: Yes, I will accept that equality, but if you read the Hansard report, especially Mr McCausland's contribution and especially, unfortunately, that of Mr Wells, you will see demonisation, selective commentary and an incomplete analysis of what the problem was on that night.

What was the problem on that night? One thing that Mr McCausland said, which I partially agreed with, was that it romanticised violence. I accept and agree with that point. That is because, unfortunately, what was said that night and the way that some people responded may be their view of politics and history on this island, but it is not the view of history of the vast majority of people on this island. That is because the violence of the IRA was anti-national and anti-democratic, it was used when there was a constitutional alternative, it divided the people of Ireland more than they ever had been before, and it carried an enormous personal and human cost.

What we need to do in this society is not just walk away from the politics of demonisation and selective condemnation but move away from the politics of revisionism that glorifies the violence of anybody in any uniform who inflicted violence against the wishes of the people of this island. My offence at the event of that night was much less about the man from the Druids and what he said. It was that young people and generations were again being taught that somehow the violence of the few, which

was endorsed by 2% of the people and inflicted against the wishes of the people of this island for 40 years, destroyed lives and the ambition of the people of this island, divided the people of this island one from the other and put back unity by many a generation —

Mr Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Attwood: — was legitimate and valid. Those who cheered that night are being led down a false narrative of our history. That is what we should defeat.

Mr Elliott: We have heard quite a lot today about things that are not relevant to the north Belfast fleadh. We have heard about murals, signs and provocative issues. They are all around Northern Ireland — of course they are — and they have been for generations.

Let me make it clear from the start that I accept that not everything in Northern Ireland is totally integrated. People have their own thoughts and views on issues and have their own particular aspects to celebrate. The fleadh, by and large, would be regarded — I am open to somebody telling me that I am wrong — by the unionist community as a broadly nationalist event just as Orange Order events are accepted as broadly Orange/Protestant/unionist events. Let us be clear about that and have an acceptance of that.

Let us get back to the crux of the particular event in north Belfast at Ardoyne. I have heard here that there has been condemnation from the committee of the fleadh organisers. Let us see how strong that condemnation is. Has the committee withheld the payment that the Druids were due for their appearance? Taking that action would show a real commitment. It would show a real commitment if they guaranteed that the band would not come back to the festival. There is much more that could be done than the condemnation and regret story that the committee has come out with. It must go much deeper than that, because if it does not there will be no confidence from the unionist community — I am trying to be as fair as possible — for any further support or funding.

As Mr Wells indicated, there have probably been actions like this in the past that have not been broadcast. The one thing that I would disagree with Mr Wells on is his view that it was “misjudged”. That is a test, because I am not so sure that it was misjudged. How much of it was misjudged and how much of it was deliberate. How much of it was misjudged or deliberate from the Druids? How much of a misjudgement was it for the organisers of the event to invite the Druids, because I am sure that they knew what they were likely to get?

Mr A Maginness: Will the Member give way?

Mr Elliott: Yes, I am happy to.

Mr A Maginness: I quote from the concluding remarks of the public statement by the chair of the committee:

“The organising committee of the Fleadh will be reviewing our guidelines in relation to performers and acts to ensure that this does not happen again.”

That is an indication of the intent of the organising committee to take effective action.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Member for that clarification. However, it does not go far enough: it does not say that they have taken any action against the Druids, it does not

say that they will not invite them again, and it does not say that they will ensure that they will not invite bands of a similar nature back to the event. That is why there are a lot of unanswered questions.

I have already put in freedom of information requests to the Community Relations Council and DCAL, asking for information on the applications for funding and on what criteria had to be met. None of that information has yet been forthcoming, but I hope that I will get it in the near future to see whether any criteria were broken. That is a very important issue: if funding is going to an event or an organisation, they need to ensure that they meet the criteria.

Very quickly, I want to move on to Mr Allister's amendment.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for giving way. I appreciate the efforts that he is making to be fair and rational in his contribution. Does he acknowledge that the original motion prejudices the process of the organisations reviewing whether those conditions have been breached. Is he considering supporting the motion?

Mr Elliott: Of course I am considering supporting the motion, but the reality is that, if there can be a proof otherwise, it is up to the organisers of the event next year to prove it. The burden of proof must go on to the organisers, not the funding body.

I move on quickly to Mr Allister's amendment. It is unfortunate that the police and the Public Prosecution Service made an assessment of only one particular clause in legislation. I have met the Public Prosecution Service, so I have that at first hand. I have explained that I do not believe that they gave a wide enough remit, look and assessment of the legislation itself. We were able to point out a number of potential breaches of legislation. That is up to the Public Prosecution Service and the police to do, if they want to take those points on board. I am pleased that the police have now indicated that there will be a wider investigation and review.

Mr McNarry: I actually received an invitation to this event. Fortunately, I had a prior engagement, but imagine how I would have felt being there, trapped in a crowd belting out hatred against me whilst I sat alongside them. From the footage of the audience participation it is clear to anyone that the audience needed no encouragement to demonstrate hatred. The hatred was obvious, and it came out naturally. It was naked sectarianism — anti-British bile roared with approval by an audience that enjoyed every minute of the abuse directed at soldiers and members of the Orange Order. How on earth was that scene on film anything to do with community relations, when, as a result and as is abundantly clear from this debate, it has set back relations? Funding an outward expression of hatred cannot be the role of the Community Relations Council or any other funder.

I am one of the Orangemen whom the crowd begged to be sent back to England where we came from. Yes, I am a proud unionist, and I recognise the effects, in life lost and limb risked here in my name by those serving in Her Majesty's armed forces — the same Her Majesty whom Martin McGuinness desperately wanted to shake hands with. Let me say that I am going nowhere. I did not come from England, but I have Orange colleagues who do. I also have many colleagues who live in England, Scotland, Wales and across the free world and belong to the Orange Institution. There is no doubt that the apologists — we

have heard them — for the "Kick the Orange" and "Kick the army" bands will defend that audience. Tell me this: what is the defence? Do the excusers mean that calls to kick the Orange and kick the army were offensive or regrettable but not incitement? Draw the line, Members, between the difference: offensive, highly regrettable but not incitement. Please, do not try to insult us by pretending that it was all just a bit of fun. There is no pretence. It was sick fun at other people's expense, and, much more, it was meant.

I am the only leader of a local party in the House who is a member of the Orange Institution. I am proud to be so and proud to be a past assistant Grand Master of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland. I will and do stand up for Orangeism. There is not an ounce of hatred in my head or in my heart, not a smidgen of inciting anyone nor a desire to cause offence in the practice of my belonging to the Orange Institution. There is no slippage on my part from adhering to the qualifications of being an Orangeman. I am, in all that, a typical, ordinary Orangeman, and the very idea that a publicly funded body would cover the expense of an event mired in disgrace over its choice of entertainment affronts me as I am sure it does Mr Hussey, who I will give way to.

12.00 noon

Mr Hussey: Thank you. Reference has been made several times to the British Army. Indeed, Ms Ruane made reference to it as well. Do you agree that many soldiers who serve bravely in the British Army are actually from the Irish Republic? Where are they going to go home to?

Mr Speaker: The Member has an added minute.

Mr McNarry: I take that point. It is well made. I agree that there is a long history of Irishmen, before this state was founded, serving loyally and that that continues to this day.

I heard a reference to Irish culture at the end of Ms Ruane's piece. The offence to me and many like me at the event actually showed the door to me for Irish culture. It said, "Don't come in. You are not welcome. If you happen to trespass in here, this is what we want to sing about you". Irish culture may be very fine, but let us share it and recognise our own culture as well.

Mr Lunn: I support our amendment. We will oppose the motion and amendment No 1. I am pleased to see that Sinn Féin and the SDLP are prepared to support our amendment. That is positive.

The motion has come about because of sectarian comments made by a member of a band from Kildare that, somebody said, has form in this area. That is putting it mildly. It has considerable form in this area, and the organisers of the Ardoyne Fleadh would have known what they were getting for what Mr McCausland referred to as Irish rebel night on the last night of an otherwise relatively uneventful and successful event.

Mr Wells: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: Go on then.

Mr Wells: Does the Member agree that not only did the Druids have form, but the event had form for many years. With anything billed as an Irish rebel night, there is something in that description that might give you a clue as to what is going on. That should have no part in a cross-community festival.

Mr Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Lunn: I thought that I probably would achieve an extra minute, Mr Speaker.

The band went back to Kildare after causing mayhem and apologised. I use that word in its loosest sense. They apparently said that the remarks were taken out of context and they did not intend any offence. How you can take out of context a request or demand that the legitimate population or a section of it from Northern Ireland should eff off back to England where they belong and say that that is capable of interpretation is beyond me. It is pretty explicit. I utterly condemn what the band has said, but I also acknowledge that the organisers of the Ardoyne Fleadh have been unequivocal in their condemnation of what was said —

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: No — as has everybody else involved right round the House today. I listened initially to Mr Maginness's remarks on the radio on the day after the event, and the condemnation was absolutely clear. The band's apology was entirely mischievous. They knew exactly what they were doing and knew what the reaction would be. I imagine that the band members are sitting down in Kildare now probably with a pint and enjoying themselves hugely, especially at the fact that they have created the situation where the Assembly has to debate something that, to some people, is not quite as important or worthy of our attention as it is to other people.

I want to talk about Mr Allister's amendment. I think that there is a misunderstanding here. The PSNI has looked at the situation and discussed it with the DPP and the PPS, and the initial impression that it got was that it was not worth pursuing a prosecution.

Following further complaints — particularly, I think, from people around us here — the police have had to go through the full procedure and prepare a file that will be passed to the appropriate authorities. A decision will be made on whether there is grounds for prosecution. To me, that does not constitute lack of action. It is unfortunate that they had to be prodded to do the right thing, but they are doing it. For that reason, we cannot accept Mr Allister's amendment.

The motion talks about withdrawal of all public funding from this event. I wonder where we go with that. This is one event. Effectively, it is one evening of one event, an event that has been running for 24 years. I believe that it has largely been uneventful, if I can say so. I am looking at Mr Wells, who would probably not agree. It is a well-established, mainly cultural event. Are we going to seriously think about withdrawing funding from any events that I might call "single-identity events", where there might be a sectarian display of some kind or sectarian comments or singing? Are we talking about bonfires or posters on bonfires? An awful lot of events are sponsored by Departments in this country, including the West Belfast Festival, which has been commented on today. I would include the various attempts at Orangefest, Orange outreach and Orange and loyalist bands. You cannot really look at them one by one, then pick one out and say that, on the basis of one misdemeanour, we will not —

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: Yes, go on.

Mr Beggs: As a member of the Orange Order, I ask him to explain how he compares Orange events with this fleadh and this outrage. I am offended.

Mr Lunn: I compare them in their attempts to reach out across the community. That is the comparison. The Ardoyne Fleadh has a cross-community aspect to it.

Mr Wells: Where is it?

Mr Lunn: Mr Kelly referred to it. Mr McCausland has participated in panel discussions. There have been cross-community events involving children during the fleadh, mainly around arts and crafts. At least it is an attempt to bring the community together.

Mr Speaker: The Member must bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Lunn: I will finish with the petition of concern, Mr Speaker. It really does not matter a hoot, does it? It will not change the balance of votes in the House by one iota. Whatever the House thinks, it will vote. I really do not care that there is a petition of concern or otherwise.

Mr Allister: Most contributors have, in one way or another, agreed that the words used were, at least, abusive and insulting. Many suggest that they were much more besides. That is good. The surprising thing is that then, when it comes to the vote, some of the people who profess to take that stance will vote against any rebuke whatsoever in respect of the participants in the fleadh.

Mr Clarke: Will the Member give way on that point?

Mr Allister: I will give way very quickly.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he agree that maybe the Alliance Party's attempt here is to protect the chairman of the CRC, who is a former member, if not an existing member, of the Alliance Party? Is it not an attempt on its part to save his face?

Mr Allister: I cannot really comment on the machinations of that.

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: I might deal with your comments later, so perhaps then.

I want to pick up on the comments made by some Members. Mr Attwood rebuked unionists in the House, saying that the response to the remarks had been disproportionate. Mr Attwood fails to have any appreciation of the raw nerve that those remarks touch for many in the unionist community. Those remarks are an articulation of "Brits out". For decades in the Province, "Brits out" was delivered down the barrel of a gun. That is why unionists in this community are sensitive when they are told, "Brits out": we know what it is code for. We know what those who were chanting and dancing and exalting were supporting.

Mr Attwood: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: Yes.

Mr Attwood: I accept that the relentless validation by republicans of IRA terror is deeply alienating to unionism, as it is to us, which is the point that I was making at the end of my speech. My comment, as you will see if you check Hansard, was that it would be disproportionate to withdraw funding. It was not that the sense of offence was disproportionate; it was that to withdraw funding from the Ardoyne Fleadh would be disproportionate.

Mr Allister: Mr Attwood's answer to the offence caused by the fleadh is to do nothing. That, I think, is a commentary in itself. Doing nothing would be disproportionate to the offence caused.

Mr Maginness rebuked me for suggesting that the matter had been swept under the carpet by the prosecuting authorities. Has Mr Maginness or anyone else ever heard of a decision on a prosecutory matter being taken within seven days? Of course there was an attempt to sweep it under the carpet. Then it emerges that the DPP was consulted without even the presentation of a file. What does that speak to but an urgency to sweep it under the carpet? Now we are told by the Alliance Party, "Oh well, don't bother. Don't be disturbed about that. They are going to put that right". Are they? What did the Chief Constable say? His response was this: "Within a few hours we could put together a file". That is not a proper investigation. As I laboured during my earlier remarks, once you have a reasonable suspicion that an incitement to hatred crime has been committed, the bounden obligation is to arrest and to question. That cannot be done within a few hours. So, even yet, in the words of the Chief Constable, there does not seem to be a manifestation of intent for a proper investigation. That is why the criticism in my amendment is more than justified, and why I urge it on the House.

Mr Maginness said that there had been a proper investigation. Then, in the next breath, he said that we did not know the detail of the file; in fact, we know that there was no file. How could it ever be a proper investigation? Patently it was not. Patently there was a great urgency to do exactly what I said: sweep it under the carpet. Some in the House want to sweep it under the carpet. That is why, for all the platitudes, many in the House will vote against the motion and against the first amendment.

Speaking of platitudes, Miss Ruane told us that she condemns all sectarianism. I have listened to Miss Ruane many times, and I have yet to hear her condemn the murderous sectarianism in the murders of the IRA. Not once has she condemned that manifestation of sectarianism. Rather, she continues to justify it. So much for the remarks of Miss Ruane.

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for giving way. The Member said that the Alliance Party was going to vote against any rebuke whatsoever in relation to this heinous sectarian comment. That is obviously inaccurate. We have also been accused of being linked to decision-making in relation to the Community Relations Council. A simple check —

Mr Speaker: Order. Mr Allister's time is gone.

Mr Humphrey: I thank those who have contributed to the debate. Franklin Jones once observed:

"Nothing makes you more tolerant of a neighbour's noisy party than being there".

The recent performance by the Druids as part of the Ardoyne Fleadh showed that such a proposition would not be possible for a Protestant or unionist living in north Belfast in the vicinity of the event. Indeed, the performance on the stage made it clear that those so-called entertainers thought that the unionist community of that area, along with the soldiers and those who are Orange brethren, should clear off and take their Union flag with them.

12.15 pm

Many Members made reference to the speech and the direct words used by the so-called entertainer. They were anti-Orange and anti-British; they were sectarian, hate-filled, racist, bile remarks, and they should be, and have been, condemned. Let me make it very clear: I am a proud Ulsterman; I am a proud Orangeman; I am British; I am from north Belfast; my community and I are going nowhere.

There are those who talk about Her Majesty's forces being in Northern Ireland. I have to say this: there is a certain irony in this whole thing when those people come from the Republic of Ireland. Her Majesty's forces are garrisoned in Northern Ireland, as they are across the kingdom — as they should be — to protect people from terrorism, the very terrorism that was being glorified at this event. I have spoken to the grand secretary of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, and I know that he is pursuing the issue because of the offensive remarks that were made towards those of us who are Orangemen. To think that my Orange culture is branded as being intolerant.

Since the comments became available online, the organisers of the event have been at pains to point out that they do not represent the views of the republican community, as articulated by Mr Maginness and Mr Kelly, in that area. As others have said, the enthusiastic cheering and hollering that took place as those remarks were being delivered in a school's grounds by the thousands of people surrounding the platform do not bear that out. The truth is that it is merely a symptom of the much wider, undiluted, unrestrained and unreconstructed hatred towards the Protestant community that emanates from certain sources within that community. It is chiefly directed at the Orange Institution by groups with dissident connections such as GARC.

Having listened to this debate, we have tacit endorsement from Sinn Féin and the SDLP for these actions, because there is refusal to have sanctions applied to those involved in organising it. Already, I can hear the holier-than-thou commentators and politicians asking how dare I make such comments about the community in north Belfast. Unlike most of those commentators and politicians, I live there. I happen to live in north Belfast and have done so all of my life. I know the reality of what it is like on the ground in the constituency. The hurt that Mr Attwood talked about is absolutely palpable. People are coming into my office, and people are stopping me on the street. Members across the way can laugh, but that is the reality. If you are serious about building an Ireland of equals, you should listen to what I am saying.

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Humphrey: Surely.

Mr Lyttle: Does the Member agree that one does not have to live in north Belfast to share the same amount of resentment and anger in relation to the sectarian comments that were made from the platform?

Mr Humphrey: I will come to the Alliance Party in a moment. Emotions are extremely raw within the Protestant community in north Belfast, for a variety of reasons, ranging from the ludicrous determination of the Parades Commission through to the sectarian decision to remove the nation's flag from the City Hall, which you played a part in. The performance of the Druids was merely the latest in

a long line of calculated insults on rebel night and acts of aggression to emanate from this particular quarter.

What message does it send to the people I represent? Mr Maginness talks about the chairman. Who is the chairman? Is Eddie Copeland the chairman? That is the same Eddie Copeland who unveiled a memorial plaque in Flax Street to the murderer of the nine people who were killed in the Shankill bombing.

Mr Wells: The Member will also be interested to hear that, in addition to the Druids, this year's fleadh had the Fianna Irish rebel band. I am sure we would love to see a video of what went on during that concert.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Member for that contribution. How are we on these Benches — those of us who live in or represent north Belfast, or anyone else for that matter — to take seriously the assertion that this is an event that is about building community spirit rather than directing hatred to Protestants and unionists, Orangemen and British soldiers when the organisers, point blank, refuse to condemn the attack on Her Majesty's forces who live here, many of whom are local people protecting communities?

Members of Belfast City Council's licensing committee asked the organisers who, incidentally, have held the event illegally, without a licence, for years, if they were prepared to turn the sound down or to end the event earlier in the evening. What sort of message does it send out when Sinn Féin, the SDLP and Alliance vote to agree the licence anyway? It is no surprise that Sinn Féin is backing Mr Copeland and his committee — birds of a feather flock together — but questions do have to be asked of the SDLP and Alliance.

Then again, I listened to Mr Lunn's summing-up speech for Alliance in which he said that it is a mainly cultural event and that this is not a big deal really. I will tell you that for the people whom I represent and the community in which I live, it is a big deal.

Mr Lunn: Will the Member give way?

Mr Humphrey: No.

Those of us who live in north Belfast know that the SDLP has been, in recent years, seeking to out-green Sinn Féin, but what of Alliance? Why does a party that preens itself in public on its cross-community credentials vote in City Hall for such a thing to happen and agree the licence? I hope that the Alliance Party will review its decision when the licence is before the committee next year.

It is not for today to hear the usual sermonising from Alliance Members about both sides being as bad as each other. The fact is that the Druids would not have been on stage had Alliance and the SDLP not voted to give the licence. The response to the ensuing uproar over the Druids' comments from organisers and Sinn Féin was the classic political non-apology. They said sorry for the comments in so far as they related to Orangemen but defended them in so far as they related to Her Majesty's forces and soldiers. What about Orangemen who are soldiers? Does the apology apply to them? Why apologise for comments about Orangemen when the comments are actually much broader than that? What the performer actually said was, "Orange comrades". That is a much wider category of people than members of the Orange Institution. It encompasses Orangemen, the Orange family, their friends and supporters — 750,000 of whom are out

on the streets across this country on 12 July. In other words, the entire Orange tradition in Northern Ireland.

In the context of a community like mine where Orangemen are, daily, being denied their legitimate rights, it does not take a fool to understand just how incendiary those remarks are. Having lost ground to the dissidents in Ardoyne for some time, I suspect that senior members of Sinn Féin were actually pleased about the opportunity presented by the Druids. After all, they got to say offensive things about Her Majesty's forces that perhaps Sinn Féin has decided, politically, not to say in recent years.

Serious questions have to be asked and answered by DCAL, the Community Relations Council, the Department of Foreign Affairs in the Irish Republic and CCMS. The Community Relations Council's role in Northern Ireland is to promote a peaceful and fair society based on reconciliation and mutual trust. It was formed in 1990 and was set up:

"to promote better community relations between Protestants and Catholics ... and, equally, to promote recognition of cultural diversity."

Well, we will see what actions it takes in the coming days and weeks.

The fleadh's final night is something that I have witnessed and listened to for many, many years. The sectarian bile that comes from the so-called community festival is just disgusting. For years, grossly offensive, sectarian, racist speeches have peddled hatred and division against my community and wider society in Northern Ireland.

To conclude, this event has proven through repeated breaches of rules and through more recent events that it does not merit public funding, whether from council, Government here or, indeed, a foreign Government. I commend the motion to the House.

On behalf of the DUP, I have to say that we will accept Mr Allister's amendment, because, despite what Mr Maginness said, the debacle around the original file produced for the PPS was a disgrace. Only when pressure was applied from party colleagues of mine and others was a second file put forward to the PPS.

Mr Lyttle: Will the Member give way?

Mr Humphrey: Serious questions must be answered by the police and the PPS —

Mr Lyttle: [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. The Member should not persist. Order.

Mr Humphrey: — around the issue. A party delegation from the DUP will meet the Chief Constable on Thursday, because confidence in the police and in the Public Prosecution Service has been undermined by this debacle. It is very clear and Members can live in an ideal world all they want, but, on the ground, —

Mr Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Humphrey: — that is the reality in north Belfast, across this city and across Northern Ireland. I commend the motion.

Mr Speaker: Once again, before I put the Question on amendment No 1, I remind Members that if it is made, I will not put the Question on amendment No 2.

Question put, That amendment No 1 be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 42; Noes 42.

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Copeland, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Hussey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kinahan, Mr I McCrea, Mr McGimpsey, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr G Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Allister and Mr McNarry.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr McCallister, Mr F McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Milne, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Ms Ruane and Mr Ó hOisín.

Question accordingly negated.

Question put, That amendment No 2 be made.

Mr Speaker: I have been advised by party Whips that, in accordance with Standing Order 27(1A)(b), there is an agreement that we can dispense with the three minutes and move straight to the Division.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 44; Noes 42.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr McCallister, Mr F McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mrs Cochrane and Mr Dickson.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Copeland, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Hussey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kinahan, Mr I McCrea, Mr McGimpsey, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan,

Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr G Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That this Assembly notes with grave concern the remarks made by the Druids and the leading of young people in pro-IRA chanting at the recent Ardoyne Fleadh; denounces sectarianism of any kind; and calls on the Executive to work to ensure that all publicly funded events remain free from sectarianism or hatred of any kind and to implement measures to ensure such events remain open and shared for everyone.

Mr Speaker: The Business Committee has arranged to meet immediately after the lunchtime suspension. I propose, therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm, when the first item of business will be Question Time.

The sitting was suspended at 12.47 pm.

*On resuming (Mr Principal Deputy Speaker
[Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair) —*

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Social Development

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Ms Anna Lo is not in her place.

Commercial Business Funding

2. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister for Social Development whether departmental funding can be used to establish a commercial business that would compete with private enterprise providing the same or similar service. (AQO 6506/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development):

You will be aware that, over recent years, my Department has invested significant amounts in order to support the regeneration of Enniskillen town centre and support local businesses. That funding has not been used to establish any commercial business. Approval for a branding, marketing and advertising campaign for Enniskillen town centre was endorsed unanimously by Fermanagh district councillors.

The development of the Enjoy Enniskillen website was one element of a package of actions aimed at highlighting Enniskillen's role as a tourist destination and market town. Key elements of the project included adding vitality and vibrancy to the town, strengthening the strong independent retail offering, promoting Enniskillen's unique identity as an inland town, and maximising the town's tourism potential in order to make the most of its physical assets and geographical location.

The development of the brand "Enniskillen — A Place Apart" required an online presence. That website showcases Enniskillen town centre and gives a flavour, through images, of what the town has to offer in terms of attractions, services, events, arts, culture, history and heritage. It is appropriate to include images of services such as shopping as they are a key part of what visitors to Enniskillen will want and need. It was not designed to compete with any existing business or shopping directories.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that answer. He strayed into the issues around Enniskillen that were not in my question, but which are of significant help. Does the Minister have a specific policy that does not allow funding from his Department to compete directly with a commercial business?

Mr McCausland: That comes down to the question of what constitutes a commercial business and what constitutes competition. I am sure that the Member would agree that when Fermanagh District Council unanimously agreed, as a council, that having a website of this type was the right approach, the decision was taken to support them. That is the specific example that the Member raised previously.

As to whether there is competition, there will be various opinions. I am not aware of any specific policy, but then I

am not sure and do not accept that there is competition in this case. I understand that the Member may not want to go fully into all the details of that particular case, but I think that there is a link between the two websites.

Budget Cuts: South Antrim

3. **Mr Clarke** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the effect his Department's budget cuts will have on South Antrim. (AQO 6507/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department is currently considering a number of options to manage the effect of the budget cuts. It is too early at this juncture to determine to what extent the present budget cuts will affect the south Antrim area in particular.

Mr Clarke: I thank the Minister for his answer, although it is vague on detail for South Antrim. What effect will the ongoing problems with the Budget have on the totality of his Department?

Mr McCausland: The Member raises an issue that is very much on my mind and, I am sure, on the minds of a number of other Ministers. The fact is that a budget cut of 2.1% was imposed as a result of the June monitoring round, which represented a cut of £13.5 million for the Department.

Work is well advanced on the upcoming October monitoring round. Current indications are that that will produce a further 2.3% cut, therefore resulting in a total cut, over June and October, of £29 million for the year. That is bound to have an impact in South Antrim and, indeed, other constituencies. It will also have an impact in a whole range of areas.

I will mention here areas in South Antrim in which we have invested in the past year, 2013-14. In housing and urban renewal, for example, we invested £1.9 million in new social housing; £1.7 million in planned maintenance services; £1.3 million in urban regeneration; £54,000 in voluntary and community; and £42,000 in tackling disadvantage. So, over that period, you can see that we spent in the region of £6 million. However, we are now faced with a very substantial cut, right across the Department, of £13.5 million and, adding on from that, £29 million.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his answer so far. I am glad to hear that £6 million was spent in South Antrim, although that still seems very little. Will the Minister accept that the cuts to departmental budgets that were applied in June monitoring were nothing to do with welfare reform and, in reality, were predominantly to pay for Executive commitments and the £20 million lifeline to health? Will he make sure that the public knows that?

Mr McCausland: As the Member well knows — as does his party colleague on the Executive, because he has been party to the discussions there and has been part of the welfare subcommittee in the Executive — we are facing into a further cut of £15.5 million. We already know what the total cost of not proceeding with welfare reform is going to be. It is not just the smaller figure that we are talking about at the moment, because we are getting to the point where meeting the penalties as a result of welfare reform will cost £200 million a year, on top of all the other costs.

Of course, there are people who think that you should just invent your own IT system. Sure, £1 billion to pay for something there — to buy over a legacy system and operate that — will not be a problem for some people. Or, £1.6 billion to create a new, bespoke system for Northern Ireland is not a problem for some people. The result is, in fact, that some Members are quite clearly financially illiterate.

Welfare Cuts Agenda

4. **Ms Fearon** asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the current welfare cuts agenda in relation to vulnerable people. (AQO 6508/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Perhaps the Member will consider the adverse effect of not introducing welfare reform in Northern Ireland, which is an area that I have already strayed into. It is important that we consider that in relation to vulnerable people by considering my previous answer on the budget cuts that my Department will have to make, should we not have movement with the Welfare Reform Bill. DSD provides a range of services to vulnerable groups across Northern Ireland, and some of the most vulnerable in our society — people in areas of deprivation and suffering from individual and family vulnerabilities — will bear the brunt of this.

Welfare reform will control the level or rate of the increase in social security spending. It is estimated that, even after welfare reform, spending on social security benefits will be higher than it was in 2010-11, rising from around £5 billion in 2010-11 to over £6 billion by 2018-19. Protecting the vulnerable is a key priority and, although I have publicly expressed support for the reform of the welfare system, I have concerns with certain aspects of the welfare reform proposals as implemented in GB. I have listened to the debate in Great Britain about the impact on the most vulnerable. That is why I met Northern Ireland's four Church leaders to discuss welfare reform in Northern Ireland and why we have ongoing engagement with a range of stakeholders. I will continue to ensure that protecting the vulnerable is at the core of what I do.

The reality is that the welfare system needs to change to ensure that it is fair, affordable and sustainable. In fact, plans to reform the welfare system have been ongoing since 2009, when a Welfare Bill was considered. Since taking office, I have ensured that this Welfare Reform Bill has been progressed against my four principles which are central to the policy intent behind this legislation, namely: protect the vulnerable, get people into work or back to work, develop a system that is fair, and encourage personal and social responsibility.

As part of that, I have developed a package of measures, including a series of flexibilities and transitional protections designed to meet the needs of the people in Northern Ireland. That package of measures helps to simplify the system, and, more importantly, it ensures that the vulnerable are protected.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That was an important and detailed answer, but I remind the Minister of the two-minute rule.

Ms Fearon: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The Minister made up his own question and answered a completely different question from the one

I asked. In light of a recent report issued by Queen's University that says that over a quarter of adults in the North live in multiple deprivation and in light of the fact that the UN is investigating Britain for human rights abuses against disabled people, will the Minister join us in defending the most vulnerable against Tory cuts, which will only worsen the already bad levels of deprivation in the North?

Mr McCausland: The Member says that I did not answer the question she asked. I actually answered her question and the question that she and her party does not want to ask or face up to. The fact is that, if Sinn Féin cuts are imposed — when they are imposed, given the way that we are going — they will be detrimental to the most vulnerable. Those cuts will be the result of the inaction of Sinn Féin and the SDLP.

There is also an increasing body of evidence, such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report on minimum income standard for the UK in 2014 and the Institute for Fiscal Studies report 'Green Budget 2014', that supports the positive aspects of welfare reform and the introduction of universal credit, which will improve the financial reward for hard-working families and provide greater incentives for people to work. We need a system that encourages people into work, supports them in that regard and is there as a safety net for the most vulnerable. That is my task. I do not want to see the vulnerable being punished because of the financial incapability of others.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for his answers. Minister, when we talk about some of the most vulnerable, we often think about those in receipt of disability benefits. How will the new personal independence payments (PIPs) affect children and older people?

Mr McCausland: The personal independence payment will affect only working-age claimants — those aged 16 to 64. PIP will not affect the most vulnerable age groups — children under 16 or adults over 64. Individuals in those age groups will continue to receive their benefit as long as they satisfy the criteria. It is only when a child reaches their sixteenth birthday that they will be invited to make a claim for personal independence payment.

Additional safeguards have been built into the PIP customer journey to ensure that vulnerable people in Northern Ireland receive all the help and support they need as they encounter the new benefit. I will continue to work with colleagues to ensure that Northern Ireland is not adversely impacted by the changes. We are doing all we can in terms of getting the flexibilities that I have negotiated with Westminster and putting together a package of other measures to mitigate the worst effects of welfare reform and protect the most vulnerable.

Mrs D Kelly: Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, you will appreciate the scepticism many of us on this side of the House have about a financially illiterate Minister who stood a few months ago and accused four contractors of an £18 million overpayment. There is some concern around his waffling about of financial figures at the moment. Perhaps the Minister could give us a profile across each constituency of the impact of welfare cuts. It is unfortunate that he and his party have thrown in the towel to the Conservatives in relation to the impact of the cuts.

Mr McCausland: The opportunity to answer Mrs Kelly is always a privilege and a pleasure. The first thing is to

point out that it was her party, when it was in DSD, that started the process of implementing GB welfare reform in Northern Ireland. It is not just that she does not mention that; she seems to have forgotten about it. I do not know what the reason is, but she obviously has forgotten about it. It is one of a number of things that were quietly forgotten about by Mrs Kelly.

Secondly, in terms of doing things on a constituency basis, in regard to welfare reform, we have generally looked at the impact on different categories of people, whether it is a particular age group or a particular section 75 category or whatever. All of those things have been looked at; it has not really been done on an individual constituency basis. However, it is clear that the work was done. In fact, we had to do it because, if we were going to develop mitigations and flexibilities, we needed to know what the impact was in order to develop and negotiate them. That work has been done, and it informed fully all the conversations that we had with DWP, Iain Duncan Smith, David Freud and others and the work that was then done in developing local flexibilities and mitigations here in Northern Ireland.

2.15 pm

Mr Cree: Will the Minister explain why he does not bring the Bill that he introduced two years ago back to the Floor of the House for discussion and, at Consideration Stage, table his package of proposals and allow other parties to do the same?

Mr McCausland: The worst thing of all, in many ways, would be to bring legislation into the Assembly and then for that to fall. We would be in a much more difficult situation then because you would almost be back to the drawing board and back to stage one. I can see the Member's colleague beside him nodding in agreement.

The second thing is that we have two parties that have their face set very firmly against it. Maybe the Member's head just nods. The fact is that there are two parties that are dead set against any movement. They seem to be like rabbits caught in the headlights and are not quite sure what to do. I do not want us to get into the situation where we would be worse off than we are now. We have a good package, and people are well aware of what is in it. It has been talked about enough. Everyone knows what is in it. The Member himself will be aware of the elements in that package. The real issue needs to be in the Executive, where the representatives of other parties agree that this comes forward as a Northern Ireland Executive package rather than simply being put onto the Floor and thrown out there. We do not want to get into a situation that would be worse than the current situation.

Neighbourhood Renewal Areas

5. **Mr Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the capital and revenue projects his Department is currently developing, in conjunction with other Departments, in neighbourhood renewal areas. (AQO 6509/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department is developing a number of projects in conjunction with other Departments in neighbourhood renewal areas. These range from capital street enhancement schemes to revenue projects that address some of the barriers that contribute to low educational attainment and poor health. These projects are being developed in conjunction with the Department

for Regional Development, OFMDFM, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Department of Education. Obviously, there is a long list of projects that it is not really possible to deal with in an oral answer. We work with all of those other Departments on a range of measures.

Mr Lynch: I thank the Minister for what was a fairly short answer. Minister, given the transfer of neighbourhood renewal to local government, can you assure us that projects that are under way will not be impacted by a reduced budget? Go raibh maith agat.

Mr McCausland: The answer was brief because it was either going to be succinct in summary of the situation or we would get into a situation where I listed all the projects across all the constituencies. We would have been well past the two minutes set aside by the Speaker to deal with questions and answers.

The budget for neighbourhood renewal and urban regeneration is being transferred to local councils, and my departmental officials are engaging thoroughly with councils to make sure that that process is as smooth and seamless as possible. How councils then take forward those projects, how they decide to prioritise them, to stage them and to finance them are matters for councils themselves. As of 1 April, if the Regeneration and Housing Bill goes through — I say "if" because it has not gone through yet — it will indeed be a matter for councils.

Mr Givan: The Minister will be aware of the meeting that he had yesterday with representatives from the Resurgam Trust in my constituency. That organisation is funded through a pilot scheme. Can the Minister give an assurance that there will be proactive work taken forward so that that scheme does not fall through any cracks because it does not naturally fit with urban renewal? Can he update the House on progress towards introducing the Regeneration and Housing Bill?

Mr McCausland: I thank the Member for his question. He was at the meeting and is aware that work is ongoing between DSD officials and the officials in the new council area to make sure that whatever happens moving forward is the best possible outcome.

The Member also asks about the Regeneration and Housing Bill. That is why I said "if" earlier. I have sought Executive approval to introduce the Regeneration and Housing Bill in the Assembly on a number of occasions. I made three attempts to table it at Executive meetings on 5 June and 9 June and on 8 July. I also sought clearance by urgent procedure on 9 July and 29 August. However, I have so far been unable to make progress with that important legislation because of the failure of some members of the Executive to agree to the Bill proceeding.

The Bill is essential in order to proceed with the transfer of functions and the conferral of powers to councils in April 2015, as agreed by the Executive in April 2013. The Bill was put forward for the Executive back in spring. I have listed the occasions on which I attempted to table it and have also sought clearance by urgent procedure. I also recently wrote to all Ministers asking for comment on it. I got a reply from one Minister — the Culture, Arts and Leisure Minister — who raised a range of issues now at a very late stage. I have responded to that. I wrote out on 2 September; we got a reply on 8 September. The reply to all the points has now gone back, and I hope that we will

be able to move forward. Councils are expecting that, on 1 April, the functions will transfer. If the legislation does not go through, nothing will transfer.

Mr Dallat: I thank the Minister for his comprehensive answer, which I listened to carefully. Can he tell us what endeavours he has made to submit his proposals for equality impact assessment, given that the new councils will be very quickly judged on their ability to be fair in the distribution of their resources? Can he tell us what training the new shadow councils have undertaken to ensure that, come 1 April, they will be in a position to do the job and do it correctly?

Mr McCausland: The Member should have a conversation with his own Minister. There is a role for the Department of the Environment as the lead Department in the reform of local government, so I suggest that, if he has concerns — he obviously has — he take them up with the member of his party. It is not a thing for me to deal with. If the Member does not even understand that, we are in a bad and sorry state. Clearly, it is something that his own Minister should be dealing with. He should talk to him. If they do not talk to each other, I cannot help that.

Fuel Poverty

6. **Mrs Dobson** asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of his Department's effectiveness at reducing the proportion of households in fuel poverty. (AQO 6510/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I thank the Member for the question and for raising what is an important issue in regard to fuel poverty. Fuel poverty in Northern Ireland has three core contributors: income, energy prices and the energy efficiency of homes. Unlike other regions of the UK, a primary reason for high levels of expenditure in Northern Ireland is the prominence of oil as a source of domestic heating fuel.

In 2009, it was estimated that 44% of households were experiencing fuel poverty. According to the 2011 house condition survey, that figure is currently 42%. That is based on households needing to spend 10% or more of their income on household fuel costs. Research has also highlighted 33,000 households across Northern Ireland that need to spend 25% or more of their income to adequately heat their home.

Whilst the proportion of households in fuel poverty has reduced slightly, without the measures delivered by my Department the rates of fuel poverty would be significantly higher. That underlines my commitment to assisting the most vulnerable households in Northern Ireland by providing measures to reduce their energy costs and maximise the energy efficiency of their homes.

There are 120,000 homes that have had energy efficiency measures installed under the current warm homes scheme, investing over £150 million. Over 14,500 old, inefficient boilers have been replaced in the boiler replacement scheme. I will shortly launch a new energy efficiency scheme that will be a targeted, area-based approach. It will find and target the most vulnerable homes — those where people live in severe fuel poverty — and offer energy efficiency assistance to them.

There is no doubt that more work could be done in tackling fuel poverty. However, I am restricted to the work that

can be done within allocated budgets. I can assure the Member that I am committed to working in a collaborative and inclusive way, and I am always keen to explore all options and new initiatives to provide assistance to the most vulnerable households.

I chair the cross-sectoral fuel poverty partnership and work closely with my colleague in DETI, Arlene Foster. The partnership includes not simply the Departments that are relevant to this but a range of stakeholders who work in the area of fuel poverty.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I again remind the Minister of the two-minute rule.

Mrs Dobson: I thank the Minister for his detailed and lengthy answer. Does he accept that, despite all the policies and the wholehearted words of support from his Department, the impact on families in fuel poverty has been negligible? Does he really think that a 2% drop over recent years is good enough? What more could he have done to meet key departmental targets?

Mr McCausland: I made the point at the start that there were three main contributors to fuel poverty. The first is a really big issue in Northern Ireland: our heavy dependence on domestic heating oil. That is so different from the situation in GB, which is why the work being taken forward by my DETI colleague, Arlene Foster, to expand the gas network to the west is so important. The more people who can access gas, the better, because it is a cheaper fuel. That sort of thing will have the biggest impact. The other thing we do, which I did not really mention, concerns income. Our benefit uptake campaigns have a significant impact on people's ability to pay for fuel. Income level is the third factor in fuel poverty. The work that we are doing at the moment — the targeted approach — is particularly innovative. The academic whom we are working with, Professor Christine Liddell, is at the forefront on that and is leading the way in the British Isles in that regard.

Mr G Robinson: Why has the decrease in the levels of fuel poverty not been more significant?

Mr McCausland: Fuel poverty has those three factors: income, fuel cost and energy efficiency. The major focus of my Department's fuel poverty strategy is to remove energy inefficiency as a cause of fuel poverty, because that is the one contributor to fuel poverty that we can do something about.

We can talk about tackling the price of fuel, which is important, as is the introduction of gas to a wider area, and we can talk about improving household incomes, but we really can do something about improving energy efficiency. In the social housing stock, we have done a tremendous amount of work on that, and by the end of this financial year all Housing Executive properties will be double-glazed.

By the end of this year, we will also be in a much better position regarding the energy efficiency of the thousands of Housing Executive no-fines homes: that is, stock that has no cavity wall and no cavity wall insulation. That issue has been around for several decades. Over the past decade, there has been a lot of denial, but we are actually dealing with the issue now, which will make a difference.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. It is pretty shocking that one third of people are expected to pay more than one quarter of their income to

heat their home adequately. We deserve better from the Minister than listing the three causes of fuel poverty.

The Minister says that we can talk about increasing household income, but really he is talking about cutting household income. He wants to cut the basic rate of welfare for people and to impose heinous sanctions. How does he tie the two together? You are talking about increasing household income to tackle fuel poverty, but at the same time you want to take hundreds of millions of pounds out of the most vulnerable households in our society.

Mr McCausland: I encourage the Member to ensure that in future, when those issues are being debated at Westminster, the Members from his party, instead of running away from the issue, are in their seats in Westminster, doing their job and representing the people of Northern Ireland. Then he might have something to talk about and be in a position to comment on others. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order, order. I call Mr Fearghal McKinney. I have time to take only the question. The Minister may respond to you in writing.

Mr McKinney: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker.

My question is on a side issue that has been drawn to my attention. Is the Minister aware of what may amount to a warm homes scheme scam, whereby individuals purporting to represent the scheme present themselves at households, do undefined works and demand money? If he is aware, what advice would he give to householders who find themselves confronted in such a way?

2.30 pm

Mr McCausland: If the Member has information, I encourage him to bring it to my attention, and I am sure that he will also want to bring it to the attention of the police to have the matter properly investigated. Whatever information he has, I will certainly be interested to hear about it.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister and Members. That ends the period for listed questions. We now move to topical questions.

Councillor Jenny Palmer: Intimidation

1. **Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Social Development, given that, a year ago, it was announced that a fact-finding investigation was being conducted into the alleged attempted intimidation by the Minister's special adviser of Councillor Jenny Palmer, why that report is buried in the Department, where it is buried and whether it has resulted, or will result, in the implementation of any disciplinary proceedings. *(AQT 1401/11-15)*

Mr McCausland: I thank the Member for his question. I assume that he is, as a member of the Social Development Committee, aware that just the other day, on 8 September, the Chair of the Committee wrote to me about that very issue and asked for a reply within 10 days. Within the next 10 days, the Member and other members of the Committee will receive a fulsome answer.

Mr Allister: Is the Minister not being disrespectful to the House by refusing to provide information that he clearly holds? Should he not reflect upon that, or is he trying to

conceal it from the House? Will he tell us whether the promised apology to Councillor Palmer has been issued and, if not, why not?

Mr McCausland: It would be disrespectful to the Committee, in so far as I have received a letter from the Chair of the Committee and I will give that information to the Committee within the 10 days. The response is being prepared and drafted. I think it important that I, having received the letter from the Chair, respect the Committee.

The other matter is outside the remit of the question that the Member originally raised. He moved on to something else, but I will say this about it: it is a personnel issue, which will have to influence our dealings with it and the way in which it is handled. I am sure that the Member is aware that there are rules, regulations and procedures that have to be in place when dealing with personnel issues. As I said, the matter will be with the Committee within the next number of days.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before I call the next topical question, I remind Members that they should ask a single question. Will they clearly focus on that? The same goes for a supplementary. Members should remember that Ministers can choose which element of a line of questioning to respond to. They have that discretion. So you should ask one question, and it should be focused on clearly in the discourse.

Councillor Jenny Palmer: Ministerial Contact

2. **Mr Copeland** asked the Minister for Social Development, on a similar vein to Mr Allister's question, albeit in a slightly more personal context because of curiosity over whether approaches, as happened previously, have been made, whether he has spoken to Councillor Jenny Palmer since this morning's media reports, given that she obviously feels cheated and let down by his Department. *(AQT 1402/11-15)*

Mr McCausland: I did not hear the news item this morning. I was preparing for this morning's Executive Committee meeting and today's questions for oral answer. That and other matters took my attention, so I cannot comment.

Mr Copeland: I will follow on from Mr Allister's question: can you confirm whether, at any stage, the findings of your Department, and particularly the DFP internal inquiry, will be made public?

Mr McCausland: I think that the Member is aware of the rules for dealing with personnel matters. Personnel issues are not handled in the same way as certain other things. I am sure that the Member will bear that in mind when asking such questions.

Social Development Committee: Ministerial Relationship

3. **Mr F McCann** asked the Minister for Social Development how he would characterise his relationship with the scrutiny Committee after his attack on its integrity yesterday. *(AQT 1403/11-15)*

Mr McCausland: I want to ensure that the Committee does its job properly. Primarily, that is, of course, the role of the Chair of the Committee. I think that it was perfectly right and proper to say that a flawed process produced

a flawed product. I also encourage the Committee, as I did yesterday, to address the big issues that face us at present. I listed a number of those yesterday, and they include fuel poverty, the standard of maintenance in social housing properties owned by the House Executive, and all the other areas that we are working in, such as energy efficiency, the boiler replacement scheme and antisocial behaviour. I would like to see more product from the Committee in that regard, but, sadly, so much of its time is being taken up on what is, I think, a pointless diversion.

Mr F McCann: Thank you very much, a Phríomh-Leas Cheann Comhairle. I noticed that the Minister completely dodged the question that I asked. Does he not accept that the Committee is essential for its role in holding Ministers and officials to account?

Mr McCausland: I certainly would not want to dodge Mr McCann. The fact is that this Assembly, as does any legislature anywhere in the British Isles, functions best when you have all the different elements working together. That is why I emphasised yesterday, and again this afternoon, the important role that the Committee has in addressing, considering and bringing forward ideas and recommendations on the sort of issues that really matter to the people of Northern Ireland. Those are the things that I already listed. So, I encourage the Committee to consider those and to reflect on them. They are key areas of work. I will take a simple example. We had some proposals on antisocial behaviour. The Committee had contrary views on them, but when I actually asked, "What do you think would be the best way to tackle it?", there was nothing forthcoming.

Building Successful Communities

4. **Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Building Successful Communities programme launched by his Department. (AQT 1404/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I am glad to say that all the Building Successful Communities regeneration forums have now been established in the six pilot areas across Northern Ireland. Those are Doury Road in Ballymena; and, in Belfast, lower Falls; Lenadoon and Glencolin; Tigers Bay and Mountcollyer; lower Shankill and Brown Square; and lower Oldpark and Hillview. Doury Road, Lenadoon and Glencolin, and lower Falls were established in April and May. Tigers Bay and Mountcollyer, lower Shankill and Brown Square, and lower Oldpark and Hillview have all had their first meetings within the past four weeks. All the meetings to date have been positive and constructive, and that is an encouraging start. Each forum's membership has embraced the challenges ahead in attempting to use housing as a spearhead for physical, social and economic regeneration.

Each forum includes representatives from the local community who will consider the redevelopment plans for the area, as well as representatives from statutory bodies and elected representatives. Work is ongoing to appoint the consultants who will work with the forums, and I hope that the individual action plans will be in place in the new year, with action plans to follow during 2015.

We are having a seminar on 17 September, which I will open. It will feature keynote addresses from people who have experiences in the field, including those from the

Northern Ireland Housing Executive, urban regeneration and the Wheatley Group in Glasgow, and it will be attended by forum members from all six areas.

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Minister for his answer. I am glad that he made mention of the Doury Road scheme in my constituency. I have had the privilege of attending a number of the meetings so far, and I can say with certainty that the buy-in from statutory bodies and the community has been excellent and certainly very encouraging. What is the benchmark of success for those programmes? What is the endgame, and what is it hoped will be achieved for disadvantaged areas such as the Doury Road in Ballymena?

Mr McCausland: Building Successful Communities is an attempt to address the difficulties and needs in areas where the regeneration programmes that have been in place for a number of years — in fact, for the past decade — have not really made the impact that is required. In the pilot areas, a range of initiatives will be brought forward, but, at the end of the day, what will be the evidence of success? A regenerated community. That is what the people in those areas want to see. They do not want to see dereliction, they do not want to see derelict properties, and they do not want to see blight. They feel a sense of despair. Therefore, this is something that gives them an opportunity for hope and progress.

The key thing with this is that we have around the table all the relevant players — the relevant Departments, agencies, local people and local elected representatives. Everybody there is saying, "We know this area. We either live or work in it. These are the things that will make a difference." What the outcome will be in terms of a programme in each area will be different, but the end result has to be vibrant communities and places where people want to live, work and socialise.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Sammy Wilson is not in his place. I call Mr Patsy McGlone.

Racial Equality Strategy

6. **Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Social Development, given this morning's newspaper articles that show that 20 organisations have come together to highlight the shortcomings of the racial equality strategy, particularly saying that it needs to be much more ambitious, far-reaching and robust, what his Department is doing — and what more it could be doing — with the likes of the housing association movement and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to address issues such as the intimidation of the minority and ethnic communities in our midst and the need that there is among many sections of the community, particularly those such as the Lech family in Moneymore, a family that I have got to know very well in the last two to three years, good decent people who were intimidated out of their home. (AQT 1406/11-15)

Mr McCausland: First, I personally do not know the details of that particular family in Moneymore. Of course, what I would say is that in this or in any other situation where people are being intimidated because of their religion, race or whatever, that should not happen. It is wrong. It hardly needs to be said, but it is right to say it. It is something that everybody should sign up to — that it is wrong — even without saying it. I am putting on record today that it is wrong. It should not happen. It is something that happens

in a number of areas. The reasons are different in different cases. In some cases, they are communal; in others, they are individual. There is a whole range of circumstances.

The Housing Executive has a good record in trying to help people in those circumstances. However, there is a limit to what the Housing Executive can do; it is simply one player in this. The fact is, of course, that others are involved. If there are issues of intimidation, the police have a role to play to ensure that the perpetrators are brought before the courts and dealt with appropriately. The community will very often give their support to those who are the targets of intimidation. It is very difficult to come up with a single answer and say that A, B, C, D or E are the five things that need to happen. It will depend on the circumstances. However, I assure the Member that the Housing Executive keeps this very much in mind, as I am sure he would expect. I think that its community-cohesion unit also does good work in trying to create more cohesive communities where that sort of thing does not happen.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhúochas leis an Aire chomh maith. I thank the Minister very much. However, he highlighted the question that I asked but did not respond to it. Essentially, what I wanted to know is what his Department is doing — his Department's As, Bs, Cs and Ds — at progressive level to work with those agencies and bodies to ensure that a strategy is developed to ensure that people are made to feel at home and are accommodated in this part of the world.

Mr McCausland: If the issue is, for example, one of racial tension between groups or individuals and people are being targeted because of their ethnic background, that is not an issue that can be solely my responsibility. In fact, OFMDFM has responsibility for racial equality, so there are a number of different Departments. It is not just a matter of simply asking what DSD is doing. We work through the Housing Executive on the housing aspect of the issue, but there are wider issues there. Maybe that matter needs to be looked at. It is a bit like the question from another member of the SDLP. It is important that the question be directed to the appropriate person, Minister and Department.

Mr McGlone: So you have nothing to do then?

Mr McCausland: Well, I did say that the Housing Executive, which is one of my Department's bodies, does have a role. I did say that.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Time is up.

2.45 pm

Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: We move on to questions to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Ms Lo: On a point of order, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I will take no points of order during Question Time. I will take them immediately afterwards.

I inform Members that questions 2 and 12 have been withdrawn.

Bovine Residencies

1. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development if there is any resolution to the problems faced by farmers and marts in relation to the limit on the number of bovine residencies required by some retailers. (AQO 6520/11-15)

11. **Dr McDonnell** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on any formal discussions she has had with the Livestock and Meat Commission and the mart owners to deal with beef penalties being administered by the meat plants regarding farm residencies. (AQO 6530/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. With your permission, I will answer questions 1 and 11 together.

Over the last few months, I have met and listened to farmers, processors, mart operators and the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC). I have also asked the meat plants to reconsider their position on penalties. I am very encouraged that all elements of the beef supply chain are committed to working together to address the current difficulties for the benefit of the industry as a whole. I am hopeful that we are now close to a resolution on those issues, which have been causing such concern to the industry.

I welcome the work that the LMC has done in conjunction with the key elements in the beef supply chain to develop a protocol for agreement among the parties. It is a positive step that the Livestock Auctioneers' Association has agreed that marts will have the discretion to display information on farm residencies. I hope to see processors significantly reduce their penalties on cattle with over four farm residencies until the end of the year, as has been proposed. My Department is willing to work with herdkeepers and marts to explore how information about cattle residencies can be accessed as simply as possible, and it has already committed to commencing work to bring about the changes to the animal and public health information system (APHIS). To assist herdkeepers immediately, and until residencies can be displayed electronically in markets, my Department will provide a report to the keeper on request, listing all animals in the keeper's herd. The report provides keepers with full movement history for their herd and can be obtained from local DARD Direct.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that update. I am not sure that all farmers and market owners would agree that this seems to be moving proactively. However, the Minister did say that she is hoping for an outcome in the near future. Will that outcome result in either the number of residencies allowed being increased for those retailers or, indeed, being removed altogether?

Mrs O'Neill: I do not think that there is any hope of it being removed, but certainly things are moving in the right direction. What we are seeking is confirmation from those people that they will not introduce further changes.

You will be aware of the LMC protocol, which it published last month. It clearly sets out that there needs to be communication across the supply chain. The reason that farmers ended up in such difficulty this time is because

changes to residencies were brought in without any warning.

There have been positive contributions in response to the LMC protocol. One thing clearly set out in the protocol is that, if there are to be changes to the specifications, those need to be communicated well in advance so that farmers can make decisions based on knowledge of the specifications into the foreseeable future. I am pleased with that piece of work. As I said, the mood music is good. There has been no formal sign-off on the protocol, but I am hopeful that that will happen in the time ahead. We are seeking assurances that there will be no further calls from the major retailers to reduce the residencies any further. I think that four is reasonable, and I know that, particularly given the type of farming that we have, it would be very difficult for our farmers to be able to put up with any more than that.

Mr Byrne: Does the Minister agree that DARD needs to drive this centrally on behalf of the farming community? Does she also agree that, in the current situation, many beef farmers are caught in limbo and need relief now to address the issue?

Mrs O'Neill: I do agree. As I said, the way in which this was brought in was unfortunate, to say the least, and left some farmers who had bought cattle for finishing at high prices last year in a situation in which they had nowhere to go with them. I am pleased to see that all the main processors appear to be joining up to a protocol that would allow farmers until the start of January to be able to adapt. We will then have a new system. The penalties need to be reduced. Farmers cannot be caught out because of a change that these people brought in without forewarning.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. How long will it take to make changes to APHIS?

Mrs O'Neill: We want to be able to get things moving. Part of the agreement that has been established, with LMC taking the lead, is that the Livestock Auctioneers' Association will allow marts to display the information.

We will work our way through that, but we need to make the changes to the computer system. We will do that, but, in the meantime, we will work with the marts to give them a physical copy of the information that they need until such times as we have the changes secured. We are talking about six months for the APHIS system to be formulated in the specifications required. I have prioritised that work with my Department and asked it to make sure that we deliver our end in making sure that we can resolve the situation. That is why we have taken a two-pronged approach. That will physically help them until we can get the information on the APHIS.

Mr Allister: Has the Department considered or taken any advice on whether this price-cutting ploy is anti-competitive under EU law?

Mrs O'Neill: It is not something that has been brought to my attention. The way in which the processors have gone about bringing in these changes has been unfortunate, to say the least. I think it has been very clear. One positive thing that has come out of this recent conversation is the fact that, unless there is fairness and communication across the supply chain, we will not have a sustainable farming system into the future and be able to target all the markets that we are going after. As to whether it is anti-

competitive under EU law, no, that is not an issue that has been raised.

Rural Development Programme

3. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the funding for the 2014-2020 rural development programme. (AQO 6522/11-15)

5. **Mr McAleer** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the new rural development programme. (AQO 6524/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Again, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle, with your permission, I will answer questions 3 and 5 together.

As part of the decisions on CAP reform, I received Executive agreement to a budget of up to £623 million for the next RDP. That is an increase in funding of almost 16% compared with the current programme and gives us the largest RDP we have ever had. It will allow us to deliver a broad range of measures to improve the competitiveness of our farm and agrifood businesses, protect and enhance our environment and improve the quality of life in rural communities.

I intend to match the EU funds, pound for pound, with £186.5 million of my Department's own resource. The provision of that match funding will be a high priority to ensure that we maximise the EU funds available. The agreement secured with the Executive will provide additional funding of up to £250 million to fund the proposed farm business improvement scheme as requested by the Agri-Food Strategy Board. That additional funding will help me to deliver on the aims and objectives of the 'Going for Growth' report.

In July, I announced further detail of the proposed allocations for schemes in the programme. My officials are working to finalise the draft programme in conjunction with the RDP stakeholder consultation group. Formal submission to the European Commission is expected in October.

Mr Beggs: Much of the rural development programme 2014-2020 is aspirational, with money still to be committed to in any budget. With considerable and intolerable health pressures and cutbacks being implemented by every Department, including the Minister's, my question is this: can she advise how the current cuts in her Department — a result of the failure to maintain welfare parity — will affect the rural development programme during this year? What effect does she foresee it having in the future when she will have to implement much larger cutbacks in her Department?

Mrs O'Neill: As I said in my original answer, I intend to prioritise this work, and it is vital that we do that. The Executive would be cutting off their nose to spite their face if they were not to look at this work, because this is us enhancing European money. It doubles our money, so it is a priority for me. This is about the Executive clearly saying that they have a commitment and want to invest in rural communities. I am delighted that, back in June, we got the commitment to secure up to £623 million for a new rural development programme, which will be vital. As I said, I will prioritise that. There is no impact whatsoever on this year's funding. All funding has been allocated. The current programme is about to come to the end of its life, and we will be looking towards our new programme for next year.

As I said, we are already budgeting for the money that I have set out.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat. When does the Minister expect the new programme to get off the ground for delivery?

Mrs O'Neill: It is vital that we learn lessons from the previous programme, which we inherited and where, I suppose, everyone can agree that there was very much a slow start. I want to be able to get things off the ground as soon as possible. In order for us to do that, the first stage is to achieve EU approval for the programme. We intend to go to Europe in October. We have been working with EU officials as we have been developing our programme, and we are hopeful that we will get that turned around pretty quickly — certainly, at the start of next year. I have impressed on Dacian Cioloş, the EU Commissioner, the need for us to have our programme cleared and turned around as quickly as possible so that we can have clarity on the EU rules and on our programme and so that we get things up and running as soon as possible.

My aim is to recruit for the new local action groups (LAGs) towards the end of year and have them in place by the end of the year, and then all the work around animation can start. It is particularly good timing in that the new council structures will be consulting on community plans over that time. Those two programmes can very much dovetail and assist each other.

Going for Growth

4. **Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the progress made in implementing Going for Growth. (AQO 6523/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am delighted that the Executive have endorsed the growth aspirations of the industry, as set out in 'Going for Growth' and agreed a proposed response as part of the package of significant support on CAP and the rural development programme announced at the end of June 2014. Since then, my officials have been working with colleagues across Departments to refresh and update the response prior to publication to take account of the various actions that have already taken place.

Progress has been made on a number of fronts. For example, we have developed our new rural development programme, which contains a range of new support schemes to address the aims and objectives of Going for Growth, including a farm business improvement scheme and an agrifood processing investment scheme. We have deferred the introduction of charges for export health certificates for meat and dairy products. An appointments process for the TB strategic partnership is under way. We have launched the all-island Chalara control strategy, increased the number of DARD-funded postgraduate places, launched a further tranche of the research challenge fund and appointed a contact point at AFBI to assist researchers and businesses in making applications to EU research funding programmes. We have also opened a third tranche of the manure efficiency technology (MET) scheme. With DETI and Invest NI, we have jointly launched a loan scheme to support the sustainable use of poultry litter.

My Department will continue to work with other Departments and industry representatives to drive forward

implementation. I am sure that the Member will agree that there has been good progress to date.

Mr McCarthy: I welcome the Minister's report to the Executive. In her statement just now, she did not mention fisheries, which are a vital part of our rural economy, as she will be aware. Can she outline the progress made on the commitment to grow fisheries? Is the £90 million that was promised for the industry on target?

Mrs O'Neill: I assure the Member that I am committed to ensuring that we have a sustainable, thriving fishing industry into the future. Work is going on in quite a number of areas at this moment in time, particularly around European funding and making sure that we have more interaction. You will be aware that I established a task force to work more with the fishing community on the ground around how it can access European funding in this new round of funding. That work is under way.

A number of key actions in the 'Going for Growth' document are directed at fisheries. I can assure you that they are receiving as much attention as any of the other areas that I mentioned here today. That is vital, given the recent Russian ban on food imports, which will impact slightly on some of the fishing community here. So, we are making sure that we are to the fore of championing the needs of our local industry.

Mr McMullan: Can the Minister provide more detail on the proposed farm business investment scheme?

Mrs O'Neill: The farm business improvement scheme is a key recommendation under the Going for Growth strategy and reflects a clear need for farmers to be provided with capital and advisory and training support to invest in their farm businesses and to improve their efficiency and competitiveness. The Executive have agreed a proposed budget for the scheme of £250 million that will be delivered via the rural development programme. My officials continue to develop the details of the scheme and the necessary business cases, building on the Agri-Food Strategy Board's views and the responses that we received during the consultation on the RDP and from the stakeholder consultation group.

The scheme is intended to provide support for increasing farm production sustainably by improving competitiveness through efficiency, integrating the supply chain and adapting to market requirements. An important element will be support for training and learning new skills to ensure that the industry can benefit from the transfer of new innovative technologies and adapt to the changing needs of the industry.

Mrs Dobson: Does the Minister share my and the industry's concern about the much-delayed funding agreement for Going for Growth? Will she inform the House how she feels that has impacted on targets that the Agri-Food Strategy Board anticipated would be met in 2014-15?

Mrs O'Neill: The Member might want to catch up: the Executive agreed the position and the funding package for the 'Going for Growth' document back in June; I think it was 26 June. As I have just outlined, a range of things has happened in the absence of all that. We were not sitting back waiting for the package. The package and the financial support was, obviously, key in being able to

devise and develop a programme, and it greatly enhanced the rural development programme.

We now have a greater rural development programme than we have ever had, but, as I said, we have moved on with quite a number of issues, which I have already outlined in my initial answer to Mr McCarthy. A lot of progress has been made, and it is important that we build on that and use what is there. This is a thriving industry that, with the right support, can continue to grow. The Executive have very clearly put that on record and have sent a strong message to the industry that they are interested in supporting it through the Executive agreement that we achieved back in June.

3.00 pm

Mr B McCrea: What is the Minister's assessment of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute's (AFBI) role in Going for Growth? What steps has she taken to address the projected 25% reduction in budget in the next three or four years?

Mrs O'Neill: AFBI is obviously a key player as we move forward. There is no doubt that AFBI's work is central to Going for Growth. AFBI takes about 18% of my resource budget every year, so we have a strong ethos of building on research, and we need to continue to do that in the time ahead. I am sure that the Member is referring to a recent media article in which there was talk about AFBI's budget, but I can assure him that I am committed to investing in research, and the Executive have a commitment to increase our drawdown of European funding. AFBI is a fantastic vehicle for doing that and has been out in Europe making sure that it is in touch with funding partners and people it can work with.

Given the financial challenges that have been imposed on all of us, AFBI, like other elements of my Department, is looking at its budget and where it needs to prioritise its work. Work will be ongoing between AFBI and me on how we prioritise the areas of work on which it will focus. The Member will be aware that AFBI's work is quite wide-ranging and includes plant health and animal health. In moving forward, it is important that AFBI's work aligns with the work that the industry requires. That is an ongoing conversation.

Countryside Management Scheme

6. **Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the implementation of a new countryside management scheme. (AQO 6525/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A new agrienvironment scheme — the environmental farming scheme (EFS) — is being developed. The scheme will provide support to farmers and land managers to carry out environmentally beneficial farming practices. These practices will aim to preserve and enhance biodiversity; improve the quality of our water, air and soil; create small woodlands; and help to mitigate climate change. The proposed scheme will have three levels: a targeted level, primarily for environmentally designated sites; a wider level to deliver benefits across the countryside, outside of environmentally designated areas; and a group level to support cooperative action by farmers in specific areas, such as a river catchment or commonage.

It is planned that rural development programme proposals will be submitted to the European Commission in October 2014. Commission approval can normally be expected around six months following submission, although we have had indications that that will be sooner. Subject to Commission clearance and the necessary IT and control systems being in place, it is planned to launch the scheme in the second half of 2015, with the first environmental farming scheme agreements commencing in January 2016. Following the initial launch, the scheme will open in further tranches.

Mr P Ramsey: I thank the Minister for her detailed response. Can she assure the House that the scheme will have the most effective and practical control measures but will not be overburdened by bureaucratic systems?

Mrs O'Neill: Absolutely. In the past, the Department has been accused of being overbureaucratic. Obviously, we have to meet the European Commission's needs because it is giving us such a large pot of money, but I can assure the Member that there is no intention or will on the part of the Department to make it overcumbersome for people. We want to have great uptake of the schemes. Farmers are fantastic custodians of the countryside, so it is right that they should be rewarded for that. As I said, however, we will work within the rules set down by Europe, and we will always try not to be overbureaucratic.

Mr Cree: What is the Minister's assessment of the organic management scheme in the previous countryside management scheme? Why was that uptake so poor?

Mrs O'Neill: It is hard to know. It is a farmer's individual decision whether they want to participate in the scheme. That scheme ran out quite some time ago. I do not have the details with me, but I am happy to provide them to the Member. There is a combination of reasons why we did not have uptake. Maybe farmers did not feel that there was a market for their produce or that they would get value for it. I have visited some organic farms, and I have seen some fantastic practices. However, it is, I suppose, a consumer choice whether they want to pay more, so there is a combination of reasons.

One of things we looked at in shaping the new programme was whether there would be a need to develop another programme. Unfortunately, there was no demand for it at this moment in time, but I am sure that, if there was a change in consumer practice, needs or wants, we could certainly look at it again.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Will the scheme contain support for traditional breeds of cattle?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes. It is intended that the environmental farming scheme will contain support for the Irish Moiled cattle. That is the only breed native to the North of Ireland. It is on the Rare Breeds Survival Trust's watch list, so we thought it would be important in moving forward that we had something specific for those cattle.

Beef Cattle: Nomadic

7. **Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline any proposals she has to deal with beef cattle imported from the Republic of Ireland referred to as "nomadic". (AQO 6526/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I have been acutely aware that the beef from cattle born in the South and slaughtered in the North cannot be labelled with a single country of origin and that beef from these so-called nomads has a lower market value than British- or Irish-origin beef. I have been very concerned about the impact of the price penalties applied to these animals on individual farmers and the wider beef industry. I am of the strong view that the term "nomad cattle" has no place on this island.

Following discussions with industry stakeholders and Minister Coveney in the South, I have approved an application made to DARD under the voluntary beef labelling scheme to allow a local processor to use the term "Irish" to label beef from such cattle. I am hopeful that this will open up new markets for local processors with British retailers. It should also assist the long-standing tradition of trading cattle across the island of Ireland, particularly store cattle coming from the west of Ireland for finishing and slaughter in the North.

Minister Coveney and I wrote jointly to the major retailers on the issue. We asked them to consider how beef from cattle born in the South and slaughtered in the North could be marketed so that it was not at a disadvantage in terms of the UK retail market for beef originating on the island of Ireland. I intend to follow this up in the coming weeks. We all want to see a sustainable and profitable beef sector, and I will continue to work closely with industry stakeholders and Minister Coveney in support of that.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Thanks very much, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. Mo bhuíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra chuimsitheach sin. I thank the Minister as well for her comprehensive reply. Could the Minister tell me, please, if there is any indication of the time frame she will be working in with Minister Coveney? Thankfully, I take it from your response that he, too, is positive in his approach to the issue, which is in all our interests.

Mrs O'Neill: Yes, absolutely. We have had quite a number of conversations in relation to the issue and have met in person. We have jointly written to all the major retailers. We think that together we will be a stronger political voice in raising the issue with them.

In terms of a resolution, I am led to believe it should be over the next number of weeks if there is a market to be found. That would be positive news for the industry. This is a long-established trade that needs to continue. It has happened for many years, particularly west of Ireland cattle coming up for finishing, so we do not want to see that interrupted. This was another major issue for the beef industry this year, given that people were caught out again and could not dispose of their cattle. I am confident that with Minister Coveney we can bring strong political influence to the issue and deal with the retailers.

Mr Swann: Minister, can you give the House some reassurance that any cattle entering the Northern Ireland meat chain through the scheme retain their traceability and that there will be steps taken to strengthen that and make sure that the meat can in no way enhance or encourage the smuggling operation that is taking place at this minute in time and make it easier, so that we can reassure processors and, indeed, the general market that Northern Ireland beef is safe to eat?

Mrs O'Neill: I hope that the Member is not scaremongering. I give a 100% guarantee that there is full traceability in all the beef. The only addition will be that the beef will have a label that says "Irish". The EU regulations suggest that you have to include where it was born, reared and slaughtered, but the beef can also now say "Irish". Full traceability is absolutely there. That was our strength during the horsemeat crisis. Minister Coveney and I are keen to make sure that there will be no interruption of that in securing an additional label. It is merely to accommodate the trade that happens on the island.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. How does the Minister propose to encourage retailers to begin to accept the new labels?

Mrs O'Neill: Along with Minister Coveney, I have written to all the major retailers. I have met a number of them, and he and I intend to meet them together to impress on them the fact that this is a traditional trade that happens and that there is full traceability in the meat. I am hopeful that we will secure a meeting with all the major retailers over the next month, because it is important that we impress on them that this is traditional trade, it is our aspiration and we are working actively towards the free movement of cattle right across this island. I do not think that any consumer would have a problem with beef that is born in Cork and slaughtered in Newry, so we want to impress that on the retailers over the next number of weeks.

Rivers Agency

8. **Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the role of the Rivers Agency in cleaning out designated water courses. (AQO 6527/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Rivers Agency has permissive powers under the terms of the Drainage Order 1973 to carry out maintenance to designated watercourses to ensure that they are free-flowing and performing their drainage function. Designated open watercourses are routinely inspected, with those benefiting rural areas typically on a six-year rolling inspection programme, and urban watercourses are inspected and maintained annually. Watercourses that are prone to siltation or dumping are inspected and maintained more frequently. Where a designated watercourse is culverted, it is inspected on a three-year cycle. In addition, culvert inlet grilles are inspected and maintained on a frequent basis, many of them weekly. Additional grille inspections are also undertaken when heavy rainfall is forecast and after flood events, as debris can often be carried downstream by high river flows causing obstructions. In assessing maintenance needs, consideration is given to whether any obstruction to flow or reduction in channel dimensions will have a significant impact on the drainage function of the watercourse or increase flood risk. The Drainage Order 1973 does not empower Rivers Agency to carry out maintenance for any other purpose, such as the removal of litter or the improvement of water quality.

Mr Hussey: Does the Minister agree that the totally disjointed cross-departmental responsibility for our waterways is impeding their protection and operation? Will she now at last agree with the merit in the proposal to transfer Rivers Agency to the Department for Regional Development?

Mrs O'Neill: I do not think that it is totally disjointed. Past events have shown how the Departments work closely together. If the flooding is from rivers, my Department will be in the lead; if it is from surface flooding, Roads Service will be in the lead. There are clear practical examples of how Departments have worked together. I have always said that I am open to the performance and efficiency

delivery unit (PEDU) report, which looked at one body taking the lead. I have always said that I am very open to that in the context of a wider review of Executive Departments. I do not have a closed mind to it, but I do not think that it is fair to say that there is not good cross-departmental working on flooding. Past practice has shown that that is the case.

Mr Dunne: Can the Minister advise us if Rivers Agency has increased its staff and the resources that are available to deal with especially the flash flooding that we have experienced in recent years?

Mrs O'Neill: We do not have an issue with staff. We have recruited staff — I do not have the numbers to hand, but I can certainly provide them — over the last number of years. Our priority is that, as is set out under the Drainage Order, we make sure that rivers are clean, that we inspect them annually and that there is no flooding unnecessarily because of work that has not been done. In areas where there was a need to maybe enhance inspections, we have been able to deploy the staff we have on the ground. I can write to the Member with the number of staff that we have employed over the last couple of years.

Mr Dallat: The Minister may well be aware that, at the height of the building boom, many rivers were piped and culverts then created, but those culverts are not being checked on a regular basis and there is a question mark over whose responsibility it is. Will the Minister investigate that and ensure that, where those culverts exist, whole neighbourhoods are not threatened with flooding? One Department does not accept, another does not accept, the things are not adopted and neighbourhoods are living in fear.

Mrs O'Neill: I can make sure that we investigate that. I am aware, even on a constituency level, of cases where developers have gone bust and people have been left in a particularly difficult situation. I know how difficult it is to get someone to take ownership. I will certainly take a look at my Department's role and what we do.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for oral questions. We will now move on to topical questions.

Farming: Russian Import Ban

1. **Mr Anderson** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps she intends to take to support the agriculture industry in light of the impact that the Russian import ban is having on farmers and processors in Northern Ireland. (AQT 1411/11-15)

3.15 pm

Mrs O'Neill: The ban is particularly affecting our dairy industry, and we are quite concerned about how it will impact on other sectors further down the line. The ban has mainly affected cheese.

Last week, I went to Brussels and took part in a special meeting the EU had convened to get all the member states together to talk about the issue. I made sure that I impressed on the DEFRA Secretary of State, whom I also attended meetings with, the need for our industry to be protected, to be given immediate and timely supports where appropriate and to find new markets for products that would traditionally have gone to Russia.

So whilst there may be a smaller impact on the number of businesses that are immediately affected, I think that there will be reverberations further down the line that may cause problems for us. I also think that finding new markets needs to be a key priority.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Minister, for that response. You mentioned that you met the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Elizabeth Truss, last week. I take it that you were lobbying for support on that occasion, and I hope that you were. Do you intend to meet her again to try to get support, in particular for the introduction of export refunds for the dairy industry?

Mrs O'Neill: I am sure that the Member will be very aware that my political position and ideology regarding the EU and how to support the industry is very different from Elizabeth Truss's. However, I made it very clear that I think that any supports that can be provided by the EU need to be timely and appropriate. I welcome the fact that the EU has already taken steps in terms of storage, but I think that it is important that we do not have similar situations as we have seen in the past when the EU sat back, and the industry was detrimentally affected. I made that case very strongly to Elizabeth. I also made that case to Commissioner Ciolos, whom I was also in a meeting with. I made the case for our local industry.

I suppose what we have to do now is to watch the market very closely and to see how this is going to impact on other sectors. It is also disappointing for a number of industries, particularly the pork, beef and pet food sectors, which had been targeting Russia as a market. That will obviously cause setbacks for those people, in the immediate future anyway.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Question 2 has been withdrawn.

Badgers: TVR Project

3. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how the test and vaccinate or remove (TVR) project is progressing. (AQT 1413/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Member will be aware that the project commenced in May in the 100 square kilometre area around Banbridge and that it will run for five years and end in late 2018. TVR is a research project that will provide much-needed information on badgers and the TVR approach. It is not a pilot and is not being attempted anywhere else. No badgers will be removed this year, and all badgers that are captured will be sampled, microchipped, vaccinated and released.

I went to the site to see the ongoing work for myself. The project is certainly going very well. I know that the vets are very enthusiastic about the work they are doing and are absolutely passionate about it. So, good progress is being made, but it is too early to give statistical information about the project. We are only a number of months into it.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. What has been the uptake in the area where the project is being implemented?

Mrs O'Neill: The uptake has been very good. The Department has written to all the landowners, and we have had a very positive response. At present, our departmental researchers are calling with farmers and landowners in the Banbridge TVR area to obtain the permissions to access the land and to conduct TVR activities over the next five years. I think that some 93% of farmers in the TVR area who responded have given permission to the Department to access their land. We are very grateful for that, and I obviously encourage all the remaining farmers to get involved and to give their permission to departmental staff to access their land.

Forest Service: HQ Relocation

4. **Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for information on the date of the move, following her announcement that Forest Service headquarters will relocate to Fermanagh. (AQT 1414/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am pleased to say that the headquarters relocation team has prepared a project plan and has identified key stages for an expected move by June 2015. The Department has worked very closely with DFP's properties division to complete an appraisal of Inishkeen House in Enniskillen to consider the viability of placing more Forest Service staff there. The first phase of that work is complete, and it has been confirmed that Inishkeen House can potentially accommodate more staff. The indications are that, with an internal redesign, Forest Service headquarters staff could be accommodated there. I am very pleased with that, and I assure the Member that we are on target and working very hard to be able to deliver the project and for staff to be there by June next year.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. It is good to get good news here the odd time.

There is considerable interest amongst people employed in the public sector in Fermanagh. An awful lot of them have to travel to Belfast and places like it to get employment. Will the Minister outline how many jobs in total will be made available in Fermanagh?

Mrs O'Neill: There will be 65 in total going to the Forest Service in Fermanagh. The Member will be aware of all the other relocations, with fisheries going to south Down, Rivers Agency to Loughry in Cookstown and DARD headquarters to Ballykelly. These are all positive. All are on target, and a lot of work is going on. It is about making sure that staff feel comfortable with all the moves, so we have a significant lead-in time to allow all that to happen. It is all very positive stuff.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr McNarry is not in his place. In fairness to him, he contacted the Business Office but did so just outside the time allowed for the withdrawal of questions.

Rivers Agency: Planning Service Relationship

6. **Mrs Hale** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the relationship and consultation between Planning Service and her Department, in particular Rivers Agency. (AQT 1416/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I can provide more detail in writing on the specifics, but there is a relationship: when applications come forward, the Planning Service may, at times, consult Rivers Agency, which will assist it with mapping designs and whatever else it has been asked for at the time. There have been instances in the past of, for example, objections to planning and Rivers Agency having to get involved by providing details of what it feels are potential or problematic areas.

Mrs Hale: I thank the Minister for her answer. From my experience in Lisburn, the reality is that we may lose a multimillion pound investment because investors cannot wait for Rivers Agency to respond to Planning Service applications that would bring much-needed investment to Lagan valley. Delays from Rivers Agency have had a detrimental effect. What can you do, Minister, to ensure that Rivers Agency will prioritise such applications?

Mrs O'Neill: I hope that the Member has spoken to and dealt with Rivers Agency directly. However, I am happy to talk to her outside the Chamber about that constituency issue.

DARD HQ: Ballykelly

7. **Ms McCorley** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the relocation of her departmental headquarters to Ballykelly. (AQT 1417/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As I said in a previous answer, we are delighted to be moving forward with the project. We had Executive sign-off on the project back in June and are on schedule for the relocation. It is so important, and it is fantastic to see the Executive committing to the Ballykelly area, the wider rural community and to a fairer distribution of public sector jobs. I am passionate about making sure that we get the project right and that we move it forward because this will be the first Department to move lock, stock and barrel out of the greater Belfast area. It is important that we lead the way, and, hopefully, other Departments will follow.

We are on schedule for the first cohort of staff to move in 2017, and the rest will move over the next number of years after that. Work is progressing nicely, we are ensuring that we engage with staff, and we are also on target, as I said, for all the other projects — moving fisheries, Rivers Agency and Forest Service.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo.

The Minister referred to the relationship with staff. Are staff content that they are being properly informed?

Mrs O'Neill: I am hopeful that staff are content, by and large. We made sure that we had an ad hoc committee, and we have been meeting the trade union side throughout the process, because it is so important that we get this right. DARD headquarters has been where it is now for about 50 years, so, inevitably, quite a number of staff are from the greater Belfast area. Therefore, it is understandable that those people would not want to move. I think that the fact that we are taking the project forward in the way that we are is allowing for the changes to happen and for people to move in and out of DARD. I hope that that will accommodate as many staff as possible. I have

always said that we would never want to be in the position of forcing anybody to move.

As I said, I am hopeful that, with the right planning, which I think we have in place, and continued engagement with the trade union side and staff on the ground, staff will be confident that they are being kept informed of everything as it happens and that they have been given every opportunity to create a solution for themselves that, hopefully, creates a good work/life balance.

Insect Pollinators

8. **Mr Cree** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to advise the House on the action taken by her Department to address the serious decline in insect pollinators in Northern Ireland. (AQT 1418/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I do not have any detail with me on that, but I will be happy to provide it to the Member in writing. If he wants to be more specific and to contact my private office, I would be happy to give him whatever information he needs.

Mr Cree: Thank you. That would be very welcome.

The Minister will remember that the House encouraged the development of a bee health strategy a couple of years ago. What work has her Department done on the development of that strategy? Perhaps if the Minister does not have that information to hand, she could let me know.

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware of concerns about the bee population. So yes, some work has been done on that, but, again, I will provide that information to the Member in writing.

Farm Safety: Slurry

9. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for further information on what has been done to increase farm safety, especially in relation to slurry handling, and whether any work has been done on the possibility of a warning device for farmers to alert them to toxic fumes while handling slurry. (AQT 1419/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department plays a very active role with the Health and Safety Executive, which takes the lead in farm safety. We are very keen to work with all the industry partners, particularly the farming unions. We have all come together to promote the Stop and Think SAFE message and to encourage farmers to think before handling slurry. It is a very dangerous profession, as we all know, and there is an ageing population in the farming community. All those factors need to be taken into account.

There are concerns that such a warning device could provide a false sense of safety, in that it may not be calibrated correctly but farmers might rely on it. The HSE is not keen for that to be rolled out. If that was the case, we would certainly encourage uptake of it in whatever way we could, but, at this moment, that is not a solution that either industry or the Health and Safety Executive has identified.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Pat Sheehan. Excuse me; I call Mr Gordon Dunne for a supplementary question.

Mr Dunne: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. I thank the Minister for her answer. To follow that up, has the Department involved universities or anyone else in

research and development to try to come up with suitable equipment? Unfortunately, deaths from slurry-related incidents are a regular occurrence in Northern Ireland and will continue to be, given our large dairy sector. Surely there is a need for someone to look at this and to come up with a proper design, such as something for that purpose that will be effective, efficient, strong and portable. Has that aspect been looked at?

Mrs O'Neill: I assure the Member that all those things are being looked at through the auspices of the Health and Safety Executive. If there was a solution that we could provide, I have no doubt that we would have it. The work has not yet been done to say that that is the definitive solution. So, I think that there are a number of things that we need to be doing along the way, particularly around grant aid for slurry, for example, to make sure that tanks are safe and all those things. We can do all that, but we await the Health and Safety Executive's approval of a device of that nature. I have no doubt that it is consulting universities and has other researchers involved in researching farm safety. It is so important that we do not just put a sticking plaster on something that could be a bigger issue; it is important that we get it right.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Pat Sheehan — again.

Ash Dieback: Impact

10. **Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the impact of ash dieback. (AQT 1420/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The 2014 survey of ash is complete, and 406 of the planned 1,000 inspections have been carried out. That survey was done in the recently planted sites of ash in public and private woodland; roadside plantings; established trees and hedgerows; and there is ongoing nursery surveillance. Any suspect trees that have been sampled have undergone laboratory testing for the ash dieback pathogen, and we are adopting a risk-based, intelligence-led, targeted approach.

Our 2014 survey has found only two new infections, with no evidence that the disease is circulating in the wider environment. So, I suppose that is positive in itself. However, current scientific understanding suggests that the conditions for spread in the wider environment exist right across the island of Ireland. Two wider environment sites were identified in the South last year when action was taken to destroy the mature ash in hedgerows and associated ash debris affected by the disease. So, we continue to remain vigilant and to survey for this serious disease.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order. Time for questions is up.

I see that Ms Anna Lo has come into the Chamber. You wished to raise a point of order earlier.

3.30 pm

Ms Lo: Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, it was to apologise to you and to the House for not being in the Chamber earlier. I was involved in a seminar to look at the draft racial equality strategy and missed the opportunity to come down. Sorry.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: OK. Thank you for coming in person to apologise to the House.

Mr Wilson: On a point of order.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Hello, Mr Wilson.

Mr Wilson: Since it appears that apologies are the order of the day, I also apologise for my absence during —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Could you speak up? [Laughter.]

Mr Wilson: You never usually have to ask me to do that, mind you. I also apologise for my absence during topical questions to the Social Development Minister. I apologise to the House for that. I hope that my apology is sufficiently fulsome and has sufficient volume as well.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I feel better already. The House will take its ease while we change the top Table.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Committee Business

Barroso Task Force

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer will have 15 minutes to propose the motion and 15 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Nesbitt (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I beg to move

That this Assembly notes the report of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (NIA 179/11-15) on its Inquiry into the Barroso task force; and calls on the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, announced a European Commission task force for Northern Ireland just over seven years ago, on 1 May 2007. It was the first time that a task force for a specific region in the EU had been created. It was done to support the peace process, with a particular emphasis on how to assist Northern Ireland in its efforts to improve its economic competitiveness and to create sustainable employment. The Northern Ireland, or Barroso, task force as it came to be known, comprises a group of representatives from the European Commission who work with officials from the Northern Ireland Executive Departments to strengthen European engagement.

On a day-to-day basis, the task force is managed in Brussels by the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy at the European Commission, with representation on the task force from many other directorates-general. The Northern Ireland aspect of the task force operates through the Barroso task force working group, chaired by the junior Ministers, and its thematic working groups. These thematic groups focus on the economy, environment and social themes, with a cross-cutting focus on Horizon 2020, which is the EU's programme for research and innovation. The work of these groups and of the Executive as a whole is supported by the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels.

President Barroso's term comes to an end next month, and the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister agreed that it was timely to undertake a short inquiry to reflect on the work of the task force and what it has achieved. The Committee wished to gather evidence on the outcomes from the work of the task force and to identify and consider any lessons learned, in order to inform recommendations for the Executive's engagement in European affairs in the future.

At this point, I thank all those who submitted evidence to the Committee inquiry. That evidence was vital to its considerations. The Committee was pleased to note the positive comments from the European Commission's director-general for regional and urban policy, Walter Deffaa, on his cooperation with the authorities in Northern Ireland.

On the outcomes of the work of the task force, the Committee was grateful in particular for the detail provided by the European Commission submission. It highlighted a number of outcomes across a wide range of policy areas that could be directly or indirectly attributed to the work of the task force. The range of activity undertaken should be commended. In consideration of the evidence received, it is clear that the task force in Brussels and the task force working group in Northern Ireland have stimulated a marked increase in engagement in European affairs by Departments. The outcomes can be grouped into successes across four areas: the drawdown of competitive funds; the establishment of fora and networks; an increase in profile and focus; and the creation of appropriate structures.

Much of the evidence received on the drawdown of competitive funds commented on the Executive's performance in exceeding their annual goals in the Programme for Government target of increasing drawdown by 20% over the period 2011-15. The target for drawdown is £64.4 million over that four-year period. The Executive are on track to meet and perhaps surpass that target. That must be commended. Just one example is the success of the Department for Regional Development in drawing down competitive funds from the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) programme.

On the establishment of fora and networks, the creation of the task force working group is seen as providing a useful forum for discussion and sharing of best practice among Departments. In addition, other networks have been created, including the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum (NIERF), which was created by Belfast City Council and is now co-chaired by OFMDFM. It provides a platform for strategic collaboration on EU funding and policy for the public, private and voluntary sectors. Those networks serve to increase knowledge and capacity in applying for funding and influencing policy.

The profile and focus offered by the task force and its working group were viewed as successful outcomes. The visibility of Northern Ireland as one of many regions in Europe and the access to senior officials in the Commission were viewed as positive outcomes in providing impetus, focus and a more cohesive approach to how our Departments engage in European affairs. The structures created by the task force, particularly the additional staffing resources in the Executive offices in Brussels, were viewed positively in providing information on policy, legislative and funding issues relevant to Northern Ireland.

Mr Wilson: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he agree that one of the gaps that there appears to be is with groups that may well spend funds and put forward proposals for drawing down funds in Northern Ireland? Many of them are still not aware of the kinds of funds that they could access and the kinds of projects that might be eligible. Did you identify a gap in communication between those groups and the relevant authorities in Brussels?

Mr Nesbitt: I thank the Member for his intervention. The question of a coordinated approach to the dissemination of information is an ongoing challenge for Europe. Our MEPs, or at least some of them, have produced information leaflets that community groups and others find extremely useful. If you look at the landscape and the map of stakeholders, you will see that there is an ongoing

challenge to ensure that there is a coordinated approach so that information gets down to the ground, where it is needed. Perhaps that is a lesson of the task force.

On lessons learned and in looking to the future, the Committee's analysis of the evidence found four main issues. The Committee has made a number of recommendations accordingly. First, the focus and momentum provided by defined targets was a clear theme emerging from the evidence provided. The aspirations of the Executive's engagement in European affairs must be clear, and success or otherwise must be measurable. Monitoring and evaluation of success is key to capitalising on the opportunities offered. To this end, the Committee recommends that the current benchmarking exercise to compare Northern Ireland's performance in drawdown of competitive funds is completed and then shared with Assembly Committees as soon as possible.

The Committee welcomes the clearly defined Programme for Government target in relation to funding drawdown. We recommend that more clearly defined targets be developed for the working group, where outcomes can be more easily measured. It is only through measurement and evaluation that performance can be enhanced. However, the Committee does recognise that some goals, for example in relation to networking and influencing, will be more qualitative in nature.

The Committee also recommends that data on applications for European funding be more comprehensively captured, monitored and evaluated. It is through sharing lessons learned and best practice that capacity can be developed to improve the number of successful funding applications. So, the Committee also recommends that the Executive publish their annual European priorities in a more timely fashion. The Committee has been advised that the document is currently a work in progress, but, at the mid-point of the year, the 2014-15 priorities document is as yet unpublished. A telling comment from the Centre for Cross Border studies stated:

"the lack of timeliness in formulation, communication and evaluation of objectives, means that they appear to be published as if they were simultaneously being set, receiving their mid-year progress update, and their final outcomes."

Turning to the second issue of clarity of roles and responsibilities, the Committee welcomes the architecture that has been established by the Executive since the European Commission's original report in 2008 and acknowledges the recent review of the thematic priorities and the role of the official supporting the task force working group. The Committee, however, is concerned to learn of confusion, even among Executive Departments, on the roles and responsibilities of the various actors in the Executive's engagement in EU affairs. The role of the supporting mechanisms must be clear because, without clarity, effective engagement cannot be undertaken, success cannot be captured and information sharing will be limited. So, the Committee recommends that the architecture of the Executive's EU engagement be clearly defined and widely disseminated, with greater clarity of the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders. Businesses, charities and community groups must have clarity on the support available in accessing funding or policy information.

The effectiveness or otherwise of the structures must be evaluated. The Committee was pleased that OFMDFM recently reviewed the structures that support the working group and implemented changes to thematic groups and to the supporting liaison officers to better respond to changes in European policy and legislation. The Committee hopes that these changes will enhance the effectiveness of the engagement in EU affairs to the benefit of the people of Northern Ireland.

Turning to communication, there are lessons to be learned about effective communication of the nature of the task force and the working group and the work being undertaken. The issue was raised by this Committee and other statutory Committees during the 2013-14 session, where delays in receiving timely reports from Brussels-based officials were highlighted. So, the Committee recommends that a communications plan for the task force and the working groups be developed as a matter of urgency. The plan should include means of regular, timely and accurate communication of the work of the task force and the working group to Executive Departments, Assembly Committees and other key stakeholders. Indeed, the submission to the Committee's inquiry from the European Commission provided much detail on the work being done by the task force and the task force working group across a range of policy areas. The detail within would be very useful for Assembly Committees and is but one example of information that could and should be communicated in a structured and a regular fashion rather than coming to light only in written evidence to a Committee inquiry.

Given the issues experienced by Assembly Committees in exercising their statutory scrutiny function, mechanisms to facilitate effective and timely communication with Committees must be developed and developed as a matter of urgency. The Committee also recommends that OFMDFM, in leading on European affairs at the Executive, actively pursue opportunities for two-way secondments for civil servants to the European institutions to build capacity and expertise. The Committee also recommends that the Executive explore opportunities for Northern Ireland to offer its experience and specialisms to other EU partners.

3.45 pm

In conclusion, the Committee acknowledges the work of the Barroso task force and of the task force working group to date, while making a number of recommendations that seek to enhance and further develop Northern Ireland's engagement in EU affairs. While the future of the task force itself is unclear, the Committee recommends that OFMDFM continue to support an interdepartmental forum to support a cohesive and coherent Executive-wide approach to EU engagement. It is important that the valuable skills and networks that have been developed to date be further enhanced.

It is only through more effective engagement in European affairs that we can hope to maximise the benefits of our EU membership and grow our economy. While much remains uncertain about our future in Europe, we must support the public, private and voluntary sectors in grasping the opportunities currently afforded by the European Union.

I commend the motion and the report to the House.

Mr Moutray: I support the motion from the Committee before us today. The report has been enlightening and timely, given the imminent change on the horizon with the presidency of José Manuel Barroso coming to an end shortly. I believe that the inquiry has clearly highlighted the benefits of the Northern Ireland task force and also the areas needing further work and effort to help fully utilise the task force that was established by President Barroso in 2007 to support Northern Ireland's efforts to improve its economic competitiveness and create sustainable employment.

Throughout the report it is evident that the task force in Brussels and the task force working group in Northern Ireland have stimulated an improvement and an increased engagement in European affairs by Executive Departments. It is also very clear that, in terms of policy, the task force has directly and indirectly created positive outcomes for Northern Ireland.

In the Programme for Government the Executive made it abundantly clear that the aim was to increase Northern Ireland's drawdown of competitive funds by 20% over the period, and we are all aware that Northern Ireland has exceeded that target. I count that as an achievement. However, it is vital that we continue to work and build upon our proven track record in Europe and move towards the establishment of clear targets and clear outcomes and the capturing of data to prove and demonstrate its successes and to ascertain what else can be done to improve and enhance our drawdown from Europe.

The report contains 11 recommendations, and it is not my intention to go through them all in detail, but I want to mention a few of them that I believe are of the utmost importance. On recommendation 1, it is inevitable that, when there is a change in personnel, the focus changes, relationships change and linkages that were previously established can be lost. However, I believe it is vital that we maintain a focus on what has been achieved, endeavour to hold on to the linkages and connections that have been made previously and realise and further the potential, and perhaps the opportunities, that will come with that change.

Of the regions represented, Northern Ireland is among the top achievers, and we therefore have to continue to improve, enhance and build upon what has already come to fruition.

Mr Wilson: I thank the Member for giving way. It is good to see that the targets that have been set by the Executive are actually being met and exceeded, but will he agree with me that one of the impediments — and there are many — to fully drawing down the amount of money that we could draw down is sometimes the bureaucracy that exists within Departments? It almost becomes very difficult for projects to meet the timelines that are set down for spending funding, and many of the balances or checks that Departments put in place in terms of new business cases etc affect the ability of people, first of all, to apply, and, secondly, to see the projects through. Indeed, some projects have been lost as a result of the bureaucracy within Departments.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind Members that interventions are meant to be short. You have an extra minute.

Mr Moutray: Thank you, and I thank my colleague for his intervention. I agree entirely with what he said about red

tape and bureaucracy. They still need to be challenged and overcome in relation to Europe.

I mentioned earlier the need for the establishment of clear targets, and that is where recommendations 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 play a role. It is clear that, to measure the success of something, you need to set clear targets and clear outcomes and have the capability to capture data to prove the worth of something or highlight that something is just not working. I support those recommendations. There is a need for a better evaluation process of ongoing work and a more open line of communication with the Executive and the Committees.

There needs to be a quicker and more effective way of publishing the annual European priorities document and a more regular review of processes by Committees to look at the progress and aid the Executive as they look towards future European priorities.

There also needs to be a concerted effort to help improve the accessibility of funding and the completion of application forms by third parties and arm's-length bodies. Unfortunately, there remains a lack of capacity where funding applications are concerned. Often, that is because they are too complicated.

Recommendations 8 and 9 deal with communication, and both are key to going forward. Any ongoing work, whether it results in achievements or a lack of progress, must be measured and communicated. Communication of the task force's work is essential, be it with the public, Departments, Committees or key stakeholders.

There is much good work ongoing. For instance, the financial gain of €14.5 million at the half-way stage of the Budget period and the Peace IV programme, which is worth €150 million, was lobbied for by the task force and has been secured. Those are key messages — key wins — that we need to get across to the public. We also have benefited financially from the transport and mobility policy, with €28.4 million having been secured for seven projects in Northern Ireland to improve our transport infrastructure.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Moutray: There have been many more wins, and I am sure that other Members will mention them in the debate. I welcome the report. It has provided Members with clarity on the task force and its work. I support the motion.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I support the motion. I commend all the good work of the task force since its establishment in 2007. Without doubt, the task force has made an impact by improving the North's economic competitiveness, achieving sustainable employment, helping to raise the profile of the North and having a role in the decision-making that takes place in Brussels.

Following the inquiry into the Barroso task force, the Committee makes a number of recommendations to support and enhance future engagement in European affairs. President Barroso's term is coming to an end, and it is important that the Executive are being proactive regarding future engagement in the European Union.

Mr Wilson: I thank the Member for giving way. Does she accept that this is not a debate that is likely to get much coverage in the media today, because they do not like to hear about the successes of the Executive against the

targets that they have set? Not only have the Executive achieved those targets, they have exceeded them.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Ms McGahan: I thank the Member for his contribution. It is not often that we agree, but I definitely agree with you on that point.

The Barroso task force was set up and the four desk officers were appointed to help the Executive support Programme for Government commitment 26, which is to facilitate delivery of the Executive's 20% target for increased drawdown of competitive EU funds.

The report on the inquiry into the Barroso task force has identified a lot of positivity for the North across a range of policy areas where an impact has been made through engagement with the EU. One example regarding DCAL, and it is one of many, was that Department's keeping of a watching brief on Creative Europe 2014-2020. DCAL was notified of a creative industries funding call and informed the Arts Council of the opportunity, and it was grateful for having that important issue highlighted.

The report has identified that the task force has been successful in putting a focus on all Departments to increase their drawdown of competitive funds by 20%. The inquiry has identified that a lot of expertise has been built up by the task force since 2007, and it is important that that is not lost. That knitting and networking have been invaluable in establishing links. In that context, the Committee recommends that the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister continue to sustain an interdepartmental forum to support such a cohesive and coherent approach to European engagement across the Executive. This is an important area of work, as many laws and policies of the EU have a direct impact on the people in the North of Ireland. The EU is making decisions that affect us: 70% of legislation that the Assembly deals with originates in Brussels, so it is important that we are in there, shaping and influencing decision-making in Europe and that we are not, as someone stated, gold-plating legislation.

Different reports have shown, in a tangible way, the improved interaction with the EU institutions through the positive role of the task force. Playing a more active role in the shaping of EU policy will enable us to benefit from the opportunities it provides, and this is one of the Committee's recommendations in the report.

The Statutory Committees have made progress in developing and fostering that channel available via the Executive office in Brussels, and it is important that we harness and use that important position in Brussels. How we engage more effectively with that office is vital, and we need to move from being reactive to being more proactive to shape and influence. That is difficult and demanding.

I mentioned before in the Chamber that I attended an EU funding event in Dungannon, organised by our local MEP and MP. The aim was to learn about as many of these funding programmes as possible. The feedback from the well-attended information session, addressed by Martina Anderson, had been extremely positive, and many of those in attendance had been unaware of the extent of the funding available from Europe for research and innovation projects in areas as diverse as technology, health, transport, energy, agriculture, food and space sectors. It

shows that, while we have made progress, we have much more to do.

In evidence submitted to the inquiry, the feedback on the Barroso task force has been positive, and it is identified as an important mechanism for enhancing and engaging with EU structures. Most submissions advocate that we continue to have a platform to enhance our engagement with the EU and its institutions, amongst other suggestions for improvement.

I welcome the report.

Mr Attwood: As others have done, I want first to acknowledge the work of the Committee Clerks, the Commission, President Barroso and all those who went before him: Haagerup; Delors; Hume; and other MEPs who tried to put Northern Ireland closer to the centre of power in Europe. It may well be that, with the forthcoming appointment of Commissioner Hogan, if he gets the agriculture or trade brief, we will have further opportunities to be at the centre of decision-making in Europe.

The report seems to me to be a good report, but it is somewhat technocratic and descriptive. So, sourced in the report, I want to move a little bit beyond it by making the following observations. The first is this: a part of the management of all of this back here is a task force working group made up of the junior Ministers and senior civil servants. I do not think that that is adequate. I think that that organisation, as part of the management of the drawdown and promotion of EU funding in the North, should have representatives from the business community and the third sector generally. That is a principle that we should apply across government, not just in respect of Barroso. One of the strengths of the Scottish Government is that they second into Departments people from outside government, from business and elsewhere, who have specialist knowledge and insight, in order to maximise the ability of government to do what is needed in the interests of its people. And don't they do it well? I do not believe that a group made up of junior Ministers and senior civil servants has a gathering of all the skills necessary to maximise what we need to do.

Secondly, we should adopt the Dublin approach to EU drawdown of funding, whereby Enterprise Ireland has staff dedicated to identifying all opportunities, and each Department and other public agencies have staff dedicated to that task as well. They have escalated that in a way that makes what we do in Northern Ireland seem quite marginal and limited. So, for all the apparent success that Mr Wilson refers to, and I will come back to that comment, compared with how Dublin manages its European outreach in European discretionary funding, we have a mountain to learn. In my view, we should just adopt the model in Dublin of Enterprise Ireland and cascade it across the systems of government in the North.

4.00 pm

Thirdly, Mr Wilson rightly says that we have had some success and that we are going to draw down an increase of 20% over 2011-15, and that is welcome. We do not obviously know whether that is all that good compared with comparable states in Europe because the benchmarking exercise has not been fulfilled. So, subject to that caveat, this is the question: the drawdown in Dublin of FP7 up to 2014 is around €900 million, and the drawdown in

Northern Ireland from FP7 will be less than €50 million. So, subject to the benchmarking exercise, with a population of four and a bit million down there and less than two million up here, there is a huge discrepancy between less than €50 million and €900 million.

At one of the sessions of the Committee recently, one person who has a lot of knowledge about these matters did not know precisely what the future drawdown notionally of the Dublin Government is when it comes to the FP successor programme, Horizon 2020, which is €1.2 billion, and, based on their success with FP7, it will be close to €2 billion — €2 billion 100 miles from here. What is our hoped drawdown? Far, far less than that in comparable terms.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Attwood: So, I welcome the report, but we have a mountain to climb in maximising the opportunities of future EU drawdown.

Mr Spratt: I am not going to repeat a lot of the things that have been said, but, since 2007, when the task force was set up to improve economic competitiveness and create sustainable employment in Northern Ireland in the context of the peace process, it is significant that only two regions in the European Union have the support, and Northern Ireland is one of them. President Barroso's term will come to an end next month, and it is vital that the momentum that has been put in place is not lost and that we continue to build on the progress that has been made.

The report makes a number of recommendations in relation to targets and outcomes. I am not going to go over the recommendations one by one because my colleague has already done that, but there is a clearly defined target in the Programme for Government regarding the drawdown of European funds, European priorities and subsequent implementation plans. However, the Committee recommends that the European priorities are identified in a more timely fashion and that all the plans are regularly reviewed in order to ensure that the Executive can benefit from the opportunities as they become available.

The working group should set its own targets and use SMART goals that are easy to verify and measure, while acknowledging that some of the goals, such as networking and influencing, are more difficult to measure but are no less important.

The Committee also recommends that the Department capture data on funding applications, including those from third parties and arm's-length bodies. That information should then be shared with Departments, thematic groups and the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum. A comprehensive monitoring system would provide an opportunity to inform, develop and enhance future performance.

The other recommendations relate to clarity of roles, responsibilities, communication, profile and focus. It is important to build capacity and knowledge between the European institutions and the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. Many organisations have benefited from European funding. I can think, in particular, of many disadvantaged communities in my constituency.

I have to compliment Ministers from right across the board. They are often criticised in the House and outside by the press. They have regularly gone to Europe and been

successful in obtaining fairly substantial sums of money as part of the United Kingdom, not, as Mr Attwood portrays it, because Northern Ireland is only a region, not a state, of the European Union. He is pretty fanciful with the way in which he describes the whole thing and the benefits to the state in the South. Perhaps he should do some more geography on where he is actually talking about.

The Chair covered all the points. I compliment the Committee staff on how they have dealt with the report and how they put it together. The Chair mentioned, as I would expect him to, the regional development money that has been brought in. Regional development has done very well from Europe. As Chair of the Committee for Regional Development, I have to say that that Committee also played a major role in ensuring the drawdown of TEN-T money.

One of the most important things is that Departments share with their Committees, at a timely and early stage, any opportunities to get funding from Brussels. We should all ensure that the Departments for which we have responsibility do that.

MEPs have been mentioned, and I want to compliment Diane Dodds. She produced a number of booklets on funding opportunities for groups, churches and other organisations. That has been very helpful in getting funding from Europe. I compliment the work and she and her department have done in Europe.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member must draw his remarks to a close.

Mr Spratt: Thank you. I commend the report to the House and support it.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I welcome the report and thank the Chair for bringing it to the Assembly this afternoon. I add my voice of thanks to the Committee officials and also to the Department and the junior Ministers for appearing at the Committee and supporting it in its deliberations on this very important matter.

The essence of what all contributors have said is that we need to continue to work together on the issue. Obviously, what we are addressing today is the whole question of how we relate to the Programme for Government's commitment 26, which is about increasing the drawdown from 2011 to 2015 by 20%. We have all agreed that that is a modest amount, but, as Jimmy Spratt said in referencing a previous contributor, this is not a sovereign state, which is how the South is classified. Therefore, we are not in a position to get anywhere near the kind of money that has been available there. That is not to say that we must not be more ambitious in the time ahead. I see the lessons that have been learned from this phase of our renewed and enhanced engagement as being developmental in real terms.

Members referred to the fact that Manuel Barroso is moving on. We need to ensure that, whatever happens with regard to new appointments in Brussels, our focus remains entirely on working together much more effectively and sharing the wealth of experience that is undoubtedly out there. We need to harness all that to ensure that we maximise the drawdown that we are entitled to secure. As I said, 20% is, in my view and in the view of most Members, fairly modest. Nevertheless, it is important and welcome that it is a target that is clearly being met.

I think that Sammy Wilson referred earlier to the fact that perhaps some obstacles remain when it comes to the engagement of some Departments. That may or may not be the case. I simply say this: in the template for the implementation of Programme for Government commitments, we have a series of measures to make sure that we identify any problems that there may well be, whether from a Department or anybody else's failure to fully engage with, or realise, what is eligible for drawdown.

In our engagement over the years with Brussels, all of us have understood that a lot more is yet to be done. I commend the role of the working group, under the guidance and co-chairmanship of the two junior Ministers. We all agree that very important work is being done. May that work continue, not only to meet the targets that we have set but, in the time ahead, to continue to increase the targets that we want to reach beyond that 20%. Anybody working in their relevant sector over the years will know that there is an absolute wealth of experience in the community and voluntary sector. Many of us here know people who are very adept at drawing down European funds because, often, any sizeable, realistic or meaningful project in the community requires a cocktail of funding. Very often, European funding is an essential part of that. There is also a wealth of experience in the business sector, the agri-sector and a whole range of other sectors.

We have benefited from lessons on how to gain funding for transport and moneys for health, research and innovation, food and all the rest, so we know that we can benefit tremendously from a much more enhanced role from Europe. I wish the officials well in the time ahead, under the leadership of the junior Ministers, not only in realising the 20%, which we believe that we are well on target to secure, but in then setting much more ambitious targets. That means all of us, collectively, putting our shoulder to the wheel.

I commend all those, including the three MEPs, who have been working very hard over the years. Of course, it would be remiss of me not to refer again to the funding paper that Martina Anderson produced not that long ago, 'Gateway to EU Funding'. Notwithstanding all the work being done by each Department, OFMDFM and the junior Ministers, the MEPs and a range of other stakeholders who are out there, day to day, engaging with Europe, —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Maskey: — any additional information that we can get will only enhance our opportunity to draw down the funding that is available to us.

Mrs Hale: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion and to welcome the publication of the inquiry into the Barroso task force and its delivery to date. It is clear that the task force working group has proved to be a catalyst for an increased focus from all Departments on EU matters, particularly the Programme for Government target to increase Northern Ireland's drawdown of competitive funds by 20% over the period, something that has been hugely beneficial to many parts of the Executive and the region.

As with most task forces, there are many good news stories and successful outcomes but also a number of recommendations that need to be developed to sustain a cohesive and coherent approach to EU engagement

across the Executive. In focusing on recommendations from the inquiry, there are some that I would like to note specifically. Recommendations 5 and 6 are that OFMDFM ensure that, as far as possible, data on funding applications, including third parties, is captured — as my colleague Jimmy Spratt mentioned — and that cohesive monitoring systems in supporting and enhancing future skills and performance are developed.

I feel, however, that it is equally important to monitor the fullness of all funding applications, but especially those that are unsuccessful. I am approached, as I am sure that many of us are, by groups that have applied for funding and been turned down due to an array of issues. It is vital that, if we are to ensure transparency in funding, we must equally monitor the groups that have not been successful in receiving funding and, if possible, why they have not been awarded the requested funds. More focus could then be put on giving additional support and information in the areas where groups are failing. I must acknowledge all the work that my colleague Diane Dodds has done on that, particularly in my area of Lagan Valley.

Another area worth highlighting is EU research and innovation. I have concerns that we still have a shortage of successful research and innovation projects as a percentage of total projects and a shortage of SMEs participating in framework programme 7 (FP7). Currently, NI has more work to do to make our rate equal to the SME participation rate in the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and other EU member states. That is something for which we may need some extra support and guidance to help businesses to develop their key projects and to seek funding.

4.15 pm

Better communication, clarity of roles, responsibility and structure came up as part of the report. It is clear that more needs to be done to ensure that all stakeholders know the roles and mechanisms involved in EU engagement across the various Departments to avoid confusion or duplication of effort. It is concerning that certain Departments were not sure of roles and responsibilities and how that could have a detrimental impact on NI's overall goal of strengthening our economy.

I welcome that the report acknowledges the addition of the Peace IV programme, worth £150 million. That was supported by the task force, and it is something that I am sure everyone in Northern Ireland will be happy to see.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I know that other Members will have different areas of the report to discuss. Broadly, I am happy with the outcomes of the inquiry, but it is clear that we must not become complacent and that we must ensure that we carry through on the recommendations that have been requested in detail in the report.

Ms Fearon: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I too welcome the motion. Like other Members, I commend the good work that civil servants and President Barroso have taken on under the task force.

As Bronwyn McGahan mentioned, the task force was about strengthening our engagement in the EU. It was initially established as a mechanism to improve and to help us with our economic competitiveness. Under President Barroso, we were offered some excellent opportunities, which, unfortunately, some of the Departments might

have been too slow to grasp, but I suppose it is a learning exercise. The main focus of the inquiry was on the outcomes and looking at our post-Barroso future. In that respect, we must thank all those who made submissions and made the effort to try to inform our approach to what was a largely important piece of work.

One of the recommendations from the inquiry was on the lessons that we learned. I think it is important to know how important it is for Departments to continue to work together going into the future, and it is essential that we continue to have a collaborative approach to Europe. It is hugely important that the lessons we learn from Barroso are not lost but are, in fact, built upon and enhanced even further. I think that we need to continue the momentum of positive engagement of the Assembly in European affairs.

Another recommendation coming out of the inquiry was on European priorities. Although I was not in the Chamber when he said it, I think I heard Mr Nesbitt, the Chair of the Committee, refer to the Executive's EU priorities and how they needed to be published sooner — at the very least, in the first quarter of the year. I do not think really that that is a lot to ask. It would allow Departments to be more proactive in their approach to horizon scanning, which, I think we can all agree, is an area that we need to improve on.

We need to be looking at the earliest possible date at what policies and legislation are coming from Europe. That means keeping an eye on issues that might emerge as discussion papers but that gradually develop into legislative proposals. That means that we would have a chance to try to shape them from the earliest possible time, and it would allow for more success, particularly if it were to do with European funding at drawdown stage. I think that Jimmy Spratt said that you cannot measure how important networking and engagement are in Europe, but you cannot put a value on how important those are.

Lessons need to be learned from the European operation in the South. I think it is one of the most successful member states when it comes to requesting and securing European funding. Its Brussels-based staff are in from the very beginning, lobbying and influencing when possible new streams are just an idea. That allows them to have a significant impact before the White Paper is even produced. I think the fact that we have a new team in the Executive office is a welcome move, as is the fact that they are now designated as liaison officers rather than desk officers, because a key part of being successful in Europe is being active and networking.

Another recommendation coming out of the inquiry and the report is on the area of EU funding. I heard it mentioned that we need a benchmarking exercise to be completed, because, other than that, we cannot tell how successful we have been in comparison with other places that are in similar situations to us. I think there is a perception that we have been a bit overreliant on Peace and INTERREG funds. Hundreds and hundreds of funding streams have completely remained untapped as far as the North is concerned, and there are huge opportunities for us in competitive funding over the next while with Horizon 2020 and others.

The Programme for Government commitment to increase the drawdown of European funding by 20% has been mentioned. It has been successful to date, and targets have been met and exceeded. Given our past drawdown, I

think we can perhaps concede that our FP7 performance was slightly disappointing. I would have been one who said that 20% was not a high enough target, but I think it is important to note that it is developmental. It is just a start, not an end; it is something that we can build upon and learn from for the future.

Some steps have been taken to assist drawdown. Alex Maskey referred to how so many of our community projects rely on a cocktail of funding, so European funding is hugely important. That is why one of the priorities is around the need for a European capacity-building fund that would enable a range of people to draw down funds without having to rely on Departments and go through the bureaucracy that Sammy Wilson mentioned. The appointment of contact officers in AFBI, Queen's and the University of Ulster to coordinate the approach of different partners to draw down funding is also helpful.

In the report, the Committee also recommends that, as much as possible, we should try to capture any data from arm's-length bodies and third parties to get a fuller picture of whatever European money is in the North and to look at the effectiveness of the fund that we mentioned.

I think that there is consensus that, when it comes to Europe, we need to be more proactive and there is serious room for improvement. The Assembly should look to allocate more substantial resources to improve our participation.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw her remarks to a close, please?

Ms Fearon: We need to embed a culture of European participation in all our Departments.

Mr Cree: I support the motion. The Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister has done considerable work to prepare the report, and I take this opportunity to thank the staff for their excellent work.

Northern Ireland has gained much from European funds over the years, but it certainly has not maximised its drawdown. I have been in Brussels on several occasions and learned a little about how the system works. On a recent visit with the Assembly and Business Trust, we were told how important it was to get involved when ideas are first floated, because it is usually too late to amend proposals once they have been published in a paper. We were dismayed when we were told by Northern Ireland and Westminster officials that their procedure was to await the publication of a paper before trying to amend it to suit our needs. Hopefully, that situation has changed as a result of Barroso and other developments.

The Programme for Government has a commitment to increase the competitive drawdown of European funds by 20% during the current Budget period. The Departments have made good progress towards meeting that target, and, at the halfway point in the year, some £41.3 million has been drawn down. That represents 64% of the target, so, clearly, Departments are well on track to realise the total figure of £64.4 million by the end of March 2015. I believe that the relative ease with which the Executive are able to meet that target indicates that the bar has been set too low and that a much more ambitious target is required.

It is the Executive's duty to maximise their efforts to ensure that Northern Ireland begins to punch well above its weight in Brussels. Working with the Barroso task force has

helped in that regard, but there are significant challenges still in front of us. The four cross-departmental subgroups are engaged in the European priorities implementation plan, and it is crucial that Northern Ireland be engaged fully in Brussels at all levels to ensure that we can access the various funding streams available.

Members will remember the framework programme 7 statistics for 2007-2013, which others referred to earlier. Northern Ireland was bottom of the league, and that takes into account the figures for all other regions in the United Kingdom. We need to move on and improve the situation. We also need to ensure that our businesses can access European funding with the minimum of red tape and bureaucracy.

I return to the report on the inquiry into the Barroso task force. We have seen a marked increase in engagement in European affairs by Departments. The task force has directly or indirectly created positive outcomes for Northern Ireland. We appreciate that fact and are keen to continue to improve the situation.

Mr Mike Nesbitt, Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, has already referred to the focus and momentum provided by the defined targets as a clear theme emerging from the evidence provided. The Executive's engagement in European affairs must be clear, and success or otherwise must be measurable. Monitoring and evaluating success are key to capitalising on the opportunities offered by EU engagement. There is an issue with clarity on the rules and responsibilities, and that has been recognised by the Committee. Communication, as always, is vital, and the Committee recommends that a plan be developed for the task force and working groups as a matter of urgency.

In all, the Committee made 11 recommendations for the support and enhancement of future engagement in European affairs. As a member of the Committee, I support and commend the recommendations to all and trust that the House will support the report and that the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister will implement its recommendations.

Mr Bell (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I welcome the inquiry report from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. It is heartening to have that external recognition that the sustained hard work that Ministers have been undertaking with their officials over many years has resulted in a marked increase in our European engagement. That work has, directly or indirectly, been very positive for the Executive. We are well on track to exceed the Programme for Government's competitive EU funds drawdown target. In building European alliances, we have raised our positive profile in comparison with our 250 competitor regions by participating proactively in countless formal and informal knowledge networks to achieve our strategic European priorities.

In April 2008, the European Commission noted that, although apparently less involved in EU policies than others, we had a "credible track record in general." In the past six years, the Barroso task force working group has progressively and relentlessly enhanced engagement in European matters by Departments, although I would be the first to admit that the working group has not always taken the credit for its successes. As a small region

located on the north-west periphery of continental Europe, we punch substantially above our weight, to use a Carl Frampton analogy. All of that hard work has produced a step change in our relations with Europe. I want to thank the Committee for recognising that achievement in its report, including the role of our Executive office in Brussels.

I want to talk about taking a more strategic approach in Europe, because, although our experience of European engagement is positive, there is more to be done to make the most of the opportunities that Europe can offer. We remain committed to participating in Europe in a positive, outward- and forward-looking and progressive manner to become a preferred region of choice for partnership working and in which to live, work and invest. The Executive will continue to promote their interests in the European Union, raise their profile throughout Europe and raise awareness and encourage participation in European matters.

We all know that it is a time of change and renewal in Europe. Shortly, the European Parliament will begin its confirmation hearings for nominees for the next college of European commissioners. The European Commission president designate, Jean-Claude Juncker, has made strengthening Europe's competitiveness and stimulating investment his number one priority to boost jobs and growth. Despite the change of key decision-makers in the main EU institutions, the work to sustain and nourish a fragile economic recovery will continue. Mr Juncker will present an ambitious jobs, growth and investment package in the broader context of the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy. Let me tell the House that the economy was, is and will remain the key issue. I should also tell the House that the First Minister and the deputy First Minister have issued an invitation to Mr Juncker to visit Belfast to showcase what has been achieved and to look at where the opportunities for jobs, growth and investment are here.

I will now deal with the nature of the structured relationship with Europe.

4.30 pm

Our partnership with the Commission's services was originally intended to support the peace process, with an emphasis on generating more growth and jobs in line with the Lisbon agenda. Subsequently, that Lisbon economic development plan evolved into Europe's growth strategy for the decade to 2020.

In a changing world, we want a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. These mutually reinforcing priorities were to deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Five ambitious objectives on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy were to drive actions at EU and national levels to underpin the 2020 strategy.

The specific remit of the Barroso task force was to mobilise the services of the European Commission to move our economy up the value chain to enter the top league of innovative European regions. Over time, our long period as a major recipient of European regional aid was to be reduced. Correspondingly, we would increasingly rely on our own resources to compete against the best in Europe.

But, at that time, no one had anticipated that a credit crunch in the US housing market would lead to a full financial meltdown by the middle of 2008, which would

eventually turn into a global recession. So, over the past six years, our collective approach to European engagement has matured. The emphasis we place on networks, strategic alliances and partnerships has delivered success for the Northern Ireland Executive.

We have built a European infrastructure that is second to none. We are supported by a network of committed contacts in the key directorates general of the European Commission whose work impacts most on devolved responsibilities. We are committed to continue working at a high level, politically and operationally, to enhance our prosperity. The continuation of a structured relationship with the Commission, such as that with the Barroso task force, is vital in that regard.

I turn to the recommendations in what is a comprehensive report. Although I welcome the report and the spirit in which this work has been taken forward, I cannot respond to each of the recommendations within the time allowed. As European engagement is a collective responsibility, I would like an opportunity to consult in detail with Executive colleagues. In fact, junior Minister McCann and I have tabled the Committee's inquiry report for discussion with Departments at a meeting of the Barroso task force working group tomorrow afternoon. At a later stage, we will provide a formal written response to the Committee.

Let me give an outline of what Ministers are doing. Notwithstanding the need for consultation, I agree with the Committee that the expertise and knowledge that we have painstakingly accrued over the years should not be lost. I support the continuation of an interdepartmental forum to further develop and enhance our European engagement so that the investments that we have all made are built upon and not squandered.

Our engagement infrastructure is second to none because we have built it that way. Now we have to optimise its use to win hearts and minds, to persuade others of our own point of view. That requires systematic as opposed to regular engagement with Europe. That is why, in developing the Executive's strategic European priorities for 2014 and 2015, Minister McCann and I have sought to ensure greater clarity between strategic outcomes and operational processes. We believe it is important to do the right thing but also to do things right.

Working with Departments to get that balance right has taken longer than anticipated. It has led to some delay in the production of the 2014-15 priorities. A European priorities statement that focuses on the most vital indicators, tracking overall progress towards the Executive's strategic aims, is a very necessary next step. It is a means of taking our European engagement to the next stage of development. However, the Committee's point that the Executive should publish their annual European priorities in a more timely fashion is well made, and I will raise that point with the Departments tomorrow.

In conclusion, before I turn to some of the excellent contributions that have been made on the Floor this afternoon, I want to say that we are at a crossroads in our journey with the Commission services. We understand that Europe is complex and requires committed, sustained and systematic engagement. Success in our economy, society, environment and culture means being prepared to argue for and influence the policy priorities that impact most on our devolved responsibilities.

In effect, I suppose you could say that we have served our apprenticeship. Our approach has been tested and found to be mature. It is timely to thank President Barroso and Commissioner Hahn, who have been our partners in what has been something of a marathon, and, in defining our new future relationship with the new College of Commissioners, we are mindful that our new structured relationship may well be different from that of the past. The only certainty with EU institutional change is that nothing is certain, but I can give an assurance that I and my ministerial colleagues will continue to work in the European arena to promote our region as a great place to live, to work and to invest.

I will turn briefly to some of the points that were made. Sammy Wilson, in making an important point, referred to the bureaucracy in Departments and the red tape that is hitting applications. I think that will have resonance with every Member and right across every constituency office. Departments must promote EU audit standards, but a commitment was secured from the European Union to simplify the EU funding programmes. That gives Members some hope. I know that, in the past, community organisations that have attracted European funding have found themselves in absolutely ridiculous situations where they were funded to provide coffee and scones at one of their meetings and ended up getting a receipt sent back to them because the Fairy liquid to wash the dishes afterwards to leave the community centre in the same tidy fashion that they found it in was not authorised expenditure. I have raised that with SEUPB and with our Department of Finance and Personnel to try to see where we can ease those regulations so that that form of difficulty does not reoccur.

The Committee Chair mentioned the need to evaluate success of European engagement through benchmarking. We can advise that, at this stage, we are committed to assessing our own absolute, as in how we have performed against how we have performed before, as well as relative performance in drawing down competitive funds. Recently, we have engaged the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency to conduct a small feasibility study to focus on the data availability, the comparability and the analysis, and we anticipate that the next phase of that work will continue towards the end of the month.

Mr Alex Attwood argued for wider membership of the Barroso task force working group to include local organisations and stakeholders. It was a strong point, and we are committed to developing the capacity of local organisations, particularly community and voluntary organisations, to develop their European engagement and to access the funding programmes. It should be noted that the primary focus for that will be the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum, which the Department is co-chairing with Belfast City Council. It is now in its second year and has over 100 members.

Megan Fearon made a valuable point in that more needed to be done, and she raised a query about proactivity in the nature of horizon scanning. The revision of the desk officer structure should make the horizon scanning more effective, and the new legal officer that we have in the European office should give us early warning of European Court of Justice case law. Hopefully that addresses some of those points.

Contributions from Mr Moutray, Mr Spratt and Ms Hale were very strong on the need to reduce red tape. I have alluded to where that can be done and where the European Union directive is, but I want to assure you that, as far as community organisations go, we will continue to push for that reduction.

I congratulate all our MEPs. I have seen all their work individually. I suppose that I am closest politically to Diane Dodds.

I have seen the funding directories that are produced, and I would advise community organisations to access those through their political parties and their MEPs in order to simplify the rules and continue the success that we have had in attracting funds from Europe.

Mr Lyttle (The Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): I am pleased to conclude the debate on behalf of the Committee. I think that it has been extremely constructive and has highlighted, as has the inquiry report, that we have undertaken a constructive and timely examination of the work of the Barroso task force in Brussels and the task force working group in Northern Ireland.

I will not go through all the Members' contributions. They have been well made and detailed, and I think that they have highlighted the centrality of European engagement to development in Northern Ireland in areas such as community development, research and innovation, economic development, business growth and peace building. Indeed, we have heard that, since 1995, the European Union has invested €1.3 billion in peace building in Northern Ireland and we have successfully secured €150 million under Peace IV. That, however, begs this question: what is being done to plan ahead for how that type and level of investment in peace building in Northern Ireland is going to be sustained if and when the peace funding comes to an end?

Key successes have been mentioned in the form of infrastructure projects, ICT projects, tourism promotion, technology development, jobs promotion and, indeed, key successes in the TEN-T programme. I think that Members' contributions have highlighted a number of the successes of the task force to date and also referenced helpfully the inquiry report's recommendations about how the Executive can enhance their engagement in European affairs.

It is through effective engagement that the ultimate goals of improving Northern Ireland's economic competitiveness, creating sustainable employment and improving participation in decision-making in Brussels on behalf of people in Northern Ireland can be achieved. We must continue to do all that we can to maximise the benefit of Brussels to Northern Ireland.

I would like to thank all the Members who participated in the debate and the junior Minister for taking the time to respond to it. I encourage everyone to remain connected across the Assembly Committees in scrutinising the work of the Executive in Europe. I hope that the report and the debate will help us to continue the momentum of improved Assembly engagement in European affairs, and I commend the report and the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes the report of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (NIA 179/11-15) on its Inquiry into the Barroso task force; and calls on the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to implement the recommendations contained in the report.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I ask Members to take their ease for a few moments while we change the staff at the top Table.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

Motion made:

*That the Assembly do now adjourn. —
[Mr Deputy Speaker.]*

Adjournment

Road Infrastructure Improvements: Lisburn and Dunmurry 1 Development Area

Mr Deputy Speaker: The proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes and all other Members who wish to speak will have approximately five minutes. I call Mr Paul Girvan.

Mr Givan: I want to bring an ongoing issue to the attention of the House. There has been a bone of contention in Lisburn for a number of years because of the scheme that is known there as LD1: the development scheme in the north part of the Lisburn area.

The issue has been raised over a number of years. I and colleagues have sought to advance the situation. The council in Lisburn has also sought to advance it and is party to the agreements that have been put in place. However, there has been huge frustration at the way in which it has been managed.

4.45 pm

I will give a little context to exactly what I am referring to in respect of LD1. It is a proposed housing scheme at the Brokerstown Road/Ballinderry Road area in the northern part of the Lisburn area. Zoning was subject to a comprehensive design scheme. A planning agreement was put in place, there was the upgrading of the Brokerstown Road/Ballinderry Road alongside frontages, and there was a traffic impact assessment to assess the needs for the extent of any further road improvements.

The adopted Lisburn area plan subsequently zoned 84 hectares of land in that particular area. The plan required a comprehensive design scheme, a transportation and impact assessment, and the upgrading at the Brokerstown Road/Ballinderry Road junctions of the Knockmore Road. There was subsequent planning approval for significant housing developments to be taken forward by the Carvill Group, Antrim Construction and Dingles Builders, and that included a requirement for an article 40 planning agreement relating to the provision of road alterations, landscaping and community facilities. That agreement was made on 14 July 2006 between the Department of the Environment, the education and library board, the council, the developers and the landowners.

The article 40 agreement, which is the real issue of concern, related to road construction and alterations, and the agreement contained a number of covenants. First was that no residence would be occupied until a number of junction improvements were complete and operational. That included the signalisation of the Knockmore Road/Ballinderry Road junction, which has not happened; the widening of the Ballymacash Road — the eastern part at the Ballymacash Road/Prince William Road junction — to provide a left-turn lane, which has not happened; then no more than 140 residences would be occupied on the site until further junction improvements were completed and operational, which included the widening of the west side

of the Prince William Road south of the junction of the Knockmore Road to provide a left-turning lane, which has not happened; signalisation of the Prince William Road at the Ballymacash Road/Ballymacash Park junction, which has not happened; no residence would be occupied on the site until all of the following improvements would be fully completed and operational: the signalisation of the Prince William Road/Nettlehill Road, which did happen, and other improvements; no more than 200 residences would be occupied on the site until the Ballinderry Road access and linkage to development had been provided to the satisfaction of the highway authority — again, there are issues there.

As of today, there are over 300 residents occupying those areas, and yet there are at least four very significant junction improvements that should have commenced. That has not happened, nor, indeed, is there any indication of that work commencing. There is no work programme in place for it to commence, and it would appear to me, based on that evidence, that the article 40 agreement has therefore been breached, not once, not twice, but repeatedly.

The owner of the agreement is the Department of the Environment. I appreciate that the Minister for Regional Development is here to deal with some of those issues, but, primarily, the Department of the Environment is responsible for the legally binding agreement, and yet planning has continued to be granted and houses are still being built. Obviously, there is an issue with the Carvill Group because it is in administration, but the other two developers are continuing to develop. Indeed, I suspect that every elected representative here and on the council wants that area to be developed. We supported it being zoned for housing and the other community facilities that were to take place in that area.

However, elected members are not satisfied with the fact that the Knockmore Road and Prince William Road — two key arterial routes in our constituency — are heavily congested and are adjacent to Laurelhill Community College and Killowen Primary School, of which combined there are over 1,000 children and young people.

You then have the neighbouring Pond Park and Ballymacash primary schools, of which I am on the boards of governors, and Knockmore Primary School — all near this particular area and all of which use these roads. There is also traffic coming down Prince William Road from Antrim. Yet none of these improvements has taken place.

There is a real public safety concern, given the length of the queues that exist. I access the Ballinderry/Knockmore road every day because of where I live, and the dangers of trying to navigate that particular junction should not be underestimated. At the Prince William/Knockmore road junction, where you have schoolchildren wanting to cross the road to Laurelhill Community College and Killowen Primary School, there are 40-foot HGVs mounting the kerb to get round the junction. You have oncoming traffic that needs to stop in advance of those lorries or, indeed, buses, which need to come into that lane of traffic in order to turn on to the Prince William Road. It is an entirely unsatisfactory position for public safety.

The question is how we progress, because we are where we are. I appreciate that there are some complications because of the situation with the Carvill Group. I

understand that the initial agreement seems to have changed somewhat from what Roads Service is now indicating would be required. Obviously, the developers are disputing what their contribution should be. I think that Roads Service has a responsibility to identify what is required and to work with the DOE to try to pull all relevant stakeholders around the table so that this can be moved on.

Regrettably, DOE has been, in my view, very poor at bringing this issue to a head. Officials in the Planning Service need to tackle this, and that is why I have raised it with the Minister repeatedly. I raised it with Minister Attwood but was not able to meet him, and I have raised it with Minister Durkan. It was only in June this year that I was able to get a meeting. I appreciate that Minister Kennedy has always made himself available and has always indicated that he will come to these meetings and will seek to assist us. However, the Department of the Environment has been, in my view, severely lacking in grasping this difficult issue that the public expects it to deal with and advance.

My appeal is for this to be progressed and dealt with satisfactorily, because the status quo is not satisfactory. Developers want to continue to build, and we support development of this area, but you cannot have increased traffic congestion in the absence of the article 40 agreement being complied with. If it is not going to be complied with, who will take the enforcement? It is DOE's responsibility to deal with any breaches, but that has not happened. If there are complications — this is complicated — there needs to be the will to bring the appropriate people around the table to push it forward.

The north Lisburn feeder road was developed entirely through private-led contribution. The Knockmore/Sprucefield link is, again, solely dependent on private-led contribution, and here you have another significant set of improvements required that may come through entirely private-led contribution. I understand that we want to try to support the Department for Regional Development, and that it is facing very difficult financial challenges, as is every Department, but there comes a point when we ask ourselves whether anything will happen in our constituency to improve these roads unless it is private-developer led and, if so, when that will ever come into being. So, there may need to be a requirement for some pump-priming on the part of DRD. Some resource may need to be brought to the table in order to facilitate the works needed to improve public safety and, indeed, the economy of the Lisburn area. People are being put off coming into Lisburn on these roads because no action has been taken.

I appeal to Minister Kennedy to continue to use his influence and powers to progress this matter. We have a meeting next week with Ministers Kennedy and Durkan, and I know that other elected Members will bring the same message to that meeting. I trust that the Ministers will be able to use their offices to finally bring a resolution to this issue, which has gone on for too long.

Mr Deputy Speaker: For the record, I correct myself: it is, of course, Mr Paul Givan who has just spoken and not Mr Paul Girvan, as I think I said.

Mr Craig: It is sad to say that, after almost a decade, we are still talking about the Knockmore link, or what I am starting to describe as the missing link. In science, we all thought that the missing link was something else. We

are starting to see this as the missing link, particularly in Lagan Valley and Lisburn.

Where the Knockmore Road ends and the park-and-ride facility at Sprucefield is situated, there was supposed to be a developer-led junction or road to link those two. As the Minister well knows, that development has not happened. In itself, that is leading to major congestion in that whole southern end of Lisburn. We have heavy traffic, as described by my colleague, to all those major schools that were outlined; we had better not forget the two best schools in Northern Ireland — our two grammar schools, Friends' and Wallace. A large chunk of that traffic — buses and, unfortunately, cars, with parents leaving their children off — goes down there morning and afternoon, causing absolute mayhem.

What also causes great difficulty at that junction is the fact that it is very close to one of the largest industrial areas in Lisburn, where there is a lot of heavy traffic. We are proud to have the Coca-Cola plant for the whole of Ireland and further afield in our constituency. That all leads to major industrial traffic finding itself locked in a road infrastructure that is no longer fit for purpose and that was supposed to have been corrected by developer-led development.

Even as the climate for developers improves, there seems to be an issue about outstanding moneys owed and work not done on the Knockmore link and Prince William Road. The outworkings of this are incredible because, as the Minister well knows — I met him over the summer with Halftown Road residents — major industrial traffic uses what can only be described as a small country road. When two lorries meet on that country road in Halftown, they mount the footpath and consequently destroy it, causing a major public health issue, on which I am still waiting for the Minister to come back. I have had the police out at that junction, and the evidence was clearly there. There were lorry tyre marks right up the middle of the footpath, so it was difficult to deny that it was happening. These are all the outworkings of what I originally described as the missing link: the Knockmore Road.

Like my colleague, I question why every single road development in Lagan Valley has to be developer-led: in other words, private developers must pay for it. I have no difficulty whatsoever with the concept of their making a contribution towards it, but if I move a few miles down the road to Belfast, what developer ever put money into improvements on the M1? What developer ever put money into developing the Westlink? Why can we pour millions upon millions of pounds of public money into developing the road infrastructure in Belfast, but we cannot develop the infrastructure elsewhere?

When I look at the Knockmore link, I see an opportunity for government, if it is prepared to prime that link, to open up the entire development of the southern end of Lisburn, maybe reducing some of the traffic going down the M1 but certainly creating huge levels of employment in Lisburn, Lagan Valley and the southern end of what is now, in reality, greater Belfast while producing a better outcome for Northern Ireland as a whole.

I appeal to the Minister to look at the issue to see whether there is any way in which it can be looked at other than as a developer-led development.

5.00 pm

Mr B McCrea: Initially, I was not going to speak on this matter, although I read it with interest on the Order Paper. I acknowledge that Mr Craig, Mr Givan and the Minister are here, as are you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I am speaking because I am interested to see whether the matter is addressed and in what way. The real issue, however, is the benefit of Adjournment debates: there are five of us in the Chamber, and it is a beautiful sunny evening, as people will acknowledge. The matter in front of us is important, and, of course, the Minister is here to try to address it. I just wanted to put that point on record.

I have only two issues of substance, because the substance of the debate was covered more than adequately by the two Members who spoke previously. First, I think that Mr Givan said that there is to be a meeting next week with the Minister of the Environment and Mr Kennedy. That appears to be a more substantive way of moving forward and resolving the matter.

Secondly, how will we get some form of focus on Lisburn? Mr Craig's point was that it seems that everything is Belfast-centric. I probably live at the other side of the "missing link" that he talked about, but it would be really valuable to see it. We have some interest in doing what government does best, which is infrastructure improvements. That is what government can do to improve the standard of living for our citizens and, of course, the economy. It is a battle with the rest of the Executive that we have to win because we need more investment in road infrastructure.

I hope that my two colleagues did not mind me intervening on what is really their subject, but I am interested to hear what Mr Kennedy has to say.

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): I thank all Members who contributed to the debate, including Mr Givan, its sponsor. Despite Mr McCrea's comments, this debate is valuable. Adjournment debates are a means by which particular issues can at least be highlighted, leading, I hope, to a resolution. I do not say that I come with a resolution to this issue today: further necessary work and meetings are required. However, in the spirit of the operation of the House and the public service that it provides for Members to avail themselves of, it is good that these issues can be aired.

I have asked my officials to take note of the Hansard report so that, if I do not pick up on any of the points that Members raised, I can address them in writing. We had a very fair assessment of the current situation from Mr Givan and Mr Craig, and Mr McCrea accepted that that was the case.

As I said, I welcome the opportunity to debate the road infrastructure improvements for the Knockmore Road and Prince William Road in Lisburn. I will put on record and confirm a lot of the information that we have already heard, but it is important that we also put on record the official sequence and timeline of events. A concept master plan was developed for the Lisburn and Dunmurry 1 development area, which is also known as the LD1 Brokerstown site, in the early 2000s.

The site consists of approximately 45 hectares and is located between Glenavy Road and Ballinderry Road, just to the north-west of Lisburn city. The final concept master plan was issued in February 2003 and requires

the development of the LD1 site to be undertaken in accordance with the general principles in it.

Three development consortia were originally involved: the Carvill Group; Antrim Construction; and Dingles and O'Kane and Devine. In 2003, two of the three developers in the site signed a planning agreement to ensure that road improvements would be carried out at various stages of the housing development. Outline planning approval was granted in September 2006, subject to an article 40 agreement, for two of the three consortia of developers for a total of 1,800 houses. As Members will know, an article 40 agreement is a legal agreement under article 40 of the Planning Order 1991 that enables the Department of the Environment to facilitate, regulate or restrict the development of land and may be used to achieve monetary contributions or transportation provision. It cannot be appealed.

A transport assessment that was included in the outline planning application identified the need for a number of junction improvements on the existing road network to ensure that there was sufficient capacity for the predicted flows arising from the development. Those were set out in an article 40 planning agreement and conditioned under the outline application, which asked for a number of junction improvements in association with the phasing of the development. Those junctions are Knockmore/Prince William Road; Knockmore Road/Ballinderry Road; and Prince William Road/Ballymacash Road.

Subsequent to outline planning approval being granted, each developer submitted an article 28 planning application seeking an uplift to vary the planning condition for the maximum number of dwellings permitted from 1,800 to 2,900. An article 28 agreement is a legal agreement under article 28 of the Planning Order 1991 that enables the Department of the Environment to permit a change of conditions in a planning approval. As sufficient progress was not being made, my Department offered refusal reasons in October 2009.

In 2010, RPS consultants submitted a further analysis based on a 550-unit uplift and a 700-unit uplift. An uplift of 550 units proved to be the maximum additional allowable, and that would have required significant improvements to 11 junctions in the area, including the junction in question, Knockmore Road/Prince William Road. My Department requested a revised transport assessment for the whole of the 110-acre LD1 development, and that identified a requirement for additional improvement works over and above those set out in the original article 40 agreement. The costs of those junction improvements were estimated to be between £15 million and £18 million. However, no resolution was reached on a new article 40 agreement, and the developer withdrew the uplift application in January 2014.

As Members indicated, no resolution has been reached to date on the improvement of the junctions under the original outline planning application. My Department's position is that improvements at the junction previously mentioned should be built to the Transport NI design standards, as, obviously, that is in the interests of public safety.

Recently, my officials carried out a review of the history of this application and have also reviewed new drawings that Hoy Dorman consultants forwarded in May this year. That was to establish what the main differences were between

design drawings as presented by the developer and the Transport NI standards for junction design. This is, as we heard, a matter of ongoing discussion and correspondence between my Department and the Department of the Environment's planning division. I assure Members that my Department will continue to liaise with the Department of the Environment's planning division and the developers to seek to progress the delivery of improvements to the road network as part of the development in order to discharge the planning conditions.

You have heard that another meeting is due to take place on Tuesday 16 September between my Department, the Department of the Environment planning division and, indeed, the sponsor of this debate, Mr Givan. I hope that we can make progress at that point and as we go into the future.

These are complex issues that need to be resolved. On my behalf and on behalf of DRD, we want to engage positively with that. We welcome the contribution of both the elected representatives and, potentially, other interested parties. There has been involvement in the past by Lisburn Borough Council. If that is considered to be positive, perhaps we can explore further opportunities with that as well.

I am afraid that we are in a situation where there are no outcomes at this stage. However, I think that the Adjournment debate is an important facility whereby the issues are at least aired. We have been able to set out what has happened hitherto, and we also need to look forward to see whether we can resolve those issues as quickly and as speedily as possible.

Adjourned at 5.12 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 15 September 2014

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon (Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Members will have been saddened to learn of the passing of the former First Minister the Rt Hon Lord Bannside. Before I pay my own tribute, I advise the House that the Business Committee has agreed, as a mark of respect, to adjourn today's sitting after Members have had the opportunity to speak. That requires a formal item of business, which I will take now.

Standing Order 20(1): Suspension

Mr Weir: I beg to move

That Standing Order 20(1) be suspended for 15 September 2014.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before we proceed to the Question, I remind Members that the motion requires cross-community support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That Standing Order 20(1) be suspended for 15 September 2014.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before we go any further, I wish to inform the House that the Speaker has asked me to convey his apologies that he is unable to be here due to ill health. Members will appreciate that, given the long personal and political connection between the Hay family and the late Lord Bannside, he would have wished to be here, but I am sure that the House will join me in wishing the Speaker a speedy recovery.

Some Members: Hear, hear.

Tributes to the Rt Hon Lord Bannside, Former First Minister

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: One of the saddest duties from this Chair is to report to the House the passing of former or current colleagues. However, it always serves to remind us that, no matter about the heat of the political disagreements that we have in this House or elsewhere, ultimately, we are all made of the same flesh and bone.

I know that Members will have different views on Ian Paisley's politics and his legacy that they will want to express, but it is not for me to dwell on that from this Chair. However, there is no doubt that the former First Minister was instrumental in us all being in the Chamber today. Indeed, he will have influenced the politics of Members on all sides of the House.

I think that Members will agree that politics has lost a giant personality. The international coverage since his passing acts as proof of that. To opponents or the public, in speeches or in interviews, Ian Paisley may have come across as a strident, foreboding character, but I know that many in the Chamber will also hold valued memories of his warm and personal nature. That came across in his reputation as a champion of all his constituents and, of course, combined with his sense of humour, on the election campaign trail, it made him a force of nature.

It is often the case that some of the most significant and memorable political figures are those who provoke a strong emotional reaction, positive and negative. Ian Paisley did that. He was straight-talking whether you liked what he said or not. Let us remember today that, regardless of his political contribution, he regarded himself first and foremost as a man of faith and family. We express our heartfelt condolences to Baroness Paisley and the entire Paisley family. It is safe to say that Northern politics would not have been the same without Ian Paisley. May he rest in peace.

As is customary, I will now invite party leaders to speak for around five minutes to pay tribute to our late friend and colleague. I will not impose strict time constraints but I encourage Members to be brief and to speak for no more than three minutes in order to give time for as many as possible in the one and a half hours that have been allocated for tributes. When tributes are concluded, Members are invited to join me in signing the book of condolence in the Great Hall. The book of condolence will be available for Members, staff who work in the Building and for users of the Building to sign until 3.00 pm today after which it will be open to the public. The House will now pay its own respects.

Mr P Robinson: The custom on occasions such as this is to comment and reflect on the life's service and contribution of the person who has passed away, but when the person is someone who, head and shoulders above all others, strode and dominated the public stage for a time beyond the adult life of all of us who sit in the House, it is a daunting task and one that no eloquence or command of detail could, in truth and with fairness, accomplish.

Ian Paisley was a remarkable man whose long career in public life has left an indelible mark upon all of us who knew him. Like so many, I was drawn towards politics by the clarity, certainty, strength and conviction of his message. The "Big Man", as he was known, provided firm and decisive leadership when unionism lacked it most and needed it most. The stage for his oratory ranged from the lofty debating chambers of the Mother of Parliaments and the European Parliament to countless halls and meeting rooms across the land. He was as much at home speaking on top of a wooden crate or a lorry platform in an open field as he was from the green or red Benches at Westminster, yet he had a special place in his heart for this Chamber. Whether on the opposition Benches or as First Minister on this side, he loved Stormont. He could energise and inspire those around him like no other person I had met before or have met since.

He loved Ulster and her people. They returned that love and trust by repeatedly lifting him to the top of the poll in North Antrim and then giving him poll-topping success in five consecutive Northern Ireland-wide European elections. He had a sincere interest in people's problems no matter who they were or whether their problems were large or small. There are multitudes that have been touched by individual acts of kindness that were carried out away from the gaze of the media or the public.

For most of his life, Ian was blessed to have Eileen by his side whether he was battling in the valley or marching on the mountaintop. She gave him decades of love and support. At this sad time, our prayers are with Baroness Paisley, her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He was as special to them as they were to him, for his was a close and loving family circle.

Those of us who knew him best will remember the fun and joy it was to be in his company. Today, we close the page on a long and glorious era, and already politics seems a little less colourful and exciting. Ian has taken his place in the chronicles of Ulster history, alongside the greats of unionism, making our heritage even richer. As a leader of men, a friend of the people, a servant of the state and the undisputed leader of unionism, Ian Paisley outclassed all around him. Ulster will never see the like of him again. He was an exceptional human being. He had a loyal heart, a fidelity to freedom, a passion for democracy and a love for public service. In a storm, he was oak and granite, and in the sunshine, he radiated passion and commitment.

Ian's faith shaped his entire life. We will never know, this side of eternity, just how many thousands of lives were changed through his preaching and witness. In a sermon he once preached entitled "Five Minutes After Death", he said:

"If you hear ... that Ian Paisley is dead, don't believe ... it. I'll be more alive than ever ... singing as I sang never before."

Those of us who stood beside him when he did sing will know how blessed a hope that is.

I was present when Ian made what was probably his final major speech, at an event in Hillsborough Castle, where he, along with the deputy First Minister and me, was awarded the International Ellis Island Medal of Honour. Though his strength was waning and he moved slowly to the platform, his message displayed the clarity of his mind and the certainty of his convictions. He told of a time when he knelt at the feet of the saviour of the world and received eternal life. He told us it was this that had driven him all his years and would drive him through the gates of eternity to the land that is fairer than day, where wars will be no more, where darkness shall surrender to eternal light and where we will sit in the majesty of God himself. He pronounced that in Northern Ireland we were moving in the right direction and, though we were facing significant problems, encouraged us all to complete the journey. He expressed the hope that future generations would be able to live in peace and urged us to do our bit to reach that goal.

He no longer sits among us, but we are entrusted with his legacy and stirred by his injunction to finish the course and do our bit in securing lasting peace and stability for the land he loved so much.

Mr M McGuinness: I, too, thank you, Principal Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to say a few words about Ian Paisley today.

First, I want to wish our Speaker, William Hay, well. He is presently in hospital, and I hope that he recovers very quickly indeed.

This is a very sad occasion for all of us. I have very fond memories of that weekend in the spring of 2007 when the First Minister and I, as Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness with no titles, sat down with other members of our party to work out and craft a statement that would be issued by Ian Paisley and Gerry Adams the following Monday; a statement that confounded the international community, which had arrived, en masse, to proclaim yet another glorious failure in the peace process.

That was a very remarkable experience; all the more remarkable because I remember that, as an 18- or 19-year-old on the streets of Derry, being like most of the other population in Derry, in fear of Ian Paisley when he came to the city, with his huge stature, his booming voice and his politics, which we did not share or like.

There has been a lot of talk about his politics over the last couple of days and a lot of criticism of the actions in which he was involved in the past. And I say that, conscious that, from a unionist perspective, there are also a lot of perceptions and criticisms of people on this side of the Assembly.

12.15 pm

I will leave it to history to decide on Ian Paisley's legacy. I can really only talk about my experiences with him. The negotiations that the First Minister and I were involved in brought Ian Paisley and me into the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the basis of equality. I have to say that it was one of the most memorable experiences of my life to be in that office with him for that year. From the word go, for some reason, we hit it off. Not alone did we develop a positive and constructive working

relationship, but we actually became friends. We grew to like each other, and that is incredible for people who, undoubtedly for many decades, intensely disliked each other. We genuinely grew to like each other and, in doing so, we confounded the world. I think that was a good thing. He certainly made a huge effort. In one of the first conversations that he and I had together, he said to me, "Martin, you know, we can rule ourselves. We don't need these people coming over from England telling us what to do". On another occasion, when we met here in Parliament Buildings with representatives of the factions in conflict in Afghanistan, he went out of his way to describe himself — as I know he has done on previous occasions — as an Ulsterman and an Irishman, stressing, of course, that the Ulsterman came first. Those two statements were common ground that we could stand on and, as I said, it was an incredible experience.

In December 2007, we went off to the United States of America to begin the work of trying to attract foreign direct investment so that we could give our people jobs, show the world that we were open for business and that a transformation had taken place. I will never forget the meeting that he and I were involved in with President George Bush in the Oval Office which was, supposedly, to last 20 minutes but lasted well over an hour. It was an incredible experience. We were accompanied on that visit by the late John Harrison, well known to everybody in this Assembly. He was also someone we had a great friendship with and a great love for. Ian Paisley loved John Harrison. We had a memorable experience in the Oval Office when one of our press officers, Paddy Cullen, was told by John, who thrust a camera into his hand, to "snap everything in sight", when a flotilla of press people came in. The sight of Paddy Cullen jumping up on President Bush's sofa to take the photographs always got a great laugh between Ian and me.

It is not so long ago that I went to see Ian and Eileen for coffee at their home. I spent almost two hours with them, and I was really glad that we had that opportunity to talk. It was obvious to me that he was visibly weakening, but he had a project in mind and it was a project he wanted me to attend. Sadly, that will not now be the case, but we had a great conversation for two hours. I regard Ian and Eileen Paisley as two of the strongest supporters of the peace process that anybody can imagine. I think I can say that without fear of contradiction.

So, along with everybody else, I want to extend my deepest sympathy and condolences to Eileen Paisley, her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I think that she is a remarkable woman and she played a very powerful role in a lot of the political changes that brought many of us together in this House. Sometimes, I think that is not recognised enough.

When Ian left office, I asked the late, great Seamus Heaney to write out the "hope and history" poem. Seamus wrote it out in his own hand on the most beautiful parchment paper you could imagine, and we got it framed. I was to make the presentation to him. When I did that in the Executive room, I also presented him with one of my own poems about disappearing sea trout on the west coast of Ireland and Native American Indians. About a month later, Ian asked to see me. He was in his own new room after he had left office here in Parliament Buildings. I went up to the room and was brought into a side room, and

there on the wall was Seamus Heaney's poem alongside mine. I said to him, "I appreciate very much you raising me to the elite of the poets", and we had a great laugh about that.

I was part of the delegation that went to Liverpool to argue for City of Culture status for my city. We made the case. The announcement was to be made on 'The One Show', and we were all there for that. The announcement was made, and we won against all odds. The first phone call I received after I stepped down from the podium was from Ian Paisley. He said, "Martin, I've just been watching you on TV. This is a fantastic result for the city and a great result for our young people". That had a tremendous effect on me.

At the same time, I know that when Ian left office, a number of reasons were cited by journalists and so forth. Some said that the DUP thought that he was elderly, and he was, but others said that it was also because he was too friendly with me. There is food for thought in all of that for every Member, in that he had the ability, coming from where he came from, to bridge the differences with me, and, as I wrote in the book of condolence in my city at the weekend, in rising above old enmities, we pointed the way to a better and peaceful future.

I believe that the peace process has lost a great friend, and I have lost a friend. I know that, over the weekend, some people in the republican community took exception to me saying that. I have heard that, and it has been on social networks. I say this to them: if F W de Klerk had died before Nelson Mandela, what would Nelson Mandela have said about F W de Klerk?

We all have to rise to the occasion, folks. This is about peacemaking and building a better future for our young people. I want to end on that note. I think that Ian Paisley, whatever about his past, did a magnificent service for our young people and for the future. For that, I am proud to be associated with him.

Dr McDonnell: Thank you very much, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. Like others who spoke, I wish our Speaker, Willie Hay, a speedy recovery to good health, because we miss him, and I am saddened that he is not able to be with us here today.

My main purpose in speaking is to express my most sincere sympathy and that of my colleagues and the SDLP to Baroness Paisley and the family, including the children and grandchildren. I also extend a heartfelt sympathy to colleagues opposite and DUP colleagues of Lord Bannside across Northern Ireland. I could never, and would never, agree with much of Ian Paisley's politics, but that was understood and very clear, but I have to pay tribute to him as a committed constituency representative and dedicated public servant.

I am not going to delve into the whys, wherefores or why nots. I will leave it to others and to history to judge Ian Paisley's contribution to this place, particularly in the latter days in helping to bring about peace and devolution. In 2007, his efforts ensured that power-sharing and devolution were put back in place, but today our thoughts are with the family and friends.

I have known Ian Paisley for over 40 years. I do not want to admit how many years over 40, but it is a while. Despite fundamental political differences, at a personal level,

we had many conversations and an enduring personal friendship that defied political differences.

So, today our thoughts and sympathy must be with Eileen, Baroness Paisley, with the extended family and with the grandchildren, who are grieving and trying to come to terms with this sad loss. We in the Chamber can move on at various speeds — some of us will maybe be able to move on more quickly than others — but the point is that the family are left with a big gap in their lives. There is a husband, a father and a grandfather missing, and my and the SDLP's sympathy goes out to all of them on this sad and difficult day. Thank you.

Mr Nesbitt: As I begin, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, may I, on behalf of my party, send our best wishes to the Speaker? You acknowledged that Willie Hay has been taken unwell. The Ulster Unionist Party wishes him a full and speedy recovery, and we look forward to seeing him back in the Chamber as soon as possible.

In representing the Ulster Unionist Party, I acknowledge the loss of Ian Paisley — a loss that will be felt most keenly by his family and by the Members to my left in the Chamber. I was in my constituency office on Friday helping a family in need when the news came through, and I believe that it is to the Paisley family that our thoughts should turn today.

It is a powerful consideration that Lord Bannside's widow, Baroness Paisley, was married to him for longer than many Members in the Chamber have been alive. This week, Eileen Paisley finds herself in a position that she has not been in since 1956: not having a husband to turn to for comfort and for companionship. I have no doubt that her faith and her family will be comforts of immeasurable strength at this time. I do not know what value she will place on the thoughts and prayers of the Ulster Unionist Party, but let me assure the House that she and her family are very much in our thoughts at this time.

Ian Paisley was a huge figure, physically and metaphorically. He also made huge decisions that affected all of us in the most profound way, but I do not believe that this is the day for me to analyse his leadership or its legacy. This is the day of his funeral, and I wish to be respectful of that occasion. There will be plenty of time to reflect on political relationships, on rationales and on that legacy.

My personal relationship with Dr Paisley was more centred on my days as a broadcast journalist than as a politician, and I have to say that interviewing Ian Paisley was always something of an event. If you had not been admonished by Ian Paisley, you could not consider yourself a proper journalist. Now he is gone, as is Albert Reynolds. John Major, John Hume, David Trimble, Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Bertie Ahern and many, many others have all left the mainstream political stage, yet we are still a long way from where they and we would like to be.

So, on this day that a family mourns, let us keep the Paisley household foremost in our thoughts, but let us also commit to finishing our political journey — a journey that took Ian Paisley on a remarkable voyage, for better and worse.

I understand that there are many, many Members wishing to speak today, so I will finish here to allow as many as possible to record their memories of Lord Bannside.

12.30 pm

Mr Ford: On behalf of my colleagues in the Chamber and in the Alliance Party generally, I also wish to express our sympathy to Eileen, Baroness Paisley, her children and grandchildren, the family circle and those who loved and respected Ian Paisley most. Also, as you have done, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, we wish to record our best wishes to the Speaker for a speedy recovery, and we hope to see him back soon in his place in the Assembly.

Ian Paisley was certainly a man of many parts; he was a preacher, a politician and, of course, a partner and a parent. Many of us in the Chamber disagreed with many of the things that Ian Paisley did and said over many years, and we should not seek to brush that aside as we look at his legacy. The journalists are already asking the “what if” and the “what if not” questions, but the reason why we are paying tribute today is because he became First Minister of Northern Ireland and he played his part in that.

On the day he stepped down from office, I remember saying that historians would have to judge whether he was remembered for 40 years of saying no or for two years of saying yes; but today we can commemorate the fact that we have a working Assembly and that he played a significant part in ensuring that that happened.

I can certainly remember as far back as the 1970s when, as well as being the preacher and the politician with the fiery rhetoric, he was also an assiduous constituency worker. I know that my colleagues in the Northern Health and Social Services Board saw many typewriter ribbons — that is how long ago it was — worn out in the letters of reply that went back as he followed up the case of any constituent who went to him. I have no doubt that the Northern Health and Social Services Board was not the only public agency that bore the brunt of his representations on behalf of the people of North Antrim and, of course, subsequently as an MEP, of any part of Northern Ireland on whose behalf he cared to follow matters up.

I got to know him personally particularly well when, following the Good Friday Agreement and the full restoration of powers to this place, I was a member of the Agriculture Committee, which he chaired. There is no doubt that that was a time when, some of us will remember, all was not particularly easy in the Chamber. Sometimes, sitting in the Alliance Party wedge immediately between the DUP and Sinn Féin was not always the easiest place to be. Yet, in the Committee, even though Ian Paisley was reluctant sometimes to use people's names, when he looked down the table and pointed and said, “This gentleman will now ask a question”, and the gentleman in question was our former colleague Francie Molloy, he proved that the political did not have to become the personal as well and he could take that forward.

It is clear that in the years following the Good Friday Agreement, when the balance of power in unionism changed, he could see a different role. I remember a conversation in the period that led up to the St Andrews Agreement, although it was some time before it, and which was private and which I did not report, from which it was clear that he could see that there was a need for change, that he wanted to see change happen, and that he wanted to be part of something positive. He sought to bring his

party around to that view along with others. Eventually, of course, at St Andrews and then in talks in and around this Building in the spring of 2007, he saw that happen.

Over the last few days, many journalists have said that only he could have brought the DUP into that form of power-sharing. I tend to agree, because the reputation that he had established and the certainty with which he led his party gave him the authority and the courage to make that change and to bring us to where we are, in these institutions today, with credibility and with that change.

I suspect that historians will record little of his actions as First Minister. The crucial issue was that he brought about change in which he became First Minister in a partnership power-sharing Executive in this Building. The fact that he did so presented us, as others have said, with the opportunities and the challenges that we face in the difficult circumstances we are in today. If we are going to pay any respect to Ian Paisley's legacy, it would not just be in the words that we utter in the Chamber today but in a firm commitment to build on the agreements of 1998 and 2007 and embed power-sharing devolved government in a way that ensures that we, collectively, meet the needs of the people of Northern Ireland.

That, however, is a point for the future. Today, let us remember the family burying their loved one and the loss that they in particular suffer.

Mr Allister: It is natural that, in this political place, there should be a particular focus on the highly significant and highly successful politician that Ian Paisley was, but to those who will miss him most, above all that, he was a devoted husband, a loving father and a caring grandfather and great-grandfather.

Anyone who knew Ian Paisley knew that, next to his faith, his family was all-important to him. The way in which he loved, cared for, protected and promoted them was central for him. He did it as he did most things: single-mindedly and unabashed. The mutual devotion between him and his wife, Eileen, was legendary, so today we should think most of those who will miss him most. Personally and on behalf of my party, I wish to pass on to the Paisley family our sympathies at this time of great loss for them.

I have many good memories of earlier years. The House and the wider public know that, in more recent times, I had significant differences with Ian Paisley. I do not intend to dwell on them today, but I would not be true to myself if I did not record that it is, of course, an abiding regret for me that, after his decades of principled stand, his legacy in the House is terrorists in government and a system that is not fit for purpose. None of that would have been possible without Ian Paisley. The arrangements that needed to be sold to those they needed to be sold to could be sold only by Ian Paisley. By any standard, his was a remarkable political journey. Whether one approves or disapproves of it, one can but marvel at the journey from being the scourge of republicanism to the proclaimed friend of an unrepentant IRA commander.

Whatever one's disagreements with Ian Paisley, you could not help but like him. A big man in every sense, he had many charming characteristics. He was great company, he was compassionate to those in need and, in public life, he was a colossus. His personal charisma was key to his success, and he had an easy ability to relate to all in all walks of life. That ability, which he had in abundance, was

remarkable to observe, and it induced in many, of course, an unshakeable loyalty towards him.

I would venture to say that Ian Paisley was the most charismatic politician that these islands produced in the 20th century. Yes, he could have a sharp tongue, felt sometimes by friends as well as foes. Yes, it was not always deployed judiciously, but, in his day, he was an orator in this land without equal. It made him into a renowned parliamentarian who used those oratorical skills to great effect. In his prime, in this place and in the House of Commons, he was in a league of his own. In the pulpit, too, he was a prince of preachers, and many have reason to be eternally grateful for his ministry there.

It has been said, but it bears repetition: we will not see the like of him again.

Mr Agnew: Ian Paisley had many titles over the years, the most recent one being, "The Lord Bannside". He was a councillor, an MLA, an MP and a Member of the European Parliament, and he had the titles "Reverend" and "Doctor" in front of his name. However, when we get to sickness and, ultimately, death, all those titles strip away. The status that they proclaim on us can mean very little, and we are left with a human being who is vulnerable to life's final conclusion. That is important to remember on the death of a public figure. We should remember the vulnerability of the family and the difficulties that they face.

It was with much regret that I witnessed some of the comment on and reaction to the death of Margaret Thatcher. When public figures or politicians retire, that is the time to reflect on their political career and to pass comment and judgement. Today, we mourn the death of a human being and remember him as a person more so than various roles that he played in his life.

I make the comparison with Margaret Thatcher, and it is an apt one, because both had a huge impact on our politics. Although he had a particular impact in Northern Ireland, there is no doubt that Ian Paisley's importance went well beyond this Province. Both equally divided opinion and provoked a strong reaction in people. As I said, the time of someone's death is a time to moderate our reactions and be respectful to the memory of the person and to the grieving family, friends and wider circle.

I have heard it asked many times over the past few days, "What will history conclude? What will the final analysis be on Ian Paisley? What will be his legacy?" To come back to what Mr Robinson said, in a short speech you could not sum up Ian Paisley, and I do not think that history will ever become able to reconcile a standard narrative on his impact on the politics of Northern Ireland and beyond. He was too significant and complex a man to be distilled into such an easy conclusion.

12.45 pm

However, if, as many have suggested, his legacy is to be that we have these Assembly institutions and that he was a significant, if not the final, piece in getting stable politics in Northern Ireland, and if that indeed is to be how we finally assess the contribution of Ian Paisley, then it is incumbent on all those who rise to pay tribute to him today, particularly those in the positions of highest responsibility — and it was noticeable that the First Minister and deputy First Minister spoke with such fondness towards the man — to do everything in their power to make these

institutions work for peace in Northern Ireland and for the betterment of our citizens.

On behalf of myself and the Green Party in Northern Ireland, I would like to extend deepest condolences to the Paisley family, to his friends and to all of his many, many well-wishers.

Mr McNarry: On behalf of Nigel Farage and myself, I extend condolences to Baroness Paisley and the family circle. Our thoughts and prayers are with them, of course.

We are gathered to pay tribute to Ian Paisley as our former First Minister. This is a time for respect, so let us face it and be honest that, without Ian Paisley saying yes and embracing power-sharing, this Assembly would not be here today nor would we be in a position to make this tribute. I suspect that listening to us right now — some sworn enemies, some hypocrites and some in genuine grief and despair — the “Doc” would be having a good chuckle. His sense of humour, certainly for me, took us through many traumas.

He shocked outsiders and insiders when he led the DUP into power-sharing with republicans. It was an amazing time and an amazing day when he made that decision. Some concluded then disappointment in him. Well, I did not. How could you be disappointed when he took on, and took over, the groundwork cleared out painfully and to the cost of others before him, which culminated in him walking into office as First Minister? I would like to think that, whilst the issue was the same for any unionist and therefore fraught with complexities, the solution in the end proved to be relatively simple. Ultimately, he chose what he thought was good for the people and best for the country, and it is in that context that I pay tribute to him.

So, I say respectfully: thanks, “Doc”. The “never” moved towards a “maybe” and turned into a “yes”. It was a yes to work in progress, a yes to move forward, and a yes to ensuring Northern Ireland’s continued Britishness. Our job from here on is to hold that line and do what we think is best for our country. Rest in peace, Dr Paisley, and thank you for your time in office.

Mr B McCrea: I offer my sincere condolences to Ian Paisley’s family. As Mr Agnew acknowledged earlier, it is sometimes difficult with events like this to separate the personal loss from the political legacy.

I will just say — I say it advisedly — that I liked Ian Paisley. I got talking to him towards the end of his political career. I did not always like Ian Paisley. I did not always agree with him. In fact, if I am really honest, almost all of my political awareness since I was growing up was against what Ian Paisley was talking about. I did not accept his argument, and I was disappointed in the way that he used his talent. But such was the wonder of the man that, when you got talking him and got that sense of humour and interaction, all things appeared to be possible. I perhaps did not know him politically in the way that everybody else here in this room will have done. I only saw him towards the end of his career, when perhaps he was not the orator that he had been earlier, but he still retained that sense of humanity and that willingness to have a wry smile with you that smoothed the way on a lot of issues.

I acknowledge that his commitment to his family and his faith is unquestioned. I know some of his family quite well. They, too, are personalities, and they, too, will have

a contribution to make in the coming years. They are a powerful legacy for this place. My message to them is that we are absolutely at one with their loss. It is the loss of someone very special. I hope that they use their talent to move forward and bring this place to a better place.

It is one thing to have great oratorical skills and the great ability to get people to follow you; it is a different thing to get them to follow you in the right direction.

I will conclude on this message by saying that, yes, no one can say other than that Ian Paisley dominated politics in Northern Ireland for 40 years or longer. Of course he did, and he will have a legacy, but I hope that that legacy is a Northern Ireland that is at peace with itself and is able to build a future and to show that it is OK to make friends with people who you once thought were your enemy. I do not agree with some of the assertions that are put forward in the Chamber that that is a bad thing. The mark of a man — a big man — is the ability to change your mind, and we witness today the passing of a great man and a big man.

Lord Morrow: The name of Ian Paisley is known in different tones. Those of who know him affectionately knew him as the “Big Man”. Some know him as Lord Bannside, some as the Reverend Ian Paisley and some, of course, as the “Doc”. Right at the outset, I want to extend my sincere sympathy at this time to Baroness Paisley; to his sons Kyle and Ian; to Cherith, Rhonda and Sharon; and to his brother, Harold, and sister, Margaret. They will miss him the most.

It is at times like this that you start to reflect on when you first met the person who has passed away. I can very vividly remember that experience, and it was quite an experience. I was but a stripling. I remember my first encounter with him, and he was everything in stature that I was not. I felt so very insignificant in his presence. It goes back to August 1964. I was a boy at school then. I was not at primary school, but it seemed as if I was as I stood there that day. Dr Paisley had a great passion for the lost and the perishing, and he had come to conduct a gospel mission in a place called Laghey, Killyman. For those of you who do not know where it is, it lies about two and a half miles south-west of Dungannon town.

I remember that first encounter so vividly that I will never ever forget it, and he left a mark on me that I will never forget either. When I stood there that day as but a boy, and a very small boy and very small in a whole lot of ways, because I was standing beside a giant — those of us who are not over six feet and who stand beside someone who is well over that do look and feel very small, and that is how I felt that day — I was struck right away that that man with the big booming voice and a big heart — he had a big heart — had a love and compassion for everyone, irrespective of who they were. That was my first and lasting impression of Dr Ian Paisley or, as he is today, Lord Bannside.

Dr Paisley was challenging, inspirational, persuasive, direct and sincere in everything that he put his hand to. I am doubtful whether there was anyone who had a greater love for his country than Ian Paisley. He was a colossus — that word has been used often — on the political landscape. Whether you agreed with him or not, you could not ignore him. I suspect that even his political opponents today would acknowledge that he could not be ignored.

He was, of course, a man with tremendous faith, passion and zeal unequalled. I learned many valuable lessons — enduring lessons — that have stayed with me to this day. I listened to one of my party colleagues today who had been asked whether he had ever been admonished by Dr Paisley. Well, I must have been a good boy, because I cannot recall ever being admonished by him, but I vividly recall being in the room — I am not talking about Stormont here — when others were, and I just thank God that I was not that person. However, when that was all over, it was over, and he moved on to other things.

I counted it a great honour and privilege that, when Dr Paisley was elevated to the House of Lords, I was asked to be one of his co-sponsors along with Lady Boothroyd. I will always hold it dear that he thought me worthy to be one of his co-sponsors on the day that he was elevated to the House of Lords.

Again, I want to say how sorry we are as a party. As an individual and, speaking for my wife and family, we miss him the most. Northern Ireland and politics somehow will not be the same without him.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask Members who wish to contribute to rise in their places in the usual way, because we are not sure of the completeness of the list of names that has been subscribed. In order to get as many in as possible — we have just over half an hour — I ask Members to confine their remarks to three minutes.

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Tá muid ag smaoinreamh inniu ar chlann Paisley, Baroness Paisley, an cúigear páistí agus na garpháistí. Our thoughts today are with Baroness Paisley, her five children and her grandchildren. Bhí saol lán agus fada ag an Uasal Paisley.

Across Ireland, people have had a very wide range of views about Mr Ian Paisley during the 88 years of his long life. I can say without fear or favour that our First Minister has made a contribution to history, and history will obviously analyse that and judge that; today is not a day for that.

I want to focus today on my dealings with Rev Ian Paisley during my time on the Executive. We had very different views on a wide range of issues. I was a feminist — I do not think that Ian Paisley ever named himself as a feminist — and I was a supporter of equality in education and the abolition of the 11-plus. Mr Paisley had different views, although I often wondered whether he was a secret supporter of getting rid of the 11-plus.

We also had very different views on equality for the LGBT community, but, at all times, he treated me with the utmost courtesy and respect.

1.00 pm

I never felt his tongue as Lord Morrow mentioned earlier. He was courteous at all times, including during some very fraught Executive debates that he jointly chaired with Martin McGuinness. There were fraught debates on a wide range of issues, and education was one of the issues in the eye of the storm at that time. I remember coming out of one Executive meeting and ending up in the middle of Ian Paisley and Peter Robinson, just because of the way that we had all walked out of the room. Afterwards, I drove to

Mayo to see my mother, who was not well. I got some stick in Mayo after the media reports of that.

What I admire about Ian Paisley is the role that he played in helping to create a peace process. From the first day that he came out in support of power-sharing, he did not resile from it. I was privileged to be a member of the Sinn Féin team at the first meeting with the DUP here in Stormont. From that day on, I watched him. He had made a judgement: it was the right thing to do and he stuck with it. He was not in it half-heartedly. He did not jump in and out of it. He was involved in all aspects. He was equally gregarious at North/South meetings — I remember him in Dublin, Dundalk and various other places — and British-Irish Council meetings. I admire the leadership that he showed in the peace process. At times, it could not have been easy, and it obviously was not easy for him. All of us together created our peace process, and the peace process has changed us all. Rinne Ian Paisley a lán oibre ar son phróiseas na síochána.

My daughter is moving on to another phase of her life — she is leaving home to go to study — but she came here at 11 years of age, and, without my knowing, went up to Ian Paisley and asked for his autograph, which she got. She has come by a lot of different things throughout her life and does not keep them all, but when we were clearing out her room, up on her noticeboard was Ian Paisley's autograph. I think that that is testament to the role that he has played in our peace process. She, like me, is a feminist and is very progressive on a wide range of issues, but she admired what Ian Paisley did for the peace process at an instinctive level.

Mr Campbell: I join others in offering my sympathy to the Paisley family today. Of course, our best wishes go to the Speaker as well as he recovers in hospital.

My mind is drawn to one of the first times that I heard of Ian Paisley, way back in the late 1960s, when the Troubles were afflicting our Province. I had heard that he was to speak at a meeting in Limavady Town Hall. I, in my naivety as a young teenager, thought that this was a political meeting, even though it was on a Sunday afternoon. I went along to hear about how Ulster's ills could be remedied. I did hear of a remedy, but it was not a remedy for political ills. The remedy was that someone like me, who was born in sin, could find a saviour. That is what he preached unequivocally and clearly that day.

I got to know him much better in the years that followed. I remember when, in 1984, the INLA planted a car bomb to try to destroy me, my wife and my family.

Of course, that was in the days before mobile phones. We had to go to another home, because ours was sealed off as the army disposal officers tried to deal with the device under our car. Ian Paisley sought out where I was and phoned me to pray and to assure me of his support in the midst of the deepest trauma.

A few years ago, when a member of my family was nearing the end and I was in hospital, the phone rang. It was Ian Paisley on the end of the phone. He was a man of compassion, a preacher and a politician. He was a man who did not broach subjects with any stealth; whatever it was, he was full on. I have read some attempts to rewrite history over the past few days, and we shall deal with those in the next few days. He was very clear in his life and his ministry: error had to be exposed, and enemies had

to be opposed. That was his life; that was what he knew he had to do. Once it came to the point in his life where some of his enemies realised that they could not bomb or blast his people, he was prepared to be as assertive in his magnanimity as he was in his opposition. Once he reached that point, he was prepared to go forward. People learned that, if you kept asking Ian Paisley the wrong question, you got the wrong answer. That is why they got the word “no” all the time. However, when they asked the right question, they got the right answer.

When we come to the point that we all reach of crossing the Jordan, we need to know that Ian Paisley’s saviour is our saviour, too. I know that, in the corridors of glory today, there is singing a bit louder and shouting a bit louder than there was on Thursday.

Mr Storey: It is with a great sense of personal loss and sadness that I stand in the House today. There will never be another of the stature of Ian Paisley either in Church or in state. To me, he will always be the “Doc” and the “Big Man” — that larger-than-life figure whose presence filled the room. It was a privilege for me to know him not only as my MP and moderator for over 40 years but as a friend and someone with whom I shared many occasions and of whom I have many, many precious memories. I will always be proud to be called a Paisleyite.

My first recollection of Dr Paisley was of him coming to canvass in my home village of Armoy in the heart of his North Antrim constituency. My father, a local founder member of the Protestant Unionist Party, which ultimately became the DUP, went to canvass with him around the doors of the village of Armoy. For our family, that was a special day — the day the “Big Man” came to visit our home. Little did I think that, one day, I would have a greater privilege: that of standing alongside Dr Paisley in the same elections and on the same ballot paper, representing the same North Antrim constituency he loved and served faithfully.

He married Christine and me some 26 years ago. To have him share that special day in our lives was indeed an honour. When I was ordained to serve as an elder in Ballymoney Free Presbyterian Church, he was there to be our support and to be by our side. When my late mother passed away in 2000, as Gregory and thousands of families in Northern Ireland have recounted, although out of the country, he called our home and spoke and prayed with my father and me over the phone. Indeed, it was through the faithful preaching of Dr Paisley that my late mother came to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. What a reunion there has been for them in glory.

Dr Paisley was a faithful political representative for the people of North Antrim in Westminster and Stormont for over 40 years. The thumping majorities that he achieved in each election are testament to his devotion to public service and the popularity with his people. Since the sad news broke of Dr Paisley’s death, I have met countless constituents over the weekend from throughout the area who have told me personal accounts of how he had helped them and their family in their circumstances with their problems. No case was ever too small for Dr Paisley to deal with. His constituents mattered to him, and his dedication to duty was unwavering. He served the people of North Antrim and Northern Ireland with fairness and diligence and without fear or favour in every forum to which he was elected.

There may be one inaccuracy that I feel is necessary to set right in the House this afternoon. Yes, he founded the DUP and the Free Presbyterian Church, but he was not the founder of the Independent Orange Institution. He was born in 1926; that institution was founded in 1903. I have no doubt that today, in glory with the late George Dawson and James McClure, colleagues who loved him, they will have had a reunion to recall those days of the past. He was made a freeman of the borough of Ballymoney, the first local authority to confer that honour on him, in 2001 because in that town they loved him. The resolve that they had for him is resounding.

In conclusion, I want to extend to Baroness Paisley and, in particular, to my close friend and colleague Ian Paisley Jr and to the entire family circle, including Mrs Beggs and his brother, Harold, in Canada, my sincere sympathy at the loss of a great man of God. Let us ever be mindful of the words of scripture that tell us in Psalm 116:

“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”

Mr Poots: First, I wish well the Speaker and Minister Kennedy, who are unwell at this time. The greatest tribute to Ian Paisley will not be in the eloquent speeches of people in this Chamber or, indeed, in the well-crafted words of Prime Ministers or statesmen. The greatest tribute to Ian Paisley will be those simple tributes that will come and have come from many men and women over the weekend that they came to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ through hearing the preaching of Ian Paisley. I had the privilege from being a very young boy of hearing that preaching. He spoke with fire and fervour, with passion and compassion and with power and conviction, and his impact was felt right across Northern Ireland but well beyond Northern Ireland. My sister was one of those who came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ through his preaching. She ended up taking the gospel to the people in the jungles of Papua New Guinea. In Brazil, many lepers were healed as a result of the work of Bill Woods, who went out there on the support of Ian Paisley and many others. People in the slums of Manila, and people in the mountains of Nepal. That was the spread of the man. It was not just Northern Ireland but has been a worldwide spread. Locally, many a drunkard, a gambler and a wife-beater sought Jesus Christ after hearing the preaching of Ian Paisley, which made a remarkable difference to families.

He looked on his political opponents as people who could be redeemed because he knew that the apostle Paul was a man who called himself the greatest sinner and was actually involved in the killing of people. He knew that anybody could find forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ, and he wanted to spread that gospel, irrespective of who it was. My father first stood with Ian Paisley in 1969 as a Protestant Unionist, and he entered this Chamber in 1973 in the old Northern Ireland Assembly. He walked in with him, and he was carried out with him. I then had the privilege of walking in with him in 1998 and of being with him right through until he retired in 2008. The more I got to know Ian Paisley, the more I liked the man. That is not a trait that always happens. He was more than a colleague. He was caring, he was kind and he was wise. He could be quite crafty. For me, he was a friend, a brother and a mentor, but most of all he was a spiritual father. I had the opportunity of spending time with the family yesterday. As

we recalled stories, we laughed and considered various things. We mourned, and we wept.

1.15 pm

As we gather today to remember Ian Paisley, we owe it to him and to future generations to carry through the work that he has done and to ensure that it is not undone. He wanted peace in our land and peace in people's hearts. There is a great work still to be done, and it is our duty to do it.

Mr Wells: We have heard many eloquent words here today. I just want to focus on the enormous energy of Dr Paisley. I worked for the DUP between 1981 and 1985, and I well remember one Friday evening when Dr Paisley rang me up and said, "Brother Wells, I want to see you at Aldergrove airport at six o'clock". I said to Dr Paisley, "That is fine. I will have a lie-in, have an early lunch and see you at Aldergrove at six". He said, "At six o'clock this morning". I also knew that he was speaking at a DUP dinner in Kesh and that Rev William McCrea was singing. In those days, the Rev McCrea had a habit of gathering us all around the piano after an event and singing until the small hours, and that, indeed, is what happened. We sang until 1.00 am, I caught the plane at 6.00 am, and Dr Paisley spoke at an Orange parade in Glasgow. He then came back, picked up his car and was driven to Londonderry to open a new Free church there. He then came back that night and spoke to the prisoners in Crumlin Road prison. He had four services on the Sunday, and he bounced into the office on Monday morning as bright as a daisy. I was absolutely exhausted, and all I had done was follow him.

That was the type of man that Dr Paisley was. He had the most enormous energy. No one can understand how anyone could work as hard as Dr Paisley. He often joked and said that he had a day's work done before most men were out of their bed, and I can confirm that that is true. He never seemed to sleep. He would regularly ring you at 1.00 am or 2.00 am asking for something to be done.

I also saw the spiritual side of Dr Paisley. I was in Rathfriland campaigning, and he heard that someone who admired him greatly but was not a member of his Church was facing the valley of the shadow of death and was about to pass away from cancer. He dropped everything and went to that house. I will never forget the comfort, succour and support he gave to that family. No one could handle that type of situation better than Dr Paisley. While thousands of people from Northern Ireland will bless the day that they attended a mission or service at which Dr Paisley preached, there are many other thousands whom we will not hear about who have passed through into death with comfort and support from Dr Paisley. No one could do that better.

I have so many memories over the last 40 years. Northern Ireland, Ulster, the United Kingdom and Ireland are much poorer places for his passing. There will never be another Ian Paisley. Even if Ian Paisley had been nothing more than a carpenter or a plumber, he would have been well known in his community, but he was so much more. I will find it an enormous privilege to tell my grandchildren that I knew Ian Paisley. I think that it is a great honour to be able to say that.

Mr Frew: I rise with great sadness on this historic day in the Chamber. I can boast that I am younger than most

people who have spoken here today. My first recollection of the great man Paisley was in the early 1980s when I was young boy on a tricycle, or at least on a bike with stabilisers. When Paisley came to visit a household, or even just to canvass, he would have had an entourage that no one else could match. When Dr Paisley was in your street or your area, you knew about it and so did that community. That community would have congregated around that street or house to catch even a glimpse of the great man or to say hello to him. That is why none of us here could ever compare to the man who was Dr Paisley.

Many things have been said here about Dr Paisley and many things were written about him throughout his life, but I would like to concentrate on Dr Paisley the servant, because that is what Dr Paisley was, first and foremost.

I grew up with Dr Paisley as a childhood hero. Some might say, "That's sad. Why would you have a politician as a hero?", but he was much more than a politician. For many people in North Antrim and Ballymena, he was their hero. That is because he served them and helped them. In his constituency work, he got the mould and broke it, and he set a new standard that no one from that day to now has ever had the energy, the passion or the compassion to match. All in this room can try, but I doubt that any of us will be able to match that energy, work rate and commitment to the people, not only of North Antrim but of Northern Ireland, when he served them in Westminster, Europe and this House.

He was also a family man, and not only in the true sense of the word. Around these Benches today, he created a family that worked tirelessly, followed him, tried to be like him, tried to work like him and tried to have the energy like his. If there is anything that we around these Benches can do today and for ever more, it is to try to match that energy and commitment. That will be our lasting tribute to the person that we know affectionately as "Doc".

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before I call the next Member to speak, I want to point out that some Members who have taken the trouble to put their name down are not going to be called, because we are simply going to run out of time. So, I ask people to respect the three-minute rule or possibly even curtail their remarks to give other colleagues an opportunity to speak.

Mr Bell: It is a privilege to pay tribute to Rev Dr Ian Richard Kyle Paisley, Lord Bannside. I know with certainty that Ian has already heard the greatest of all tributes because he has already heard the:

"Well done, good and faithful servant".

So, on this day that this great son of Ulster is laid to rest, we return our thanks to God, as Ian would want us to do, because he always put God first in his life, for the love that sought him, the blood that bought him and the grace that brought him to the fold, and how faithfully he preached Christ crucified. To be alongside Ian was to know and understand that Christ was his strength and Christ was his might. The fire of the Reformation burned strongly in Dr Paisley, and he embodied in that hymn something that we should all dedicate ourselves to — that faith of our fathers, the holy faith that he was true to until death.

He was an amazingly well-read man and a powerful orator. I do not need to pay tribute to his strengths as a politician. Long ago, he entered into the pantheon of great unionist

leaders. I can remember him telling me how difficult it was when Eileen confined him to bringing 3,000 of his favourite books to their new home, because he had just short of 34,000 to choose from. He was a man of great humour and pastor's heart. As a student, I remember coming back to his house one night with a Kentucky Fried Chicken bucket after putting up posters at midnight in Belfast city centre. He came in from whatever meeting he had been at and sat down with us at his kitchen table, where he filled a pint glass full of ice cubes to the brim with red Shloer and sat and joked with us until the early hours of the morning. We got up the next day just short of lunchtime to learn that Dr Paisley had been outside the shipyard in east Belfast at half six in the morning campaigning for the European election. He was an orator of excellence. He could politically face down the worst evils of terrorism and still rejoice in his faith.

I will conclude now, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, having heard your words. How do you ever finish a tribute to Ian? Ian always quoted Ephesians chapter 6, verses 19 and 20. I thought of that. Today, however, as the Rev William McCrea would have sung with him, "There are no wreaths of death on Doc's mansion door. Teardrops are not welcome beyond the gates of glory because that heart will never break any more." The Paisley family held "Doc's" hand right up until Friday afternoon and cared for him so well until a higher hand came and took his other hand to bring him home. I will finish with the words of the doxology — no pun intended:

*"How great is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;
Whose love is as great as his power,
And neither knows measure nor end.
'Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,
whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We'll praise him for all that is past,
And trust him for all that's to come."*

Mr I McCrea: First, on behalf of my entire family circle, I offer our sincerest sympathies to Baroness Paisley and her family on the passing of their loved one and our friend Lord Bannside, or as others have said and as he was affectionately known to us, the "Doc".

I have had the honour of knowing Dr Paisley all of my life. In fact, although I do not recall it, when I was a child, he came to my dad's church to dedicate me as a young boy. I suppose that it came as no surprise that if there were ever to be a firstborn boy in our house, he would surely be christened after Ian Paisley. He always told me how proud he was that I carried on that name.

Over the years, my dad — and it is good to see him here today — has had a very close bond with Dr Paisley. He shared the pulpit with him. As a teenager, he was an assistant to him in Belfast. He was a colleague in the ministry for well over 40 years. He shared the Benches of Parliament at Westminster and here with Dr Paisley. Indeed, he also shared a prison cell with him in Crumlin Road Gaol. I am not sure that too many people can say all that.

Growing up as a boy, I have many memories of Dr Paisley coming to our home. I suppose that, as one of five, I always claimed that I was his favourite. Mind you, that must have been because of the fact that he always sent home a gift from Westminster with dad for me now and

again that the others did not get. So, there may be some truth in it. I will hold fast to that anyway.

I have numerous memories of Dr Paisley. I will always cherish them. We will all have our own memories. Whether it was his coming to Magherafelt to open the loyalist arch, the time he spent in our home, his preaching at dad's church or indeed at the Easter convention at the Martyrs Memorial or when he was here at Stormont, Dr Paisley always took the time to ask how things were with me and my family. He always had a genuine interest and showed that he cared.

Since hearing of Dr Paisley's passing, I have been overwhelmed by the number of constituents and others who have approached me to express their sympathy. I want to ensure that the family are aware of that today.

There will never be another Dr Paisley in my lifetime. He was a giant both in the political world and as a minister of the gospel. I believe that Ian Paisley was God's man for Ulster's hour of need.

Dr Paisley will be greatly missed. His seat is now empty but many of us will carry his memory in our hearts. He loved this Province. He always gave hope in the darkest day. He brought comfort to many over the years, especially those whose lives were wrecked by terrorism. He stood up for the rights of the ordinary man. He was a true Ulsterman. Through his leadership, he has left a legacy of hope for generations to come.

In conclusion, I just want to recall the hymn that he always sang at the closing of the Easter convention. It was:

*"Till we meet, till we meet,
Till we meet at Jesus' feet;
Till we meet, till we meet,
God be with you till we meet again."*

I thank God that, by his saving grace, I will meet Ian Paisley at Jesus' feet.

Mr Dunne: I, too, count it a great honour to stand today to pay tribute to Dr Paisley, whom I knew as my pastor and saw as a great leader and friend. He was a family friend who was very close to my late father and mother. As many know, I was brought up in County Fermanagh. My father and mother were great followers of Dr Paisley throughout the 1970s.

1.30 pm

Having moved to north Down, I got involved in politics there and was involved in many election campaigns. I remember the days in Bangor market. We had a famous lady from Bangor — I am sure that a lot of you remember Beryl Holland — who was a great friend and colleague of Dr Paisley's and, in many ways, challenged him about how he carried out his business. Those are just some of the people who backed Dr Paisley in the early days. The important thing he had was the ability to link with ordinary people. He always remembered the ordinary person on the street. That is an important lesson for all of us today.

As a pastor in the Martyrs Memorial church, Paisley conducted our wedding, almost 30 years ago. He dedicated our three children and he was a faithful minister and pastor for over 60 years.

I will remember him as a great leader; in Europe, in Westminster, in the Northern Ireland Assembly and as First Minister. He made very brave decisions, and I think that he made the right decisions. I believe that the future of the Assembly is secure because of Ian Paisley.

An example of the outpouring from the people of the Province in respect of Dr Paisley happened on Friday. Shortly after the announcement was made, a lady came straight to our office in Holywood with a card for Mrs Paisley. A Roman Catholic lady, she had rushed out and bought a card and brought it to our office to be passed on as a mark of respect.

I think that I have said enough. Dr Paisley has run his race. He has finished the course. He has kept the faith.

Mr Moutray: My first real-life experience of Dr Ian Paisley was in the early 1970s when he came to speak at political open-air rallies in the Mourneview estate in Lurgan. I remember him speaking from a platform, which comprised an open-top lorry, to a crowd of maybe some 500 people. Ian Paisley had a charisma that was lacking in unionism at that time. He appealed to all sections of the unionist community, but particularly to the working-class people, whom he represented so well. My family background was not connected either politically or spiritually with what Ian Paisley represented, but I admired the man from those days for his honesty, his forthrightness and his determination, sometimes against all odds.

In later years, through political and church involvement, I got to know Dr Paisley well, and, indeed, his family. I found him to be a person of total integrity who was caring and compassionate. I remember being out on the election trail with him. That in itself was an experience. He always had time for the ordinary people on the street. Ian Paisley made a tremendous impact on the life of this Province. He was a force for good. I believe that Ulster is a much better place today because of his contribution.

To Baroness Paisley, our colleague Ian and the rest of the family, I extend condolences from myself, my wife and my family. Yet, even at this time of sadness, we are consoled to know that, as Philippians chapter 1, verse 23 says, he is:

“with Christ; which is far better”.

Mr Givan: Ephesians chapter 6, verses 19 and 20, say:

“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

Those of us who have Dr Paisley's signature on our Bible, as I do on mine, will know that he always ascribed those texts with his name and that he lived out those verses in his life, in the pulpit and in politics. It is a privilege for me to speak on this day as a tribute to him. Today, we have lost a son of Ulster. We have lost a mighty man of God.

Dr Paisley was the embodiment of what it is to be for God and Ulster. Dr Paisley had an impact on my life that was immense. My grandfather and his two brothers were founding members of the Protestant Unionist Party, which then became the DUP. My father followed him, and I will always be, and proud to be, known as a Paisleyite. I wear it as a badge of honour.

He connected generations of my family in a special way and he made an impact upon thousands of people. I thank God for his ministry in the Martyrs Memorial. My wife, 16 years ago, at a youth rally, responded to his sermon and put her trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as her own personal saviour. I and thousands of others followed Dr Paisley because he led us in a closer walk with God.

Today, our hearts are broken and we mourn with his family, but we are not without hope, because Dr Paisley is with the Lord. At church on Friday we sang that song, 'Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me', to which Dr Paisley penned a fifth verse. It states:

*“Then above the world and sin,
Thro' the veil, drawn right within,
I shall see Him face to face,
Sing the story, saved by grace,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me ever be with Thee.”*

Dr Paisley is at home in glory, but we hear his voice loudly, as he says to those who remain, “put on the whole armour of God”, “Fight the good fight”, “press toward the mark”, “run ... the race that is set before us”, and, “God be with you till we meet again”.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That brings an end to the tributes to Lord Bannside. I ask the leaders of the political parties in the Chamber to join me in the Rotunda, where we will proceed to the opening and signing of the book of condolence. Members thereafter will be afforded the opportunity to sign it. The book of condolence will be available for users of this Building and staff until 3.00 pm, when it will then be open to the public.

Finally, I express my thanks and appreciation to all the Members for the sincerity of their comments and the conduct of this discussion on the life and times and contribution of Dr Ian Paisley. Thank you all very much.

Adjourned at 1.37 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 16 September 2014

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Public Petition: Elective Home Education

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Storey has sought leave to present a public petition in accordance with Standing Order 22. The Member will have up to three minutes to speak.

Mr Storey: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. I present the petition, which asks the Minister of Education and the Northern Ireland education and library boards to ensure that the education and library boards' policy on home education accurately reflects their legal status, duties and powers, and respects the parents' duty to provide an education. It is signed by 3,360 persons.

I present the petition regarding the issue of elective home education, which has caused much concern among many families who have chosen to exercise their legal right to educate their children other than at school. In recent months, the education and library boards have published a consultation exercise in relation to changes to the elective home education policies. I am at a loss to understand why the issue has emerged at this time, when it appears that the current practice within the boards has been, and is, working satisfactorily. I and many of my fellow MLAs have been lobbied about this issue. It has generated great concern among parents, many of whom have made a conscientious and positive decision to home educate their children. That is their legal right, and they now feel that they are being targeted for being responsible parents.

It is not clear from the consultation document why the consultation was initiated at this time, who initiated the process and if legal advice was sought on whether the revised proposals were consistent with article 45(1) of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Clearly, when the issue was raised with the Minister of Education in the Chamber on 2 June, he was keen to distance himself from the consultation exercise. He was also keen to stress that this exercise was undertaken independently of his Department.

My party and I support parental choice in all aspects of education. That is in keeping with article 44 of the 1986 order, which has been a fundamental tenet of our education system for many years. Our schooling system has been developed in accordance with that principle. Education, however, is not the same as schooling, and some parents wish to exercise their legal right to educate their children other than at school.

Many of them do so for religious reasons, and we, as a party, support and uphold that right.

Many of these parents, who are part of a wider international education support network, have no desire to be part of the current state schooling system. Indeed, there is no requirement in law for them to do so. I understand that it is for parents to become involved in schooling systems or to advise, or to seek permission from, state institutions such as the boards to undertake that activity. There is also no requirement for parents to seek permission to withdraw their children from schooling to educate them at home.

As I present the petition, I trust that the Education Minister will take seriously the issues raised, and I look forward to his response.

Mr Storey moved forward and laid the petition on the Table.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr Storey. I will forward the petition to the Minister of Education and send a copy to the Committee.

Committee of the Regions: Membership

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The motion will be treated as a business motion. Therefore, there will be no debate.

Mr Weir: I beg to move

That this Assembly nominates Ms Megan Fearon as a full member, and Mr Fearghal McKinney as an alternative member on the UK delegation to the Committee of the Regions; and notes that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association has nominated Councillor Trevor Cummings as a full member, and Alderman Arnold Hatch as an alternative member.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before I proceed to the Question, I advise Members that the motion requires cross-community support.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved (with cross-community support):

That this Assembly nominates Ms Megan Fearon as a full member, and Mr Fearghal McKinney as an alternative member on the UK delegation to the Committee of the Regions; and notes that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association has nominated Councillor Trevor Cummings as a full member, and Alderman Arnold Hatch as an alternative member.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: As there are Ayes from all sides of the House and no dissenting voices, I am satisfied that cross-community support has been demonstrated.

Ministerial Statement

Criminal Justice Matters: Intergovernmental Agreement on Cooperation

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): With your permission, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a statement regarding a meeting under the auspices of the intergovernmental agreement (IGA) on cooperation on criminal justice matters, which was held in Dublin on Friday 27 June. I represented the Executive at the meeting, which was hosted by Frances Fitzgerald TD, the new Minister for Justice and Equality, who was attending her first meeting under the auspices of the IGA. It was the eighth formal ministerial meeting under the intergovernmental agreement since the devolution of justice in April 2010. As I previously said in statements to the House, I am committed to keeping the Assembly informed of meetings held under the auspices of the agreement on the same basis as North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) meetings.

The meeting provided us both with an opportunity to review final progress against the 2013-14 joint work programme as well as to formally agree a joint work programme for 2014-15, which will run through to the summer of 2015. It was gratifying to note the positive progress that has been made.

A hate crime-related seminar held in Sligo during May, which was hosted by an Garda Síochána and attended by the PSNI, was the result of the outworking of the criminal justice and social diversity project advisory group.

The sharing of information and training on programmes to challenge offending behaviour between the respective probation services, including exploration of opportunities for collaboration in interventions for domestic violence and violent offenders, are further instances of progress.

The PSNI has made strides on the development of a potential information-sharing agreement with an Garda Síochána covering domestic and child abuse, and this work will be further developed during 2014-15 in the registered offenders project advisory group.

Those are just some of the examples that demonstrate the excellent ongoing cooperation between criminal justice agencies across both jurisdictions on this island.

I have attached to the printed version of the statement a copy of the joint work programme for 2014-15 agreed during the meeting. The current joint work programme seeks to build on the 2013-14 programme and on the progress made last year. I intend to give a brief progress report in December following our next IGA meeting, which is scheduled to coincide with the fifth annual seminar on public protection issues on the island of Ireland. In the interim, progress against the actions will be monitored by the working group of officials.

Six project advisory groups provide the mechanism by which work is taken forward. They focus on the areas of public protection, registered offenders, youth justice, forensic science, support for victims of crime, and social diversity. Each of the project advisory groups has continued to promote and support cooperation across the broad spectrum of criminal justice agencies on both sides of the border.

Examples of cross-border cooperation that will be taken forward include work on the further development of a forensic partnership strategy and action plan covering the forensic science services of Northern Ireland, Ireland and Scotland; delivery of seminars by the police services on this island to marginalised groups of people, building on the seminars with the Roma communities in the South; ongoing discussion on the European victims directive in the support for victims project advisory group following the joint presentation by senior DOJ and Department of Justice and Equality (DJE) officials during the meeting; and the further development of staff exchanges and information sharing between the juvenile detention facilities in Northern Ireland and Ireland.

There continues to be excellent cooperation at an operational level between the PSNI and an Garda Síochána on the management of sex offenders. I am pleased to report that there remains good progress in supporting and promoting North/South cooperation to make the whole island a safer and more prosperous place for everyone.

As the House will be aware, the IGA is not purposely intended to provide for discussion of cross-border security issues. However, I used the opportunity on 27 June to briefly discuss with Frances Fitzgerald some general wider cross-border security-related issues. Those included the work being done in the areas of tackling organised crime, fuel and tobacco fraud, human trafficking and rural crime. I also relayed my appreciation to an Garda Síochána in supporting the work to tackle ongoing security challenges.

Finally, the intergovernmental agreement provides an extremely helpful framework for supporting North/South cooperation on criminal justice matters, but we are seeing the true benefits of cooperation when individuals in the criminal justice agencies have developed good working relationships with their respective counterparts. It is that real type of practical cooperation that the new Irish Justice Minister, Frances Fitzgerald, and I are both committed to further enhancing.

Mr Givan (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): I thank the Minister for bringing the statement to the House today. Can he give any indication of whether the National Crime Agency (NCA) was raised in his discussions at this meeting in the context of tackling organised crime, fuel and tobacco fraud and human trafficking? What are the implications of the continued non-implementation of the full powers that it should have to tackle those very serious issues? Is there any indication that organised crime gangs in the Republic of Ireland are seeking to exploit the weaknesses that now exist in this jurisdiction, particularly because of the inability to cover civil assets that criminal gangs are obviously living off?

Mr Ford: I thank the Chair for his question. Certainly, the non-operational status of the NCA in the devolved sphere was mentioned in the meeting. However, his wider questions go a bit beyond the meeting's remit. I can confirm that I have meetings arranged over the next few days with most of, if not all, the other Executive parties, and I certainly hope that they will enable us to make progress on the basis of the document that I circulated last week. It is absolutely clear that we are losing out because of not having the NCA to deal with major issues such as environmental crime and civil recovery. However, I cannot give any specific information at my level on the question

of cross-border activities that exploit the opportunities that are presented by the absence of civil recovery powers at this stage in Northern Ireland.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an ráiteas sin. I thank the Minister for the statement, which I welcome. In particular, I welcome the ongoing work on cooperation and harmonisation. However, does the Minister intend to look some time in the future at legal highs? The recent legislation that was passed in the Oireachtas allows for legal highs to be dealt with more speedily and to be identified and prohibited as quickly as possible.

Mr Ford: I thank the Deputy Chair for his question. The issue of new psychoactive substances, which are more simply called legal highs, is of concern on both sides of the border. I have certainly discussed the approach taken in the Republic, but the reality is that the issue is not currently devolved here and we are bound by changes that are happening at Westminster. We are expecting the review from the Home Office sometime this autumn, and I hope that that will enable us to make progress in Northern Ireland, because it is clear that we need to see the most robust action taken against those who are seeking to promote legal highs in a way that is seriously damaging to public health.

10.45 am

Mr A Maginness: I welcome the Minister's statement. The Minister said in the penultimate paragraph:

"As this House will be aware, the IGA is not purposefully intended to provide for discussion of cross-border security issues."

The Minister then went on to identify some of those issues:

"tackling organised crime, fuel and tobacco fraud, human trafficking and rural crime".

Is that apposite because is not the reality that, when one talks about cross-border security issues, is one not talking really about dealing with paramilitary activities, subversion and activities of that nature rather than crime per se? I would have thought that fuel laundering, for example, would be a totally appropriate subject for both Ministers to discuss in an official capacity and to deal with directly.

Mr Ford: I appreciate Mr Maginness's point. The specific way the IGA was set up was a matter for the UK and Irish Governments; we operate it as best we can in the devolved sphere. When the Member raises the issue of paramilitary concerns, issues of concern relating to paramilitary terrorist activity are discussed in a general way but are not the primary responsibility of this. There are also clear indications of the involvement of some paramilitary organisations in crimes such as fuel laundering, tobacco smuggling and potentially even human trafficking.

That is where there is a clear crossover between what would be seen as terrorist activity and what is seen as organised crime. It is important that we see the agencies on both sides of the border cooperating across that range of issues and not producing artificial separations.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for the update. Although he indicated that it is not the purpose of the IGA to provide a discussion on cross-border security issues, I was just

wondering whether any new initiatives were suggested or are coming forward in relation to fuel and tobacco fraud.

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Elliott for the question. The key issue around fuel fraud is more the issue of laundering than anything else. Work is ongoing, led by the Revenue Commissioners in Dublin and HMRC in London. I am expecting to receive an update shortly from HMRC in the context of the Organised Crime Task Force, which brings together local and UK-wide agencies in Northern Ireland, where a number of subgroups have cross-border cooperation.

Work is ongoing about developing a different marker, which, it is hoped, will make laundering if not impossible then potentially uneconomic. Tobacco smuggling is a classic smuggling operation, and we need the best possible cooperation across a number of agencies, and not just on this island. Given the way that smuggling can tend to operate across Europe and further afield, we need the widest possible international reach, which is, of course, another point where the National Crime Agency may come in as well as the good work that is being done by agencies cross-border.

Mr Dickson: Thank you, Minister, for the excellent cooperative work that you are doing with your Irish counterpart. In the statement, you made reference to a forensic partnership strategy between Northern Ireland, Ireland and Scotland. Is that new or ongoing work between those forensic agencies?

Mr Ford: The forensics cooperation has been ongoing for some time. I signed an agreement shortly after I came into office with Alan Shatter as the Irish Justice Minister, but the three forensic science services have been cooperating for a number of years looking at how they can promote cooperation and provide resilience between them.

There is now in place not just a bilateral agreement between Northern Ireland and the Republic but a trilateral agreement involving Scotland. What is clear is that changes to the forensic science services in England and Wales have made it more important that we cooperate across the public sector with the agencies on either side of us, regardless of constitutional status. It is clear that significant help is being given between the three jurisdictions.

Mr Wells: The Minister is aware that the Leinster House Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality has unanimously agreed to recommend that the purchase of sexual services in the Irish Republic become a criminal offence. He raised the issue of human trafficking. Is he aware of that Committee's report, and was the issue discussed during the meeting?

Mr Ford: Yes, it was. I thank Mr Wells for giving me the opportunity to point out that, alongside the issue of human trafficking, the issue of sexual offences in general was raised. Frances Fitzgerald is considering the evidence that has been put to her before she considers the way forward for her jurisdiction in the same way that I will consider the evidence from the research that is being commissioned in Northern Ireland before I consider the best possible way forward in this jurisdiction.

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an ráiteas sin. Minister, in relation to the management of sex

offenders, you say that there is excellent cooperation between the two services on the island. Has there been any progress on the development of an all-Ireland sex offender register?

Mr Ford: I thank Mr Lynch for giving me the opportunity to point out the level of cooperation. There is a clear and significant benefit to both jurisdictions from information sharing because of the ease of travel between the two jurisdictions. The Member talks specifically about a single register, but we also need to look at the fact that it is equally easy to travel between this island and Great Britain and then into Europe. The important issue is that we have ensured that sex offenders who travel notify the police or the Garda of the details. In that context, we have good arrangements.

I will look at whether anything can be done to ensure that the border is not used to allow people to escape justice. There is not necessarily any more benefit in having a single register rather than the two that we have, which fully cooperate and engage in information sharing with the registers in GB.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for his statement. I welcome the cooperation between the police in this jurisdiction and the police in the Irish Republic.

The Minister will be aware that sex offenders, human trafficking, fuel laundering, tobacco smuggling, drugs and paedophile activity are huge issues facing Northern Ireland. I have written to the Minister on a number of occasions about the National Crime Agency, and I also raised the issue with the Secretary of State on a number of occasions. The SDLP today raised the issue of paramilitary activity, and Sinn Féin raised the issue of sex offenders. What progress is the Minister making with both those parties on getting their agreement to the installation and extension of the National Crime Agency to Northern Ireland?

Mr Ford: I am not sure whether Mr Humphrey was in the Chamber when I answered the first question, which was from Mr Givan. I made it clear that discussions are ongoing: indeed, I have a discussion with his party in my diary for this afternoon. I am keen to have discussions with all parties to see what progress can be made on the basis of the letter that I issued last week.

I hope that we will be able to reach agreement on the basis of the significant mechanisms for answerability and accountability in Northern Ireland, which do not exist in other parts of the UK, so that we can get the benefit of the NCA in the fight against crime.

Mr Humphrey: *[Interruption.]*

Mr Ford: Mr Humphrey may point across the Chamber, but we need to ensure that we have agreement around the Chamber.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a ráiteas agus as a fhreagraí go dtí seo. In the Minister's discussions with his counterpart in the South on human trafficking, was there agreement on how to prosecute offenders, to prevent human trafficking and to protect the victims of human trafficking?

Mr Ford: I take Ms McCorley's point about getting the maximum possible cooperation. Of course, the precise

mechanisms for things like support are not exactly the same. We have, however, a good system of support for victims in Northern Ireland. We have very good cross-border cooperation on that, as we do on a much wider front.

It is important that we ensure that we get the best possible information so that, if people are being trafficked across the border, across the North Channel and into mainland Europe, as we know they are, we ensure that people report their suspicions, tell the police, the Garda, Crimestoppers or whomever so that action can be taken to rescue those who are vulnerable and are being trafficked and ensure proper protection for them.

It really is important that the good work being done by the agencies be matched by good work between the agencies and the general public in both jurisdictions.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for his statement.

Minister, you have highlighted the fact that that there continues to be excellent cooperation between the PSNI and an Garda Síochána at an operational level on the management of sex offenders. Can you outline the current position regarding the potential loss of the European arrest warrant (EAW) and whether that has been satisfactorily resolved, given the significant operational benefits that it would have for Northern Ireland?

Mr Ford: Members seem to be very good at getting nearly any justice matter that they want to talk about into questions on these statements. I can happily say back to Mr Anderson that the specific issue of the European arrest warrant is one of those that was discussed as part of our general summing-up of cooperation. I have concerns that we have not yet seen full clarity between the UK and the European Union on the opt-back-in measure for the European arrest warrant, which no doubt is more significant for Northern Ireland than it is for other regions of the UK and is particularly significant between Northern Ireland and the Republic. It is important that we have the EAW back in operation, not just for sex offenders but for a range of criminals. I hope that the British Government, having made their opt-out plans clear, will ensure that they tidy up the loose ends on opting back in so that we do not have a gap in our arrangements later this year.

Mr Attwood: May I return to the wider conversation that you had with the Justice Minister in the South about organised crime? Given that the biggest illegal waste dump in the history of these islands was found outside your own city a couple of years ago, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker; that the police say that they did not have any intelligence or information on it; that the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), the predecessor agency to the much-applauded National Crime Agency, says that it had no intelligence or information on it; that the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), of which you were a member, Minister, did not have any working group on it; and that those responsible got £50 million out of the illegal waste dump, can the Minister confirm what conversations he is having with the Minister in the South about organised crime, what conclusions he has come to and what actions he is taking?

Mr Ford: Mr Attwood correctly raises the point that waste crime is one of the significant issues of organised crime. Sadly, some of the follow-up work on and part of the investigations into that particular waste dump had to cease when NCA officers were unable to continue on

the basis of the change in status from SOCA to NCA last year. That is one of the reasons why I want to see the NCA fully operational. However, we also clearly need to get intelligence and ensure that it is properly shared North/South, because many of the waste dumps have had a cross-border element. We need to ensure that we get that sharing. We also need to depend on public information.

There was a very useful meeting between officials from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and the Organised Crime Task Force, which is merely a coordinating body, not an operational one. That gave the opportunity for a range of agencies to hear from the NIEA on that issue. We cannot set up a subgroup of the OCTF for everything, but what we can ensure is that we get the maximum possible cooperation between the agencies. I believe that we have now got that, perhaps as a result of that discovery.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Minister for his statement and for his ongoing commitment to keeping the Assembly informed of the work being done under the intergovernmental agreement.

Victims have already been mentioned. The Assembly is aware that the Minister has placed the needs of victims at the centre of his reform agenda. Can he tell us whether the commitment to meeting the needs of victims is also at the centre of the cross-border work that is being carried out under the intergovernmental agreement?

Mr Ford: Whilst I thank Mr McCarthy for the question that he has asked, I will say that the precise detail of how matters are carried out in the Republic is clearly not something for me. However, I do believe that there is significant work being done. Of course, the European directive affects all of us, and there is work going on to ensure that both jurisdictions are in line with that. I believe that, in terms of the victim and witness strategy in Northern Ireland, we are well ahead of it, but it is certainly an issue that, as I understand it, is of significant concern to the DJE. Perhaps the fact that Frances Fitzgerald is, like me, a social worker means that we have an interest in the needs of victims across both jurisdictions. The key issue is the cooperation that is being carried through by officials and the work that is being done to ensure that people learn lessons from others' achievements and that we share best practice across the island.

11.00 am

Mr Dallat: The Minister may not be aware that today is the 40th anniversary of the murder of Judge Rory Conaghan and his colleague Martin McBurney. Can the Minister assure me that there is maximum cooperation between North and South to ensure that Irishmen such as judges Conaghan and McBurney do not lose their lives in the future carrying out their jobs to change society for the better?

Mr Ford: Mr Dallat brings us back to some of the very serious points that confront us even on this day, never mind looking back 40 years. I cannot give any assurance about what happened 40 years ago, but he asks about seeking to ensure that work is being done to protect Irishmen whichever side of the border they happen to be on, and I believe that, from the reports that we receive, as Ministers, from the Garda Commissioner and the

PSNI Chief Constable, we have an extremely good set of cooperative arrangements North/South at the moment.

We can always make cooperation better, but I believe that we have it at a high level. It will be the task of the new Garda Commissioner, as opposed to the acting Garda Commissioner, to see how that works in the future, but from what I see in the reports that I receive from the PSNI and from my discussions with Frances Fitzgerald I believe that we have very high levels of cooperation. Very significant work is being done, particularly as far as we are concerned, in the Southern jurisdiction, and that is aiding the fight that the PSNI is leading against the kind of terrorist crime that the Member referred to, which, sadly, could still happen today and not just 40 years ago.

Mr Allister: The Minister has been very effusive in praising North/South cooperation and, indeed, has highly commended the Garda, yet, yesterday, the chief coroner in Northern Ireland had occasion to be highly critical of the total lack of cooperation from the Garda in the preparation for the pending Kingsmills massacre inquest. What actions has the Minister taken to raise that issue with his counterparts? That is a disgraceful situation. If he has not done anything, why has he not done anything and will he now seek to engage on that important issue? The coroner says that he wrote to the guards in February and April looking for cooperation and has had no response. Is the Minister prepared to sit back and allow that to continue or will he get active on that issue?

Mr Ford: There are a number of points in Mr Allister's comments. First of all, I do not operationally direct the PSNI, and I need to be very careful about suggesting that I might operationally direct an Garda Síochána in those circumstances — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Ford: Let us be absolutely clear: it is a major difficulty to resource the issues of the past, whether it be the work of the police in the Historical Enquiries Team and other matters, whether it be the work of the Office of the Police Ombudsman on its historical issues, or whether it be the work of the Coroners' Courts in this jurisdiction. We have significant financial problems in dealing with that with a budget that is only for today and which is being cut at this stage whilst some of those issues are enormously expensive. So, we need to be realistic about the expectation as to what a Minister in this jurisdiction could do to enforce anything on a police service in a different jurisdiction.

Mr Allister: Do nothing.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order. That concludes questions on the statement.

Executive Committee Business

Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill: Consideration Stage

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call the Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford, to move the Bill.

Moved. — *[Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Members will have a copy of the Marshalled List of amendments detailing the order for consideration. The amendments have been grouped for debate in the provisional grouping of amendments selected list. There are two groups of amendments, and we will debate the amendments in each group in turn.

The first debate will be on amendment Nos 1 to 13 and amendment No 19, which deal with the appointment and guidance of the director of legal aid services. This group comprises amendments to appoint a director of legal aid services rather than designate a civil servant to the post; to remove the requirement for the director to comply with departmental direction; and consequential amendments to related provisions of the Bill.

The second debate will be on amendment Nos 14 to 18 and 20 to 22, which deal with Assembly scrutiny of rule-making powers and other technical amendments. This group comprises departmental amendments requested by the Justice Committee on the advice of the Examiner of Statutory Rules to upgrade the Assembly statutory scrutiny mechanism for significant rule-making powers to draft affirmative procedure, and two technical amendments to change the name of the Legal Services Commission to Legal Services Agency in related legislation.

I remind Members intending to speak that, during the debates on the two groups of amendments, they should address all of the amendments in each group on which they wish to comment. Once the debate on each group is completed, any further amendments in the group will be moved formally as we go through the Bill, and the Question on each will be put without further debate. The Questions on stand part will be taken at the appropriate points in the Bill. If that is clear, we shall proceed.

Clause 1 (Dissolution of Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission)

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: We now come to the first group of amendments for debate. With amendment No 1, it will be convenient to debate amendment Nos 2 to 13 and amendment No 19. This group comprises amendments to appoint a director of legal aid services rather than designate a civil servant to the post; to remove the requirement for the director to comply with departmental direction; and consequential amendments to related provisions of the Bill.

Amendment No 1 is a paving amendment for amendment No 2; amendment Nos 13 and 19 are consequential to amendment No 2; amendment Nos 4 to 8 are consequential to amendment No 3; and amendment Nos 10 to 12 are consequential to amendment No 9.

I call Tom Elliott to move amendment No 1 and address the other amendments in the group.

Mr Elliott: I beg to move amendment No 1: In page 2, line 9, leave out "designated" and insert "appointed".

The following amendments stood on the Marshalled List:

No 2: In clause 2, page 2, line 17, leave out "designate a civil servant in the Department as the" and insert "appoint a".— [Mr Elliott.]

No 3: In clause 3, page 2, line 27, leave out paragraph (a).— [Mr Elliott.]

No 4: In clause 3, page 2, line 30, leave out "those" and insert "the Director's".— [Mr Elliott.]

No 5: In clause 3, page 2, line 32, leave out "a direction or".— [Mr Elliott.]

No 6: In clause 3, page 2, line 35, leave out "a direction or".— [Mr Elliott.]

No 7: In clause 3, page 2, line 37, leave out "directions and".— [Mr Elliott.]

No 8: In clause 3, page 2, line 39, leave out "Directions and".— [Mr Elliott.]

No 9: In clause 4, page 3, line 5, leave out "A direction" and insert "Guidance".— [Mr Elliott.]

No 10: In clause 4, page 3, line 6, leave out "require" and insert "advise".— [Mr Elliott.]

No 11: In clause 4, page 3, line 8, leave out "direction" and insert "guidance".— [Mr Elliott.]

No 12: In clause 4, page 3, line 10, leave out "direction" and insert "guidance".— [Mr Elliott.]

No 13: In schedule 2, page 8, line 36, leave out "designated" and insert "appointed".— [Mr Elliott.]

No 19: In schedule 2, page 12, line 23, leave out "designated" and insert "appointed".— [Mr Elliott.]

Mr Elliott: Thank you for outlining that process and procedure.

The main purpose of the Bill is to dissolve the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission and transfer its functions and staff to an executive agency that is to be established within the Department of Justice. The Bill also makes provision for the transfer of staff from the commission to the employment of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Clause 2(1) states:

"The Department must designate a civil servant in the Department as the Director of Legal Aid Casework ("the Director")."

I have personally been a long-time advocate of having senior civil service positions more open to public competition. Therefore, it is no surprise that I have concerns that this position will be an in-house appointment instead of being for open competition. My amendment is not designed to exclude existing civil servants from applying for the post. It is designed to allow for an open competition. Indeed, Department of Justice officials were questioned at length about that in Committee. When asked by the Chairperson, Mr Givan, whether there would be an internal or external competition, the official reply was clear:

"We do not have any plans to do that at this point."

Obviously, there are some ambiguities around whether it will be an internal or external position.

Again, when pressed by the Chairman of the Committee on the matter, the official again replied:

"There would not necessarily always be a competitive process. There are a number of ways in which people get moved around in the Senior Civil Service (SCS). You could have a direct competition into the post; you could have a competition within the existing grades of staff across the SCS in all of the Departments; or you could be looking at a managed move within the Department or, more generally, across the SCS."

That indicates that there is no requirement for an open competition and that it could be just an in-house post.

There was also an acceptance by the Department that, although it may not be the normal way of doing it, there is a mechanism to have an open recruitment process and not just confine it to civil servants. The Department indicated:

"There is an individual who is currently the chief executive of the Legal Services Commission, and we would have to look at what happens to that individual and the potential for retaining the expertise over a transition period, then look at how you fill the post again in the future."

Again, I assume from that statement that the current chief executive of the Legal Services Commission would be transferred to the new agency as its director.

While the Department is looking at the potential of the retention of experience in the new agency — I totally understand that — there is a concern that this process is just about rearranging the deckchairs. I think that, more importantly, this needs to be future-proofed to ensure that such appointments are not made on a basis of moving senior civil servants around, either within a Department or between Departments, in the future. While there has been an indication from the Department that the appointment may be as the result of an open competition, that is not assured. All that I am seeking is an assurance that there will be an open competition for the director's post.

I have serious concerns about amendment No 3, which relates to clause 3(1)(a). That clause states:

"3. — (1) The Director must —

(a) comply with directions given by the Department about the carrying out of the Director's functions".

Other amendments in this group are also connected to this matter. I am sure that the Minister will indicate that he, or any other Minister, has a general power of direction to civil servants in relation to decisions. If that is the case, why is there a need for this clause? If that general power of direction is there, why do we need this separate clause? We are aware that the Minister is effectively the Department, so I do not see any difference in saying that this is a Department's power and not the Minister's power. As far as I am concerned, one is of the other.

During the debate, there may be specific reference to amendment No 5, which proposes removing the option for the Department to give direction in carrying out those functions in relation to an individual case. I proposed that amendment on the basis that we were removing the

other clause that gave direction, but I am willing to listen to the Minister's view. If Ministers have a general power to give direction anyway, I am prepared to reconsider that particular amendment and allow that to remain. However, that will not dilute the overall aspect of why we should add the powers to the legislation that a director must comply with a direction from the Minister.

There are also provisions in the legislation for the Department to give guidance to the director. I have no difficulty with that whatsoever; indeed, I would expect that the Department or the Minister would give guidance to the director. I fully support that and have no issue with it at all, but there is a significant difference between the director having to comply with the direction from the Department and the Department giving guidance to the director. There is a major difference there.

I have clearly set out the issues as simply as possible for Members to consider, and I am willing to address any further issues that Members have.

Mr Givan (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): Before addressing the amendments, with your indulgence, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I wish to make a few general remarks about the Bill in my capacity as Chair of the Justice Committee. The Bill forms part of the wider programme to reform the legal aid system in Northern Ireland and, as such, it is generally supported by the Committee. There have been ongoing issues in relation to inaccurate financial modelling and forecasting of criminal and civil legal aid spend; a lack of accountability; and significant budget overspends for some considerable time, and it is imperative that measures be taken to address the situation.

The change of status of the Legal Services Commission from a non-departmental public body to an executive agency of the Department of Justice provides an opportunity to improve the governance arrangements relating to legal aid and increase transparency, accountability and efficiency.

11.15 am

As part of the deliberations on the Bill, the Committee sought evidence from key stakeholders, as well as the Department of Justice. Written submissions were received from 20 organisations, and the Committee held an oral evidence event on 14 May this year. Seven organisations attended that to discuss various issues relating to the Bill, particularly the requirement for the Department of Justice to designate a civil servant in the Department as the director of legal aid casework, and whether there are adequate and sufficient safeguards to protect and ensure the independence of decision-making once the executive agency is established and the director appointed to take decisions. I will address those specific issues shortly in the context of Mr Elliott's amendments.

At the request of the Minister to keep the Committee Stage as short as possible to enable the Bill to receive Royal Assent in the autumn and allow the agency to be formed shortly thereafter, and given the fact that the Bill is largely technical in nature and that supporting subordinate legislation will also be required, which will provide opportunities for further scrutiny, the Committee completed the Committee Stage in 10 weeks. Despite the short timescale, the Committee scrutinised and considered

all aspects of the Bill in a thorough manner. I thank the members for their diligence and contributions. I also thank the witnesses, who provided useful written and oral evidence, and the departmental officials, who provided additional information and clarification for the Committee throughout the process. I also thank my Committee staff, who, as always, served the Committee with their professionalism.

Turning to amendment Nos 1, 2, 13 and 19: issues regarding the requirement for the Department of Justice to designate a civil servant in the Department as the director of legal aid casework were highlighted in the evidence the Committee received. Views were expressed that it may be better for the post to be filled by someone outside the Civil Service with no pre-existing loyalties in the Department. Members explored that point further with departmental officials when they appeared before the Committee on 28 May this year.

Members sought clarification, given the way clause 2 is worded, regarding whether the post could be filled by someone external to the Department or whether it had to be filled by a civil servant. The officials from the Department indicated that the post, which will be a Senior Civil Service post, did not necessarily have to be filled by a civil servant but that a person employed in an agency is normally a civil servant. Therefore, the person to be recruited would be appointed to the Department first, and the Minister would then designate them as the director of legal aid casework. The officials outlined that the post could be filled in a number of ways, such as direct recruitment, competition in the existing grades of staff across the Senior Civil Service in all Departments, or a more managed move of a particular person in the Department or, more generally, across the Senior Civil Service. They also indicated that the Department had no plans to hold an external competition and stated that consideration needed to be given to the current chief executive of the Legal Services Commission and the potential for retaining the expertise over a transition period and then considering how to fill the post in the future.

When considering clause 2, some members were of the view that it could be better worded to ensure that there is not a perception that a person in the Department must be appointed to the post of director of legal aid casework. Other members, however, noted that it did not preclude the recruitment of someone from outside who then becomes a civil servant.

Briefly, before moving on to the other amendments, I will speak on behalf of the Democratic Unionist Party. This was an issue that I pressed a number of witnesses on when they came before the Committee. I asked them about the process of designation as opposed to a public appointment process. Obviously, I share a number of the issues that Mr Elliott raised. I think that the Committee was of the view that this should be ventilated as openly as possible. However, when I pressed a number of the witnesses, I did not see material evidence brought to the Committee to substantiate why there needed to be a different process from the designation.

Issues were certainly raised about the need to present by way of perception that there was no conflict of interest, but, in my view, evidence was not brought to the Committee to demonstrate where, indeed, there have been issues in the past in respect of the Legal Services Commission. For

that reason, I will be interested to see what the Minister of Justice has to say about Mr Elliott's amendments. We are open to listen to those arguments that are coming forward; but at this stage I have not seen material evidence provided to the Committee that sufficiently assures me that such a change is necessary. We remain open to be convinced at this stage of the debate.

I move on to the amendments relating to clauses 3 and 4 in my capacity as Chairman. One of the primary concerns raised by stakeholders was whether there are adequate and sufficient safeguards included in the arrangements to protect and ensure the independence of decision-making once the executive agency is established and the director of legal aid casework appointed to take decisions on individual cases and the grant of civil legal aid. Issues were raised regarding the need to ensure the independence of the director and the potential for a conflict of interest given that the director would be designated as a departmental official who would have to adhere to the Civil Service code.

Questions were also raised regarding whether the arrangements are suitably robust to provide the operational independence required in making individual decisions, whether the director will be able to challenge directions from the Department and whether individual decisions could be compromised through guidance from the Department in relation to a certain class or category of legal case, which may have the potential to impact on a particular case.

Some stakeholders were, however, satisfied that the legislation reflects the independent role of the executive agency from the Department in considering individual legal aid applications. In response to the issues raised, the Department set out for the Committee the range of safeguards covered in the legislation to protect the independence of individual decisions on the grant of civil legal aid. These include a requirement that the Department not give direction or guidance in relation to an individual case, that directions and guidance must be published, the establishment of an independent appeals process and the imposition of a duty on the Department to ensure that the director acts independently of it when applying any guidance or direction to an individual case.

The Department emphasised that any direction or guidance could not override the provisions of the relevant primary or secondary legislation and might be challenged in the courts, as can any funding decision by the director of legal aid casework by way of an application for judicial review. It also expressed the view that the requirement to publish any directions and guidance would ensure transparency and provide a robust protection against any attempt to influence the director's decision-making in an inappropriate manner. The Department indicated that, under the proposed new arrangements, the independence of the director's decision-making in any individual case would be no less than the independence of the Legal Services Commission's decision-making under the current arrangements, and it is not the intention to place the primary duty of the director as obedience to departmental direction but rather that all the safeguards are of equal importance.

When considering clause 3, some Committee members noted that the requirement to follow directions and guidance issued by the Minister already exists and

were satisfied that any direction could not override the provisions of the relevant primary or secondary legislation and that individual decisions by the director will be made on the basis of the statutory tests. Other Members did express reservations about the proposed framework to ensure the independence of the director in relation to decisions in individual cases and whether adequate safeguards were in place. The Committee is clear that the independence of individual decisions on the granting of civil legal aid by the director must be protected. The key question is whether the Bill as it stands delivers that or whether Mr Elliott's amendments are necessary to strengthen the safeguards. Having heard Mr Elliott's explanation of the purpose of his amendments, I await with interest the view of the Minister on them.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I will take the amendments in the two groups as they were presented by Tom Elliott. I think that all of us in the Committee raised the issue of the appointment of the director, and some of the points that Tom Elliott raised and which the Chair touched on were reflected across the Committee discussion.

When we initially asked the question, the Bill was perhaps not as clear as we wanted it to be, in that it looked like this would be an internal competition only. However, I think that the officials, to their credit, said that there have been instances — and this would be one of them — in which there would be a wider, and what you might call an open, competition.

Obviously, I will listen to what the Minister says, but, at present, and if we get the assurances from the Minister —

Mr Elliott: I thank the Member for giving way. I accept that there was an indication that it could be by open competition and process, but there was no assurance of that. Is that fair to say? Do you accept that there was no assurance that it would be by open competition?

Mr McCartney: I suppose that you could say that it was not as explicit as you and others, including us, would perhaps have liked, but there have obviously been situations in which someone external was recruited to a position. The fact that such individuals had to be covered by being members of the Civil Service has been brought through. I think that, again, it is a matter of listening to the Minister and satisfying ourselves. If we then feel that the Minister is saying that it will only be internal, your amendments will better come into play.

Similarly, concerns about clauses 3 and 4 were laid out this morning. We have to ensure the independence of decision-making in relation to legal aid and the granting of legal aid. It is very clear that the Minister has no role whatsoever in individual cases, and quite rightly. When it comes to policy and so on, the Minister is guided by legislation and other regulation, so we are satisfied with that. What we need to do — I think that there is provision for this — is ensure that whatever guidance or direction comes from the Department and the Minister is open to consultation with and scrutiny by the Committee. Should we feel that there is any encroachment into an area of policy that the Department is trying to skew in a particular way — I am not suggesting that there would be — there are mechanisms in place to protect from that.

We will listen to how the Minister addresses those issues, but, in the main, we were satisfied enough with the Bill

after scrutinising it. We are certainly willing to hear what the Minister has to say.

Mr A Maginness: In general terms, the SDLP welcomes the change that the Bill will bring about in establishing an executive agency in the Department to deal with legal aid. Clearly, the previous commission had become unfit for purpose, particularly its forecasting and financial assurance. The commission failed, and failed quite badly. Now, there is an opportunity for a new body to deal efficiently and effectively with legal aid. We hope that that can be achieved through the changes.

We have already indicated our support for the Bill, but the amendments tabled by Mr Elliott raise a number of interesting points about the director of legal aid casework. His amendments are certainly very well intentioned, because their purpose is to ensure that proper independence is established in the exercise of this new office. He emphasised the importance of a fresh incumbent being brought in to this very important post. That incumbent could be a civil servant but could also be somebody from outside the Civil Service. I agree with him: I think that that is a very strong point to make. He is not being prescriptive; he is not saying that there shall not be a civil servant or that there should be an outsider but that there should, at least, be an opportunity for an outsider to come in.

11.30 am

Given the way in which the body has been run for so many years, I think that it is important that there is a new leadership. I understand what the Minister says about a transition. I think that it is important that there is, at least, a continuity in the transition to the new body. I accept that the current chief executive would be appropriate in that position, although how long that transition would last is a matter that should, in fact, be clarified. The important thing, however, is to allow an opportunity for this House and members of the Justice Committee in particular to be reassured by the Minister that there will be an opportunity for non-civil servants to compete openly for this position at some time in the near future.

That is the intent of Mr Elliott's amendments. I understand that there is some concern in the Department that Mr Elliott's amendments will not achieve that purpose and will, in fact, undermine it because, at this moment in time, there are open competitions. For example, I believe that there was an open competition for a permanent secretary in the Northern Ireland Civil Service recently. The question for me and, I think, for others in this House is this: does the current system permit that to happen in this instance, or is it necessary for Mr Elliott's amendments to be made to bring that about? I think that that is the question that we have to ask ourselves. There are indications coming from the Department — I will put it no stronger than that — that Mr Elliott's amendments could, in fact, undermine that. It would certainly be unintended and extremely unfortunate if that were to be.

Again, as the Chair stated, one awaits the Minister's reply to Mr Elliott's very cogent arguments on his amendments. It is difficult for Members to make up their minds now without hearing the Minister. It might even have been appropriate to have the Minister speak immediately after Mr Elliott so that we could, in fact, evaluate the Minister's arguments.

The other aspect is the independence of decision-making. The Minister and the Department have indicated a number of assurances, reassurances and safeguards on individual decision-making by the legal aid casework director. However, when you are outside a Department looking in and you see things like directions and guidance and so forth in the legislation, you begin to wonder whether independent decision-making is, in fact, safeguarded. That is the problem for us as legislators. What Mr Elliott is doing in his amendments is emphasising the point that there has to be that independent decision-making. That is the intent of his removal of direction. I am informed, again by the Department, that that could, in fact, have the opposite effect and confuse the whole business of the independence of decision-making. I am uncertain as to whether that would be the effect. If that would be the effect, obviously Mr Elliott's amendments should not be favoured. So we are in a quandary. I ask the Minister to provide clarity for the House on Mr Elliott's amendments.

Could I make one further point, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker? It relates not to individual decision-making but to the power of direction in relation to a category of cases. I know that the Law Centre in Belfast was quite concerned about this, as were others from the Law Society and the Bar Council, and individual practitioners. Take as an example the Department running short of money, or something of that nature, and deciding to direct that the legal aid fund should not fund judicial reviews taken against public bodies and governmental decisions. That would be a very powerful instrument in the hands of government to prevent ordinary citizens without proper funding from taking action against the Administration, the Executive or some public body. That would, in my opinion, have a detrimental effect on civic life and could occasion injustice. I would like the Minister to tell the House whether, in dealing with that category of cases, and in those circumstances, that could actually happen. Could that category of cases, whether it be judicial review or any other type of case, be prohibited from being considered by the legal aid fund? It is very important that the Minister reassure the House and those outside the House who have raised the issue before the Committee.

I will conclude there. I look forward to the Minister's comments on Mr Elliott's amendments. I commend Mr Elliott for bringing forward the amendments, because they do exercise one's mind, and the mind of the House, and raise important and quite fundamental issues in relation to the Bill.

Mr Dickson: I place on record my thanks to the staff of the Committee, who have worked with us and assisted us in the process of getting to where we are today. I also thank all those who came to us, from the Department and other places, to talk about the content and import of the Bill. I thank Mr Elliott for bringing his amendments to the House. As Mr Maginness just said, these are complex areas of law and it is important that the House does what it is doing today: debate the issues and points and come to a conclusion. We are doing what we were sent here to do by the electorate: to legislate.

That is very important, so I value the amendments that Members table.

Mr Elliott's concerns regarding the designation of a director are important. However, in the Department's evidence to the Committee during the clause-by-clause

consideration of the Bill, it confirmed that there are a number of ways in which posts could be filled that would not prevent external recruitment. The person recruited will be appointed as a civil servant, but the point at which he or she will be appointed as a civil servant will be a matter for the process, and he or she could be appointed as a civil servant after his or her appointment. The words "must designate a civil servant" do not prevent the appointment of someone who is recruited externally and who then becomes a civil servant. I hope that the Minister will be able to explain that to the House in much more cogent detail than me, and other Members asked the Minister for a clear and open explanation of that point. That, I hope, will assist Mr Elliott's understanding of the import of what the Minister and the legislation are trying to achieve. I hope, therefore, that it will encourage Mr Elliott to support the Minister's proposals.

Mr Elliott's amendment Nos 3 to 12 focus on preventing the Minister from issuing directions to the director of legal aid casework about the carrying out of the director's functions. Those amendments have the potential to cause concern. Amendment Nos 5 and 7 are key.

Amendment No 5 would remove the instruction that the Department must not give directions about carrying out those functions in individual cases. That, coupled with the fact that the Minister is already subject to direction by Ministers under the general law — Members referred to that — has the potential to lead us into very difficult and perhaps even dangerous territory. The Minister could become involved in individual decisions about granting legal aid. That would be contrary to the recommendations of the access to justice review, which envisaged a system in which decisions would be taken without the involvement of the Minister. Similarly, in Mr Elliott's amendment No 7, the proposed removal of the Department's obligation to publish any directions given when the power to issue directions exists in general law has the potential to compromise openness and transparency. That, again, is contrary to the recommendations of the review and the wider strategic objectives of the Bill.

Like other Members, I will listen carefully to what the Minister says, but when officials came to the Committee, they persuaded me and, I hope, others that the course that the Department and the Minister propose to take is the right one. I hope that Mr Elliott understands that I value the amendments that he has tabled. I am fascinated by the debate, and I think that it is important that we listen to all the arguments and to what the Minister will tell us.

It would be unfortunate if we were to pass amendments that, on the surface, have good intent but that would actually have the effect of reversing that good intent. I believe that the Bill has been carefully designed as a package to work well within the existing general statutory framework and that the amendments have a potential risk of damaging that design. On that basis, I am not inclined to support the amendments.

Mr Allister: I wish to make a contribution to the debate, which of necessity, the House may be glad to hear, will be brief. I am due to meet a Minister in a few minutes, and I do not wish to keep him waiting unduly. On that basis, I apologise in advance to the Minister in the House for not being able to stay to hear his reply.

It seems that the Bill, in its general intent and direction, is about tightening the noose of control by the Department over legal aid and all such related matters, yet there seems to be a reluctance to acknowledge that that is so. That becomes pretty clear when you look at the response in the House and, I suspect, the response from the Minister as foreshadowed by his party colleague in the debate to the very modest but I would say necessary amendments by Mr Elliott. That response, which ripples across the House, seems to be, "Yes, we might sympathise with you, and we think that you are raising good points, but we do not want to tie the Department's hands in any way, because we are so deferential and compliant with the purpose of the Bill that we want to give the Minister as free a hand as we can to tighten that noose over legal aid". That is the sense that I am getting from the debate.

I must say that Mr Elliott's amendments are modest and sensible, because they are saying that, if someone is going to be in the position of director, that should be a proper appointment, not just a matter of putting in a placeman who will act as a puppet on a string. It will be hard enough for the director to stand up for himself or herself in the climate that the Minister and the Bill try to create. That will be hard enough, but, if someone is put in as a placeman, or placewoman, not even with the authority of having been recruited in an open competition and therefore having some status in that regard, that person's opportunity and inclination to be anything but that puppet on a string is going to be considerably reduced.

Mr Elliott's second set of amendments are also right, in that there should not be facilitated a situation in which the Department, which is the Minister, can overtly and obviously pull the strings by giving directions. Guidance, yes, but directions are something mandatory. They must be followed, and they totally reduce the discretion of the occupier of the office, who is told what to do. The very fact that there is a reluctance, I suspect, by the Minister to give up that power confirms the likely intent as to how it will be used. If the Minister says, "No, I would not be doing that", he does not need that power. Minister, you have residual powers of direction anyhow. So, I fail to see what is the downside in Mr Elliott's considered amendments. They seem to me to bring some modest degree of control to the Bill and somewhat restrict the stranglehold that the Department wishes to exercise over the dispersal of legal aid.

I would be very concerned at the idea, in clause 3, that there could be guidance, or, as the Bill stands, "directions". It is said in the Bill that directions are not given in individual cases, but nowhere does it say "not in respect of a class of case". That is why, as the Bill stands, it would be more than open for the Minister to give a direction that, for example, in view of whatever circumstances, we are no longer going to fund, as Mr Maginness said, judicial reviews or tripping cases, or any selected class of case. I think that that affords far too much power and control to the Minister.

Therefore, I strongly support the amendments that Mr Elliott tabled.

11.45 am

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I certainly appreciate the fact that Tom Elliott has given us the opportunity for more debate at Consideration Stage than looked likely last week, when we merely had some agreements between the

Minister and the Committee for the amendments that will appear in our second group. I trust, however, that that does not mean that Members are going to think up awkward points to raise on the second group.

I listened carefully to Tom Elliott's comments and, indeed, to the comments of a number of Members. It is clear that the two issues are almost the same. It is about opening up the appointment process and ensuring the independence of the director. Looking at amendment Nos 1, 2, 13 and 19, it is clear to see that the intent is to open up the Senior Civil Service by requiring that the post of director of legal aid casework be filled by an open competition. If I understand his point, however, such a competition will be open to internal candidates as well as to external candidates. However, as has been highlighted, I think, first, by Mr Maginness, steps are already being taken to widen the recruitment to the Senior Civil Service generally. Already this year, there has been a competition for grade 3 entrants and a competition for grade 5. Those were open to external as well as internal candidates. A point was also made about a permanent secretary post that has been subject to open competition.

All being well, things will be fine. So, normal practice in the Civil Service is widening up in that respect, generally by generic competitions rather than by going to the expense of running individual competitions. However, I have to highlight one appointment that predates the establishment of the Department of Justice. A few years ago, the appointment of a director to the Youth Justice Agency was run on the basis of a competition by the Civil Service Commissioners to appoint somebody to the Civil Service who would then be appointed as director of the Youth Justice Agency. The problem is that the amendments would run counter to that because they do it the other way round or back to front. So, I believe that there are better ways to achieve Mr Elliott's aim. There is a real potential that, if these amendments are accepted, there will be the opportunity for confusion and uncertainty.

As it stands, the Bill makes power for me as Minister to designate a civil servant as director of legal aid casework. I think that there is common cause amongst the House, including with Tom Elliott, that, once in place, the director should be a civil servant. If, however, we accepted the four amendments I highlighted — amendment Nos 1, 2, 13 and 19 — and if I appointed a non-civil servant who then became a civil servant, there is no clear way to do that under normal Civil Service appointment procedures. It has to be on the basis of recruitment to the Civil Service and, then, a civil servant, regardless of whether they have been appointed five minutes ago or 30 years ago, becomes the person in that particular post. If the amendments were passed, they would do nothing to introduce any greater opportunities. I fear that they would create a degree of uncertainty and confusion that would have to be addressed elsewhere and which would run contrary to the normal procedures for appointing civil servants. There is nothing in the Bill that precludes the post being offered to somebody from outside the Civil Service on the basis of that open competition. Each time the post falls vacant, consideration will be given to the best way to fill the post, and the provisions that are in the Bill would facilitate that open competition, regardless of how it is.

I am not sure that there is any difference, in effect, between whether I "appoint" or "designate" a director of

legal aid casework. Either way, they will have the same safeguards regarding their independence, which are written into the Bill; either way, the Department will have to ensure —

Mr McCartney: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ford: I will give way.

Mr McCartney: In the interests of clarity, is the Minister saying that there can be an appointment external to the Civil Service by an open competition?

Mr Ford: If it is common ground in the Assembly that the person would be a civil servant whilst they are the director of legal aid casework, there can be an open recruitment competition, which will be open to people internally as well as externally. We could not run it to exclude internal applications. It would be completely open on the basis that the person would be appointed to the Senior Civil Service, and, once they were a civil servant, they would be appointed to the director's post. It would ensure that the Department looked to see about the right blend of skills and experience for that post, regardless of whether they came from internal or external. I believe that the current wording will avoid the difficulties that will arise from the use of the word "appoint" in terms of bringing that person into the Department, because there is the danger that it suggests that you are going outside the normal Civil Service recruitment procedures when, in fact, it is somebody who is to be a civil servant.

The last thing that I want to do is see us fall foul of the Civil Service Commissioners' rules on the recruitment of civil servants. So, I believe that the amendments are unnecessary and would lead into uncertain territory without providing any specific benefit.

Mr Givan: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ford: I will.

Mr Givan: Maybe Mr Elliott can address this in his winding-up speech as well.

On the actual wording of the amendment, has the Department taken a view on whether, if the Assembly went with Mr Elliott's amendments, that would automatically require a public appointments process by way of appointing rather than designating? Does that then automatically require a public appointments process to take place?

Mr Ford: I take the Chair's point. I am reluctant to suggest that I could give a definitive opinion, which might, some day, have to be given by a judicial ruling, but it is my understanding that the words do not necessarily guarantee external appointment but merely create confusion about the process.

The designation of somebody who either has already been a civil servant or is recruited to the Civil Service with a view to being designated to that post is a much clearer and less confusing way of making the appointment.

On that basis, whilst I accept Mr Elliott's wish to have openness, I do not believe that what he is proposing is beneficial in doing that and that it adds anything to what is in the Bill as it stands. I urge the House to reject those amendments on that basis.

The second set of amendments — amendment Nos 3 to 12 — is all about limiting the Department's responsibilities and abilities to guide rather than direct the director of legal aid casework on the carrying out of those functions. Whilst I understand entirely the intent to ensure independence, I believe that the amendments would compromise the measures that were carefully constructed to prevent any interference in individual decisions. This has already been mentioned, but I just want to be very specific. Article 4(1) of the Departments (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, which established working devolution, states:

"The functions of a department shall at all times be exercised subject to the direction and control of the Minister."

So, the power that Mr Elliott seeks to remove from clause 3(1) is in fact there in statute anyway and cannot be removed by that measure.

The important thing, I believe, is that we need to read clause 3 as one single unit. While subsection 1 says that the director must comply with general directions and "have regard to guidance", subsection 2 of the same clause makes it absolutely clear that there must be no guidance or direction about an individual case and that the Department must ensure that "the Director acts independently".

Subsection 3 states:

"The Department must publish any directions and guidance".

So that is an open process that is clear and transparent, and it ensures that the general guidance and direction powers do not apply to a specific individual case.

Mr Maginness and then Mr Allister, who used rather more flowery language and is no longer in his place, raised the potential for directions about a class of cases as opposed to an individual case. Article 12(5) of the 2003 order proscribes, in schedule 2, the services that the director of legal aid casework may not fund as civil legal services. Article 12(6) provides:

"Regulations may amend Schedule 2 by adding new services or omitting or varying any services".

Article 46(5) of the order provides that any regulations made under article 12(6) are subject to Assembly control by way of draft affirmative procedure. So, it would not be possible for the Department to give the kind of direction or guidance reflecting the scope of cases that may be funded in the way that Mr Maginness politely and Mr Allister in slightly different language highlighted as possible changes without the approval of the Assembly. I trust that Assembly Members regard Assembly powers as being a reasonably clear way of ensuring that those matters are carried out properly. We have the general case of directions from the Department — or from the Minister, if others wish to say it — and the normal rule that Ministers can direct civil servants in any respects, subject to the law. We then have it clearly set out that individual decisions on the grant of legal aid are not affected by that.

12.00 noon

That makes it absolutely clear. Indeed, it is something of the interplay between Mr Elliott's amendment Nos 3 and 5 that makes that point. The Bill was carefully drafted to

ensure that we kept matters clear on that and to ensure that the provisions work in harmony with existing and more general statutory provisions in the 1999 order. It is in line with existing powers to give directions and guidance to the Legal Services Commission.

As it is drafted, the Bill has a number of safeguards for specific points that I want to raise on the power of giving directions. First, the Bill expressly prohibits me or my Department from giving a direction or guidance in relation to an individual case. Secondly, any directions and guidance must be published and will be subject to consultation with relevant stakeholders and scrutiny by the Justice Committee, which is the position under the current arrangements. Thirdly, if the director refuses an application for funding or further funding, he or she will be required to set out clearly the reasons why the application has been refused. Fourthly, any such funding decision by the director will be subject to appeal to an independent panel.

As noted in the Justice Committee's report, any direction or guidance issued by me or my Department cannot overrule the provisions that I have highlighted in relevant other primary or secondary legislation. I believe that the effect of accepting Mr Elliott's amendments would be to compromise those safeguards as they are constructed. Let us be clear: applications for civil legal aid will be considered on their merits and dealt with individually.

Mr McCartney: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ford: Yes.

Mr McCartney: Alban Maginness made a point in relation to the class of cases. You are stating clearly that for any class of case to be changed — judicial reviews were mentioned, along with Coroners' Courts — that would have to come through the Assembly for approval.

Mr Ford: Yes, I can confirm to Mr McCartney that it would not merely have to come to the Justice Committee. Because it is subject to draft affirmative procedure, it would have to come to the Floor of the Assembly and not just to the Committee. That is a double safeguard in that respect.

It may be helpful to give Members an example of where I might want to consider a direction under these powers. Under the current arrangements, the Department has a role in decision-making on applications for exceptional legal aid in individual cases. The relevant statutory provision is article 10A of the Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. As Members will recall, the Bill includes provision to give effect to a recommendation of the access to justice review that Ministers should no longer have such a role. It inserts a new article 12A into the Access to Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

The current statutory provision from 1981 is supplemented by a direction, 'Direction 1 — Representation at Inquests'. That direction was issued by the Lord Chancellor in 2005 and remains in operation today. In brief, it requires the Legal Services Commission to fund representation on behalf of the immediate family of the deceased at an inquest concerning a death occurring in police or prison custody or during the course of a police or other security services arrest, search, pursuit or shooting. To date, it has been utilised in particular to secure the funding of next-of-kin at certain legacy inquests.

However, notwithstanding the change of approach reflected in this new provision, it may be considered appropriate, in order to fully discharge, for example, the state's obligations under article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, for my Department to give a direction to the director of legal aid casework. Such a direction would be in broadly similar terms to the current 'Direction 1' which I have already referred to. Moreover, as I stated earlier, any such direction would be subject to consultation with relevant stakeholders and scrutiny by the Justice Committee.

I will add a further point on the issue of inquests and the current ministerial role. In a number of cases recently, I have received submissions relating to the granting of exceptional funding for inquests for preliminary stages. In light of the access to justice review and of what we are proposing for legislative change, on each of those I have taken the initial decision and left it to the director of the Legal Services Commission — effectively the future director of legal aid casework — to take the decision on the merits of granting further funding. That is not grabbing power or looking for a “puppet on a string”, or whatever airy-fairy language Jim Allister may choose to use. That is putting the responsibility where it lies, which is on an independent official acting on the merits of a case and removing the political influence from it.

On that basis, I am delighted to recommend the Bill as drafted and ask the House to oppose the amendments suggested.

Mr Elliott: I thank all Members who participated in the debate. As the Minister said, it caused at least a little more interest in the Bill than might have been appropriate this time last week. I hope that Members and the Minister accept that I tabled the amendments with the best of intentions and with what I believe is the proper —

Mr Ford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Elliott: Yes.

Mr Ford: Sorry, I thought that I had made it clear that I appreciated Mr Elliott's intentions. I am happy to repeat that, if he did not hear it first time.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for repeating that. I did hear him the first time; I was only making the general point that I hoped that Members accepted my intentions.

I genuinely believe in my amendments, which I raised in Committee. I will deal, first, with the point that Mr Maginness and then Mr Allister raised about the classes of cases. That issue is not covered in my amendments. It was raised by one of the stakeholders, but I cannot remember which. I think that Mr Maginness said that it was the Law Centre. I did not bring an amendment on that because I did not feel that it was a sufficiently significant issue for legislation.

I am still determined that I will pursue my other two principal amendments because I believe that they are right. The Minister did not say, even in answer to the Deputy Chair, Mr McCartney, that there would be a guarantee or assurance of an open competition for the post of director. He said that that decision would be taken at the time. The Chair of the Committee, Mr Givan, asked whether it would be a public appointments process, but I do not believe that it necessarily would be. At Committee, officials said that there was a mechanism for making

appointments to senior positions through the protocol that allows for open competition. Indeed, the Minister and others said that this has already been used in, I think, the appointment of senior civil servants and maybe even the most senior civil servants in Departments.

So there is a process, but I am looking for an assurance that it will apply to this post, and I do not have that. That is why this is important. If we allow this to go through as it is, the process will be directed by the Department, and, dare I say it, internal processes for the appointment of the director will be more likely. I have heard no assurance otherwise.

Mr Ford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Elliott: I will give way in a second. At this stage, I do not want to make the process any weaker than it is. I believe that my amendments would strengthen the process. I will give way to the Minister.

Mr Ford: I appreciate the Member giving way — I am trying not to jump up and down all the time. My point in response to Mr Elliott is quite simple. He says that I am not giving a guarantee of an external appointment process. My advice is that his amendment would not create that situation either. Therefore, an amendment that adds confusion but does not produce his desired result does not seem to me to add any benefit to the Bill.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that, but the point of my amendment is that it would not guarantee that the person appointed had to be a civil servant. There may be an issue with how my amendment is worded or whatever, but the Minister has not dealt with that. If he wanted to deal with the questions asked in Committee by the Chair, I think, and the Deputy Chair, he should have done so at that stage by bringing better wording to the legislation, but that did not happen.

On the issue of the direction that can be given to the directors, the Minister quoted article 4(1) of separate legislation that gives power to the Minister. If that power is already there, why do we need it inserted into this legislation? We do not. If it is already there, we do not need it.

I noticed that Mr Dickson, who I assume has taken the same view as the Minister, seemed to have difficulties only with amendment Nos 5 and 7. Amendment No 5 would mean that the Department could not give direction in individual cases, while amendment No 7 would mean that there would be no requirement to have a report on any direction given. If those are the only two amendments that there is a difficulty with, I am willing to reconsider them and to not move them. If that is the only problem that there is, I am more than happy to do that. You have my undertaking on that.

I believe that my amendments in general will strengthen the Bill and will make matters much more open and equal for the wider community by enabling an open competition

One of the proposals from the stakeholders suggested that any person appointed should have a legal qualification. To be fair, I did not include that, because I do not think that it is an absolute requirement. It may help, but I did not put it in as a requirement. I am trying to ensure that this appointment is not just for a civil servant who goes into one of these positions that goes round in a circle; I want to see a much wider and open competition.

I believe that amendment No 7 provides strength by ensuring that there is not a requirement on the director to comply with direction given by the Department.

I thank those Members who participated in what was a useful debate. I also thank the officials from the Department and the Committee for their work in the process, which was extremely helpful.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Before I put the Question on amendment No 1, I remind Members that it is a paving amendment for amendment No 2.

Question put, That amendment No 1 be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 10; Noes 77.

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Elliott, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hussey, Mr Kinahan, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Elliott and Mr Swann.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Mr Boylan, Mr D Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Durkan, Mr Easton, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Ms McCorley, Mr I McCrea, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Ms Ni Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr P Ramsey, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Rogers, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Dickson and Mr McCarthy.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2 (Designation of Director of Legal Aid Casework)

Amendment No 2 not moved.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 3 (Exercise of functions by Director)

Amendment No 3 proposed:

In page 2, line 27, leave out paragraph (a).— [Mr Elliott.]

Question put and negatived.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I will not call amendment Nos 4 to 8 as they are consequential to amendment No 3, which has not been made.

Clause 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4 (Delegations of functions of Director)

Amendment No 9 not moved.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I will not call amendment Nos 10, 11 and 12 as they are consequential to amendment No 9, which has not been made.

Clause 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 5 to 13 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule 1 agreed to.

Schedule 2 (Amendments)

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I will not call amendment No 13 as it is consequential to amendment No 2, which has not been made.

The Business Committee has already made its arrangements to meet at 12.30 pm. I propose therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm. Thank you for your cooperation, Members.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.33 pm.

On resuming —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Employment and Learning

Hardship Funds

1. **Mr McKinney** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether his Department has responsibility for the advertising of educational funds such as student hardships funds, including their availability in relevant institutions. (AQO 6593/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):

In further education, my Department provides financial assistance to students through further education awards and hardship funds, which are administered respectively by the Western Education and Library Board and each of the six colleges. Over the last five years, there has been a net increase of approximately £800,000 in the total amount available in the combined funds, with the budget set aside for further education (FE) awards rising by over £2 million. While the drawdown of resources in the demand-led hardship fund may have decreased by just over £900,000, the spend on FE awards has increased by £1.5 million.

The funds are advertised extensively through a variety of media by the board and the colleges. Further education awards are promoted on the Western Education and Library Board's website and through a television advertising campaign run during May and June each year. In addition, each college promotes both funds through the following channels: prospectuses, websites, prominently displayed posters, and a variety of funding guidance literature, including flyers, mail drops and information in college diaries, which are provided to students. Funding advice is also provided at induction sessions. My Department consults with the Western Education and Library Board regarding the content of its advertising campaign. To ensure consistency across the colleges, my Department provides good practice guidelines with regard to the publicity of the hardship funds.

Higher education support funds are administered and publicised, by the higher education institutions and the colleges delivering higher education, to help students experiencing financial hardship. My Department provides the funding and copies of the conditions booklet to the universities and colleges. We also place information and the conditions booklet on the NI Direct and the Department for Employment and Learning websites.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister. Minister, given the recent publicity and media attention on this, are you reviewing to any extent the level of funds available?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for the question and the opportunity to clarify that a lot of the media commentary around this has been very ill-informed. It has looked solely at the issue of a reduction in spend in hardship funds without appreciating that there has been a complementary increase in FE awards and, indeed, that the overall package has increased. That said, I am happy to look at

how we promote the schemes. In saying that, however, I exercise some caution in that we have seen an increase in applications to the funds in recent years, which indicates that the message is getting out there. Where further work can be done to better signpost, to streamline that and to make it more efficient and effective, we are, of course, always open to learning lessons. I am more than happy for us to have some internal discussions in that regard to see whether we can do things even better.

Mr Swann: Minister, you said that you would look at the funding available. In the briefing you gave to the Committee last Wednesday, you indicated that there would be a £3.5 million reduction in student support provision across several demand-led programmes, which included those that were means-tested as well. Will you give clarification to the House now? Are you going to look at increasing, or are you looking at a £3.5 million reduction, which you told the Committee about last week?

Dr Farry: I thank the Chair of the Committee for his question. It is important that we draw a distinction between what is set in the budget and what is actually spent. The key consideration in all these issues is the spend, which is increasing.

The Chair is referring to the indications I gave to the Committee regarding how we are going to manage the in-year cuts that have been asked of us during this year. We have indicated that we are likely to see some underspends in some areas of student support, including the FE awards. We will have a budget allocated to that. We may not draw down all the money from that, which would create an underspend. Rather than returning that to the centre, we have the ability to offset some of the cuts through what would otherwise be an underspend. However, that in no way, shape or form means that we are reducing money from the front line. This is a demand-led process; where demand is there, it will be met. If we happen to overshoot what is now in a revised budget, we will look for other funds elsewhere in the Department to meet that demand. There is a clear commitment from me that we will meet the demand that comes our way.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he advise the House whether he is approaching the forthcoming meeting with the National Union of Students - Union of Students in Ireland (NUS-USI) with an open mind to reconsider his decision to transfer money away from the hardship fund?

Dr Farry: I approach every meeting with an open mind, but let me be clear: we have not taken a decision to transfer money out of hardship funds; they are part of a demand-led initiative. We have redirected money to FE awards, which are allocated in advance of the academic year. So, in that circumstance, a student has the support at the beginning of their studies rather than having to apply in a reactive way to hardship funds. I would have thought that, in all walks of life, it is better to intervene early and give people protection and certainty as opposed to leaving them uncertain. I find it bizarre that people are saying that we should take money from elsewhere and go back to a policy of investing in hardship funds when we have a better means of providing support to students. I have to say that people are looking at only one aspect of a budget, and they need to be very careful about drawing conclusions without looking at the full picture.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I inform Members that questions 7 and 14 have been withdrawn.

South West College

2. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what progress has been made on the proposals for the relocation of South West College in Enniskillen. (AQO 6594/11-15)

Dr Farry: The South West College is working closely with Fermanagh District Council with a view to being a partner in a proposed shared services project at the Western Health and Social Care Trust's former Erne Hospital site. Fermanagh District Council is leading a development group which is seeking to create a public sector shared services hub on the site. The first stage of the plan is that the council will purchase the site from the health trust when demolition work, contamination surveys and title issues have been resolved.

The college is developing a draft business case, which has as its preferred option a new build as a replacement for its Fairview campus. The next stage will see the college submitting a business case, which includes a proposal for the purchase of part of the site from the district council for the development of a new college campus. The Department awaits firm proposals from the college in relation to the availability and viability of purchasing the site. This cannot be completed until the Western Health and Social Care Trust has completed the site transfer to Fermanagh District Council.

Officials from my Department and the Strategic Investment Board continue to support the project. Planning NI has indicated that the redevelopment will be acceptable in principle and will meet planning policy, subject to the normal site-specific planning and environmental criteria. No funding commitment can be made until the business case has been approved by me and by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that response. How confident is he that the progression of the new college will happen, and what time frame will he put on that?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. I am optimistic that it will go ahead. I appreciate that it has perhaps taken a little longer to come to fruition than had originally been planned. I think that that reflects the complexity of the outgoing site and its former use. That has brought some challenges with respect to demolition and the environmental aspects around all that.

I expect to be in a position to receive and clear a business case during 2015. While there are other projects in terms of the FE estate that we are keen to advance, I am certainly minded to make a bid to the Executive for this particular project. I appreciate that the shared services site in particular provides potential for synergies across the public sector, so there is a strong case for this proposal.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. I will take him back to the last point that he made about the shared services site. Does he accept in principle that it makes sense to locate a college that has plans to become a rural university on the same site as a public library and a jobs and benefits office? If so, will he try

to work with other Departments to make the proposal a reality?

Dr Farry: I think that the Member can take considerable consolation in that there is a lot of interest in this particular site across a number of Departments and Ministers. Indeed, the First Minister and the deputy First Minister visited the location a number of months ago, which is an indication of the collective interest that there is in this regard.

Obviously, the more that the site can be used the better it will be for building up different types of relationships. Not every two particular agencies will have a natural partnership, but there will be enough to make the site viable. In turn, that will have further multiplier effects on the local economy, particularly the service sector, given the number of the people who will be working in that vicinity. So, there will be a wider benefit for the town of Enniskillen as well.

Mr Dallat: I appreciate that the focus is on the south-west, but I am sure the Minister will agree with me that there are pressures right across Northern Ireland. Can the Minister assure the House that, despite all the pressures he has, he can guarantee that vocational education, which played an absolute blinder in providing education to people who perhaps missed out the first time around, is bestowed with equality? Can he also guarantee that the capital projects will not simply be put to the end of the queue and that other, greater priorities will not be made?

Dr Farry: I can certainly give the Member an assurance that I am very keen to progress a wide range of capital projects, including in further education. I certainly believe that a modern FE estate is entitled to an assurance that we are investing in the skills agenda. As I am sure the Member will agree, the FE sector is incredibly flexible and diverse and covers a wide range of interventions, from essential skills to the provision of higher education.

That said, I have to put on record my concern about the current funding decisions that are being taken. While vocational education is incredibly important to our economy, the Department of Education's budget has been given protection by the Executive but that of my Department has not. That is not a plea from me that my Department should be protected as well; it is rather that I think that we have to reflect on the fact that, when decisions like that are taken, certain inequities will be created in the system. A particular inequity relates to what happens for those young people aged between 16 and 19. Those young people who are at school will benefit from protection, but those who are in further education or training programmes will not. We have to be conscious that some 40% of young people aged between 16 and 19 are in education and training outside of the school sector and that the socio-economic background of that cohort is different to that of the population as a whole. So, that is something that I think we all have to reflect on when considering the future of our budgets to ensure that money is well spent and that we take equality considerations into account.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Alex Easton is not in his place.

Apprenticeships

4. **Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on higher level apprenticeships. (AQO 6596/11-15)

Dr Farry: I have been actively encouraging and facilitating the development of higher-level apprenticeships. Higher-level apprenticeships enable young people to benefit from working with important employers in Northern Ireland, as well as to gain a recognised qualification at level 4 or above.

I am currently supporting a number of pilots. For example, in ICT, we have 15 apprentices employed by the McAvoy Group, Allstate and Core Systems who are undertaking training at South West College. In engineering, 15 apprentices working with Terex, Kiverco and the Quinn Group are undertaking training at South West College as well. PricewaterhouseCoopers has employed 18 apprentices in professional services, 14 in taxation and four in audit. In finance and accounting, recruitment is currently under way, with expressions of interest received from a range of accountancy employers, including FPM Accountants, ASM Horwath and BHP Accountants Ltd. The training will be provided by Belfast Metropolitan College and the Southern Regional College. In industrial, chemical and life sciences, recruitment is currently under way through Norbrook Laboratories, with training of around 14 apprentices through the Southern Regional College. Those are but a few examples, with further pilots planned in engineering and aeronautical engineering with major employers, including Bombardier.

A further exciting development that I have promoted is the extension of higher-level apprenticeships to the public sector. In June, alongside the Regional Development Minister, Danny Kennedy, I announced a higher-level apprenticeship for around 10 apprentices in civil engineering. Proposals from the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Police Service of Northern Ireland are also anticipated.

We know that the demand for skills at levels 3 to 8 — that is, A level to doctorate — is set to increase significantly. My vision is that, through the apprenticeship strategy, higher-level apprenticeships will play a major role in meeting that demand.

2.15 pm

Mrs Cochrane: I thank the Minister for that very positive information. Can he give us some further information as to what progress is being made to implement the new apprenticeships strategy?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for her questions. As the House will know, we released *Securing our Success*, our new apprenticeships strategy for Northern Ireland, in June 2014. It is certainly not sitting on a shelf — if anything, it is very much the opposite. A lot of work has been conducted already. We are working through our implementation plan. Over the coming weeks, I will chair meetings with employers with a view to establishing sectoral partnerships. That is a key means of ensuring that we have buy-in from stakeholders in particular industries. Those groups will be used to effectively plan the roll-out of apprenticeships in some current areas and indeed some new areas.

One of the very encouraging things that we have seen, even in response to the fact that we were discussing a new strategy on apprenticeships, is that a lot of businesses and colleges have begun to vote with their feet and come up with new and innovative ideas. Indeed, our strategy

has actually been moving to catch up with what has been happening on the ground. I believe that Northern Ireland has a very promising future with regard to apprenticeships. They will become a very effective means of ensuring that employers are getting the right people for their organisations in the future. Indeed, young people will be skilled in areas that are highly relevant to the modern economy and will have much better prospects of securing and sustaining jobs.

Mr P Ramsey: I welcome very strongly the Minister's response to Judith Cochrane's questions. I know how relevant and important it is in my constituency. Alongside the public sector bodies that he has mentioned, is he encouraging or motivating any other sectors to try to bring them into higher-level apprenticeships?

Dr Farry: Yes. We are very keen to work with employers right across Northern Ireland, including in the north-west. Indeed, there may well be potential for things to happen on a subregional basis. Discussions have been taking place with a number of employers in the north-west. We are not at the stage yet to publicise that, but the Member will indeed know who the main players in the local economy are. It is also important to bear in mind that, given the profile of employment in places such as Derry, we seek to develop the public sector as a means of apprenticeships. There will be areas of public sector employment that are highly relevant to that type of training. We are seeing that through a number of organisations where technical skills are relevant that have expressed interest and had discussions with my officials. I think that that will be a very lucrative route in future months.

Mr Dunne: I commend the work that the Minister has done on the apprenticeships strategy. Considering the failure of Sinn Féin to agree on welfare reform, does he have any concerns about implications that a lack of funding may impact on his strategy?

Dr Farry: I will certainly say to the Member that I have considerable concerns about funding. There are a number of pressures out there, of which the failure to date to come to terms with welfare reform is the major one. That will have implications for what we are doing with regard to skills.

As the House knows, investment in skills is perhaps the key economic driver in the transformation of the economy in Northern Ireland. To date, we have sought to act in a strategic way and to avoid hitting areas that are of crucial importance to the transformation of the economy, such as apprenticeships. We also have support from the European social fund in that regard. How long we can sustain that, particularly in the context where the cuts become even deeper, whether that happens this year or in subsequent years, remains to be seen. We will seek to act responsibly in that regard.

What I do fear is that, particularly as Northern Ireland emerges from a very deep recession and when we have a lot of international goodwill, the potential to bring inward investment into Northern Ireland and the potential to grow jobs locally, due to cuts to key economic drivers, whether they be in my Department or elsewhere, we will simply fail to capitalise on those opportunities. There is a real danger here that we will collectively shoot ourselves in the foot and miss the absolutely open goal that is there for us with regard to future investment and job creation.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his answers. It is good to see apprenticeships getting such a high profile. Will he explain what due diligence checks his Department takes to ensure that anybody offering apprenticeships has the necessary ability and accreditation to deliver for students?

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for the question. Again, if he refers to the apprenticeship strategy, he will see that quality assurance is absolutely fundamental to the approach that we are taking. That applies particularly to the qualifications network and the off-the-job training that is provided. I am very sensitive about not chasing numbers or trying to label something as an apprenticeship for the sake of it. This has to be driven by quality. Young people and businesses need to respond based on quality and have the assurance that they are investing in something credible. There are no shortcuts. We have to ensure that we can stand over what we are investing in and that people can have confidence in it.

University of Ulster: Course Moves

5. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the scheduled move of some courses from the University of Ulster Jordanstown campus to the Belfast campus. (AQO 6597/11-15)

Dr Farry: The relocation from Jordanstown to Belfast will see the vast majority of activities transferred to Belfast by 2018. The exceptions will be student residences, the high-performance sports centre and the fire safety engineering facility. The development in Belfast will cost £250 million. My Department is providing £16 million, while the university has secured a £150 million loan from the European Investment Bank as well as a financial transaction capital loan of £35 million. The remaining funding is being raised by the university from a variety of sources.

Good progress is being made with the development across many fronts, and the university remains confident that the project will be delivered on time and within budget. The demolition phase was completed on schedule, and the physical structure of the new university buildings is beginning to emerge. The university is finalising the procurement process to appoint a contractor to construct the main campus building. The university is engaging with the local community in the vicinity of the new campus to ensure that it is involved in a meaningful way, so that the new campus will provide tangible benefits for the local area. The Department is working closely with all stakeholders through inclusive implementation structures to ensure a coordinated approach to the relocation and to maximise the opportunities arising from the development.

Mr Beggs: The loss of university courses at the Jordanstown site will result in the loss of jobs for lecturers and a wide range of support staff. Will the Minister advise us what action he is taking to encourage the university to develop alternative job opportunities at that site? In his answer, I did not hear him specifically mention the business incubation unit that was used in the past by spin-out companies. That site and the adjacent Trooperslane site are excellent for such high-tech companies, and both are shortly to have their communication links with Belfast upgraded in the A2 upgrade.

Dr Farry: I am happy to reflect on the comments made and to pass them on to the university for it to consider

directly. As for jobs, this is not a reduction in provision; it is a relocation of the vast majority of the Jordanstown campus to Belfast. It is an investment for the future. That said, universities are obviously in a very difficult situation at present. A wider funding challenge predates the current Budget situation facing the Executive, and this year I have had to pass on to the universities cuts approaching 4%. That will be for them to manage, and they will be under a degree of pressure in maintaining existing services. It goes without saying that, when we are talking about cuts of that magnitude, there will be pressures on employment. People need to be very alert to that. However, we will reflect on what the Member said about the future use of the Jordanstown campus. Indeed, I will encourage the university to do so as well.

Mr Hilditch: Mr Beggs raised employment issues, but will the Minister indicate what future the Jordanstown campus holds for higher education?

Dr Farry: As I said in answer to the main question, a number of areas will be retained on the site. However, to be fair, the vast majority of the site is being relocated to Belfast. That will have implications for the east Antrim area, north Belfast and the wider city. There is obviously a wider issue, which the Member will be familiar with, on the future of the site as a whole, which is very large. No doubt he and his colleagues will want to make representations in that regard.

That is part and parcel of the local responsibilities that MLAs and councillors have.

Mr A Maginness: The Minister referred to the local community. Would he urge the university to maintain a sustained and meaningful dialogue with the local community, particularly around assistance, not just with jobs but in using the university's facilities and services?

Dr Farry: Yes, I am very happy to follow the approach suggested by the Member and to encourage the university to deepen its existing efforts. We want to avoid a situation in which we build a university in Belfast — in north Belfast in particular — but it is detached from the community. Looking elsewhere in these islands and, indeed, internationally, we can see examples of universities that are in cities but that are detached from those cities and much better examples of such universities that are very much integrated into local communities. We obviously want to see the latter happen in Belfast. More work can be done to ensure that that becomes a reality.

A few weeks ago, I met a delegation of traders from the Antrim Road and the wider vicinity. They made a number of useful points that we are reflecting on. The university should be encouraged to continue and widen its efforts in that regard, particularly as it moves towards the completion of the site in 2018, the successful opening, and commencement of studies in the area.

Tuition Fees

6. **Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether his Department's review of higher education funding will seek to increase the maximum tuition fee loan for local students who wish to attend courses in non-publicly funded higher education institutions. (AQO 6598/11-15)

Dr Farry: At present, the level of tuition fee loan available for local students who wish to attend courses in non-publicly funded higher education institutions, or alternative providers, is dependent on both the location of the provider and the nature of the course. Following the Executive's decision to freeze tuition fee levels here, I have ensured that all local students attending higher education providers in Northern Ireland, whether they are publicly funded or not, are eligible to the same maximum tuition fee loan of £3,685. Alternative providers are not, however, subject to fee caps and may charge more than that amount.

When the alternative provider is based elsewhere in the UK, the level of loan available is dependent on the nature of the course. Local students who attend a designated course that is owned by a recognised UK degree-awarding body but delivered by an alternative provider are entitled to a maximum tuition fee loan of up to £9,000. Local students who attend a designated course that is owned and delivered by an alternative provider and simply validated by a recognised UK degree-awarding body are entitled to a lower rate of tuition fee loan of £3,685. That aligns with the maximum loan that is available to students who study in Northern Ireland. It is not uncommon, however, for providers to charge over and above that amount.

The current student support package available to local students, including those who attend alternative providers, is being considered as part of my Department's review of higher education funding. We are working within a context of constrained public resources, and a major challenge during the review will be to decide where our funding priorities should be for student support. A public consultation on the review will commence towards the end of the year.

Mr B McCrea: The Minister may be aware that the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure recently visited the Andrew Lloyd Webber school of performing arts in Chiswick, where it was informed that the school is the premier location for such activities in the whole of the United Kingdom. Does the Minister accept that, when a citizen of Northern Ireland wishes to attend such a premier institution, it is a little unfortunate that he does not get the support that he would get if he lived elsewhere in the United Kingdom? Will the Minister undertake to look at that case in exception?

Dr Farry: It is difficult to make exceptions. Every case could make that argument, and we have to make decisions that are based on an agreed policy. The case that the Member has outlined is not unusual, and we receive correspondence from a number of MLAs and, indeed, directly from students about similar situations. That is why we are considering the issue as part of the current review of higher education funding. However, whether we are going to be able to close that gap remains to be seen, as it will be dependent on resources.

2.30 pm

We decided, back in 2011, when we last looked at issues around higher education funding, that it would be unfair to provide a higher tuition fee loan to Northern Ireland domiciled students attending alternative providers than to those attending our own public providers in Northern Ireland, especially when we are asking those local providers to find efficiency savings. That was a collective decision taken by the Executive. So there is a balance to the argument, but I can certainly confirm to the Member

that we are giving it full consideration and are open to a change in policy.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That brings us to the end of the period for oral questions. We move to topical questions.

Performing Arts and Technology Innovation Centre: SERC

1. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the progress of the performing arts and technology innovation centre at the South Eastern Regional College in Bangor. (AQT 1441/11-15)

Dr Farry: Yes, I am happy to do that. Good progress is being made and, with luck and no unexpected delays emerging over the coming months, we look forward to construction being completed by next summer. Hopefully, the facility will be open and available in the autumn of 2015 to students and, crucially, to the public for the performing arts.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he give us an assurance about the long-term sustainability of the project? Is he confident that it will provide the much-needed theatre facility for north Down?

Dr Farry: Sustainability will depend on resource funding coming through my Department. Obviously, that will be under increased pressure over the coming years. That said, this is the new investment and we want to make sure that it is a success.

We encourage the college to make as much public use of the facility as it can and, in doing so, the facility can become a theatre and a performing arts space for the wider community in Bangor and elsewhere in north Down.

I can certainly assure the Member that what is being constructed is a full spec theatre. It will have all the facilities that one would expect to see in that type of environment. This is being driven to provide a real-time experience for students, in terms of the whole range of skills involved in the performing arts, whether they are onstage or backstage activities, and the various digital and media support. That full range of activities is going to be provided, and we want to have a world-class facility to enable students to learn in that type of environment. The local community will benefit from that.

Welding Academy

2. **Mr Douglas** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for a progress report on the specialist welding academy that he set up recently. (AQT 1442/11-15)

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his interest in the issue. Alongside my colleague Chris Lyttle, the Member has been very vocal in encouraging the Department to go down this route. We have responded to concerns to ensure we are facilitating opportunities at a much greater level for people who have some welding skills but have not been able to access employment in recent times due to the need for very specialist qualifications. The advertisement for the first cohort of people going through that has now closed and selections are underway. I hope that the course will be completed within, perhaps, a six-to-eight week window and that people graduating from that will then be eligible to work on projects coming through Harland and Wolff.

Mr Douglas: I thank the Minister for his answers to date and also for the leap of faith he took in supporting this initiative. Does he agree that there is the potential for more oil rigs to come into Harland and Wolff, and so it is vitally important that we train up those unemployed people in particular?

Dr Farry: I absolutely concur with that. The Member is aware that there are some advertisements appearing already for a project that Harland and Wolff is conducting at this time, so there is real-life evidence in that regard. That has come perhaps a bit too quickly to allow people going through the academy to avail of those opportunities but, through discussions between my officials and Harland and Wolff, we are very encouraged by the long-term prospects in this area.

The Member is familiar with the fact that an oil rig was in during the first half of this year.

My understanding is that the customers were extremely pleased with the quality of workmanship in that regard. It has placed Harland and Wolff in a good place for future work.

Living Wage: NICVA Report

3. **Mr Milne** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action's (NICVA) recent report on a living wage. (AQT 1443/11-15)

Dr Farry: It is important that we approach the issue of the living wage with a degree of caution. I encourage employers to consider the living wage. It is important that people are paid well. I think that we need to be slightly cautious about where we would go for a degree of compulsion for employers to pay a living wage. The first thing that we have to do is recognise that the best way of driving up wages in society is through investment in skills. On the back of that, we would have a productivity gain, and, arising from that, you would have a natural rise in wages.

Obviously, we have the national minimum wage, which is guided by the Low Pay Commission. I believe that there is a case for an increase in that. However, if you end up setting a threshold of wages that is way in excess of what is viewed as being the natural market rate, there may be a danger of unemployment or, indeed, an increase in the prices that a shop or business will charge for their goods, facilities and services, and that will have a knock-on consequence elsewhere in the economy.

We also have a number of employment programmes in which we are trying to get people out of unemployment and into work. We often offer subsidies to employers to take people on. For small businesses in particular, those are decisions that are made on the margins. If we were to shift the goalposts in that regard, a lot of employers would be more reluctant to take a chance on taking on an extra person and addressing our situation with unemployment, where we are making some very, very good progress at the moment. While I have sympathy with the concept, I think it is something that is best approached voluntarily. If we want to go down the line of compulsion, we need to be very alert to the unintended consequences.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for his answer thus far. In light of what

you have said, would you consider legislative changes as part of the forthcoming Bill on employment law? I take from your answer that you would not.

Dr Farry: It is probably not within my powers; indeed, it is not within the powers of the Assembly. We may have a discussion in the coming months, depending on what happens on Thursday around the further devolution of powers, or not as the case might be. That may well be something that will enter into that debate. Before we legislate, we need to be fully alert to the full economic picture. I have outlined some of my concerns to the Member. Short of legislation, we can encourage employers to invest in the payment of their workers. There can be benefits to the economy where that is done in a sustainable way. The Member should take some comfort from the fact that, when you look at a lot of the jobs that we have created and announced in the past months, you will see that, increasingly, they are paying higher and higher salary levels. That is an indication that our economy is moving in the right direction.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Question 4 has been withdrawn within the agreed time limit.

Student Finance

5. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how closely his Department works and communicates with the education and library boards on student finance arrangements to ensure that everyone is on the same page in understanding the regulations. (AQT 1445/11-15)

Dr Farry: At the risk of being contradicted by the Member in a few minutes' time, I will say that we work very closely with the education and library boards in that regard. That is not to say that work cannot be done to make guidance and forms simpler. We are certainly happy to take representations on how things could be done better, which, I suspect, the Member is about to make.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: This is your opportunity, Mr McElduff.

Mr McElduff: Thank you very much. I hope you are all keeping well. Will the Minister clarify one area, if not now, in writing? I would like clarity on an area that is causing uncertainty — students undertaking second degrees in courses that relate to allied health professional courses. There seems to be a different take at DEL and the Western Education and Library Board regarding the entitlement of students to avail themselves of student finance in second degrees relating to NHS or allied health professional courses. I invite the Minister to comment on that and explore that.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: You should have invited him with a question.

Dr Farry: It is a very cunning approach that he is adopting to it all.

A number of cases in this regard have been brought to my attention. The particular issue that is arising here is around an issue of double-funding, where, because we have a limited amount of money available for investment in higher education, our preference is to invest for one time in the students accessing higher education. Sometimes that may well be a year for somebody, which then leaves them in

eligibility for two or three years, depending upon the nature of the course that they are applying to next. However, sometimes people, where they have done a previous higher education qualification, do not understand why they are not getting full access to funding for the full duration of another higher education course. It is something, again, that we are looking at in the context of the higher education funding review because, sometimes, there can be anomalies in that system and cases where someone really is investing in upskilling and there is a case for giving full support. Obviously, that will be governed by the availability of resources, but we are very much aware of the cases that the Member is referring to.

Youth Unemployment

6. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the challenges facing our young people who have been unemployed for over a year. (AQT 1446/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Member is very right to highlight the challenges facing young people. Thankfully, our youth unemployment is falling, but, like many other parts of Europe, it is a major challenge. It is worth emphasising that, in the context of Northern Ireland, unemployment is very heavily concentrated among young people. Almost a third of the people who are out of work fall in that very narrow range between 18 and 24, so there is a real concentration and a more disproportionate concentration than in many other societies. That highlights the importance of investment in work experience to enable people to get on the first rung of the ladder. It also reinforces the importance of good careers advice and the importance of investment in the new form of youth training and what we are doing around apprenticeships. Those are some of the structural changes that we are making in our economy to address youth unemployment.

To address the situation as we find it today, we have the youth employment scheme, which has been very successful in giving young people opportunities. As part of the more mainstream employment programmes, the former Steps to Work and now Steps 2 Success will also give support for young people to avail themselves of opportunities to get themselves into employment.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for his answer. In light of what the Minister said, what discussions has he had with our newly elected and re-elected MEPs to look towards Europe about bringing in programmes and support to assist our young people in attaining employment?

Dr Farry: We are very happy to have ongoing discussions with the European Union, and, obviously, the MEPs are a very useful conduit in that regard. Already, we have access to the European social fund. That is set to be a bigger pot for Northern Ireland over the next seven years than has been the case previously, so that will create a lot of opportunities for us.

The Member may also be referring to the youth employment initiative, and, due to the way that internal boundaries are drawn for Northern Ireland in terms of what are called NUTS areas — maybe NUTS is an appropriate term to refer to them, but it is a French acronym that I will not bore you with — none of our subregional areas in

Northern Ireland were going to be eligible to access that fund. We looked at a whole range of different scenarios as to how we could draw it down. We do have access to resources domestically and also through the European social fund that allow us to offer us a whole range of programmes. Obviously, we need to be mindful of coming budget pressures in that regard, but it is something that I believe should be a priority for me, and I know that it is for the Assembly as well.

2.45 pm

North West Regional College: McConnell Report

7. **Mr McCartney** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the implementation of the McConnell report on the North West Regional College and what steps he will take to monitor it, along with the Committee. (AQT 1447/11-15)

Dr Farry: I thank the Member for his question. Obviously, the McConnell report gives the opportunity for a new start in the college. A new principal has been appointed, and I have appointed a new chair of the board of governors. I believe that strong progress has been made across the vast majority of the recommendations, and the college is very much seized of their delivery. The Department is keeping a close watch on this, and the Committee has had a close interest in the issue in the past. There will always be bumps along the road and tensions between stakeholders, but we will seek to be of assistance, where we can, to overcome those and ensure that we can invest in the college, which is a key partner in the delivery of the skills agenda in the north-west, which has not always been the case. As we look to invest, particularly in level 2 and level 3, in getting much greater numbers studying STEM subjects and at how we can develop a strategy for economic inactivity in the north-west, the college is a particularly important actor. It is important that we have a college that is fit for purpose and in which there are good industrial relations.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That is the end of questions to the Minister. We must now move on to questions for the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Minister has given notice to the Business Committee that, due to departmental business overseas, she is not available for questions. The Minister of Finance and Personnel will therefore respond to questions on her behalf today. I thank him for that.

I inform Members that question 7 has been withdrawn. Mr Alec Maskey is not in his place.

Air Routes

2. **Mr Lunn** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in the light of the announcement of new air routes to Iceland and Lithuania, what progress has been

made in securing direct air routes to large EU trading partners, such as Brussels, Berlin, Frankfurt or Vienna. (AQO 6609/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): I thank the Member for his question. I welcome the recent announcements of new routes, including Iceland and Lithuania. I am also very aware that the ETI Minister is committed to improving Northern Ireland's air connectivity. She has already met the new managing director of Belfast International Airport and has also met a number of airlines to explore opportunities for improving our air access position. Indeed, she met a major airline during her recent visit to the United Arab Emirates. DETI officials are in regular dialogue with our airports and will support their route development endeavours by taking a Northern Ireland stand at the World Routes conference in Chicago later this month. However, discussions about specific routes and airlines are of a commercially sensitive and confidential nature.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Minister for his answer. Any air routes achieved are always welcome, but does he agree that the ones that we have at the moment are inclined to take tourist money out of Northern Ireland rather than bringing investment in? Obviously it would be beneficial to the efforts of Invest NI to have direct routes from trade centres such as those mentioned in my original question.

Mr Hamilton: I do not disagree that we want to develop our air routes, particularly into hub airports across mainland Europe. The Member drew attention to a couple of destinations in his question, and I do not disagree with the likes of Berlin; in fact, Germany as a whole is a priority for the Department, whether it be Berlin, Frankfurt or other destinations. I am sure that the Member is aware of efforts to get a route to Istanbul because of the strategic significance of its location.

I agree in some respects with the Member, but I do not entirely agree that the routes into Reykjavik and Vilnius are without commercial or tourism potential. Both have, perhaps to a greater or lesser extent, tourism opportunities in both directions. Vilnius, for example, is in the Baltic region, and the Minister and Invest Northern Ireland have been trying to increase trade into the area. There was a trade mission last year or earlier this year to the three Baltic states. Even though it may appear often to be marketed as a tourist route, there are business opportunities in that region. It is a growing area with huge opportunities for Northern Ireland businesses. I visited it and saw some of those opportunities for local firms. First impressions may be that they are focused on tourism, and, of course, some of the routes are, particularly those that were brought on board this summer, which are outward tourism routes. However, I think that the two mentioned in the question have commercial and tourism opportunities attached to them.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhuíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin.

Thanks very much, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker — or Mr Speaker, as I should say now. I also thank the Minister for his response.

Can the Minister give us some indication — there is possibly an overlap in this, given that he is temporarily wearing two hats — of what discussions he has had with the British Government and, indeed, Executive colleagues

about the reduction in air passenger duty for short-haul flights?

Mr Hamilton: The ETI Minister shares my position on air passenger duty, which is this: it is a tax that is not of our making and one that we would like to see done away with. The source of the tax is the Treasury in London. I think that there are ample studies and lots of evidence to show that it has a detrimental impact on connectivity into peripheral regions like Northern Ireland. That has been recognised by Treasury, which has given some allowance on APD for short-haul flights to the Highlands and Islands in Scotland. We would like to see that, as a minimum, extended to Northern Ireland, but, ideally, we would like to see the tax wiped out. Obviously, APD for long-haul flights is gone. The Executive pursued and got the power to reduce that to zero for long-haul flights, but, obviously, we would like to see it done away with for short-haul flights as well.

My Department and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment continue to work on an air connectivity study, which is very close to its conclusion. That will hopefully identify some opportunities to improve Northern Ireland's air access and will, of course, look at the question of APD. It will also look at other ways in which we can expand routes in and out of Northern Ireland, including better use of the regional connectivity fund, which I think is around £20 million and which the Chancellor announced in his recent Budget.

Sometimes there can be a fixation on APD as a silver bullet for all our connectivity problems. It certainly would be nice if it was done away with, but there are other factors. Sometimes selling the place and getting out and about in the way that the Minister is doing is, I would argue, as helpful as reducing APD.

Mr Kinahan: I wanted to come in with a question that is more in line with Trevor Lunn's. Do we have anyone who studies what we are good at here, like diagnostics in health? If so, we could use that to look at which countries we want to get into and then get airlines to open up routes to those countries. Is that part of your connectivity study?

Mr Hamilton: The connectivity study will look at a range of factors. Trying to dovetail with our broader economic strategy is quite important, although getting an exact alignment between what we are pursuing in terms of inward investment and what routes we are able to get is not always easy. To some extent, it is a commercial decision; it is not driven by us. The airlines that brought, say, the Iceland and Lithuania routes will have seen an opportunity in Northern Ireland. We support and welcome that, but it is not necessarily a matter of us going out and being able to say, "We want that one and that one". There are lots that we want. We want more connectivity into North America — absolutely — something into the Middle East — definitely — and more into mainland Europe, particularly the hub airports, and we will concentrate all our efforts on getting that.

Beyond that, it is very much a decision for the airlines and the airports themselves. Of course, we should not forget that the airports themselves have a route, and I am sure that I will get an opportunity in the not too distant future to meet the new managing director at the international airport. There is an onus on the airport as well, particularly with APD having been reduced to zero for long-haul flights. We have given that to them as an opportunity to go out and

sell Northern Ireland. So, as well as DETI, they have a bit of work to do very much in conjunction with DETI.

Paschal Donohoe TD

3. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans she has to meet with the new Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Paschal Donohoe TD. (AQO 6610/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The ETI Minister will meet the new Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Paschal Donohoe TD, in the coming weeks, as soon as diaries permit.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra sin. Has the Enterprise Minister, working with her Southern counterpart on an integrated tourism strategy, thus ended the process of the marketing of the two parts of this island as separate little competing entities?

Mr Hamilton: As I said in my original response, the Minister has not had a chance to meet face to face the new Tourism Minister in the Irish Republic. I am sure that she will take the opportunity as soon as she can, and I am sure that she will want to discuss a range of issues around the subject of tourism. Without wishing to speak for the Minister or to pre-empt what she would discuss, I am pretty sure that her view would be similar to mine in that it is important that, while there are opportunities through Tourism Ireland to work together with our counterparts in the Irish Republic to market the whole of Ireland as a place for visitors to come to, there is a need for Northern Ireland to stand out and have its own strategy for attracting visitors here from all arts and parts. In that respect, while I am sure that she will want to learn from and work with her counterpart on a range of issues, she will still want Northern Ireland to pursue its own tourism strategy to sell the particular niche markets and specialities that we have in this part of the world.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for his answers. In relation to cross-border tourism, will he give us an update on the availability of the new British-Irish visa scheme and the benefits that it will have for Northern Ireland?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. This is something that is quite interesting and even quite exciting. The Enterprise Minister is fully aware that the British-Irish visa scheme will launch this autumn. My understanding is that, under the first phase of the scheme, Indian and Chinese nationals applying in their country of origin will be able to visit the UK and Ireland using one visa, removing the need to apply for separate visas in each jurisdiction. That is transparently a good thing to have if it removes any doubt among visitors from India and China about where they can and cannot go. It is very good for Northern Ireland and will attract people from India and China, and I am sure that it will be expanded to other countries beyond that. If their entry point is the Irish Republic and Dublin, it will help to bring them north of the border on trips to the Giant's Causeway or Titanic Belfast. Of course, as we know and as the Minister has said repeatedly from this position, the Titanic brand, after Coca-Cola, is the most recognised brand in the whole of China. There are huge opportunities for Northern Ireland if there is increased Chinese tourism, as all the indicators show there will be. Anything that helps to get those people north of the border, if they enter the South of Ireland, should be welcomed.

Mrs McKeivitt: If the Minister has plans to meet Paschal Donohoe in the very near future, will she put on the agenda the impact of the introduction of the road user levy for heavy goods vehicles on small and medium-sized enterprises located in and around the border areas?

Mr Hamilton: I am sure that the Minister's officials will have heard that point being raised. Although it is first and foremost a transport policy issue, which would be one of Minister Donohoe's remits, it has an impact on the economy. I am sure that the Minister, in that capacity, will be happy to raise it with the Enterprise Minister or the appropriate counterparts.

Down District: Employment

4. **Ms Ruane** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she plans to meet with representatives from Down District Council to discuss new public and private sector employment opportunities across Down district. (AQO 6611/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I understand that the Enterprise Minister met representatives from Down District Council, including officials, in February this year to discuss jobs and investment in Down district. I know that the Minister found this meeting, which covered a diverse range of issues, useful and informative. I assure the Member that the Minister and her officials are doing all they can to promote new job opportunities in the area.

In the last financial year, Invest Northern Ireland offered nearly £2.2 million in assistance to companies located in the Down District Council area. This assistance will help to deliver total business investment of over £8.4 million into the area, promoting 255 new jobs. This assistance included, for example, jobs fund support towards Finnebrogue, the local artisan food manufacturer, to grow and develop with the aim of creating 65 new jobs in Downpatrick.

3.00 pm

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. As the Minister will know, and as I am sure his Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment will know, in recent years, the Down district has been blighted by a continual erosion of public sector jobs. Will the Minister outline what he and the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment plan to do about public sector jobs? I understand that a requested meeting on the issue did not happen.

Mr Hamilton: I attended and spoke at the launch of a brochure that Down District Council had in this Building. I think that Mr Hazzard sponsored the event. The document set out the benefits for attracting public sector jobs to the Down district area and particularly highlighted the public sector campus at the old Downshire Hospital site in Downpatrick.

Whilst I welcomed the brochure, at the launch, I said — I will say it again here, and I think that I said it in the Adjournment debate that Mr Hazzard secured — that, like any area, Down district should have more aspirations than just attracting public sector jobs.

The Member will be aware that her colleague the Minister of Agriculture indicated her intention to move some public sector jobs to Downpatrick. There are more public sector

jobs in the Down district than in other parts of Northern Ireland: the average is 31%, and in the Down district at the minute, I think that it is 33%, which is slightly above average.

Like every area, the aspiration should be to increase the percentage of private sector jobs and not to rely on public sector jobs. Whilst public sector jobs are important, they are not the same driver of wealth and development as private sector jobs.

Mr Wells: Will the Minister join me in the delight that we have one of the top golf courses in the United Kingdom — Royal County Down — and will he give his assessment of the forthcoming arrival of the Irish Open there, which many on this side of the House welcome strongly?

Mr Hamilton: When the Member started off, I thought that he was talking about Ardglass Golf Club, a course that I used to play when I was young. In fact, in many respects, that course ruined my game. Anybody who has played it will understand why.

It is absolutely fantastic that the Irish Open is coming back not just to Northern Ireland but to Newcastle. Mr Wells is absolutely right. It is one thing for us to extol the virtues of Royal County Down or Royal Portrush, but time in, time out, Royal County Down is internationally recognised as one of the best golf courses in the whole world. It is one of Tiger Woods's favourite courses, and he often drops in and plays unannounced if he is on these shores.

There are huge opportunities, particularly for Newcastle, which has developed tremendously well over the past number of years with investment in a public realm scheme. It has attracted events such as the Festival of Flight, which I went to in early August, which shows that Newcastle is more than capable of holding its own and hosting major events. It will be a great host town and course for the Irish Open next year.

The whole Mourne area will benefit considerably from that event. Anybody who is interested in golf already knows that it is a great course. After it hosts the Irish Open, many more people will flock to Newcastle to play on that course and other courses in the area. That will bring a huge economic boost at the time and have a legacy for many years to come.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. What measures, Minister, do you plan to put in place for public and private sector employment opportunities for disadvantaged areas?

Mr Hamilton: The Minister's work and the Department's strategy are to try to bring investment into Northern Ireland globally. We want investment to be spread right across the country. This topic is regularly debated. There is hardly a Member who does not want more investment in his or her area, particularly the areas that have high levels of unemployment and deprivation.

Every effort will be made to show the wealth of opportunities across Northern Ireland for investment. I understand that it is sometimes difficult to get inward investment companies to look at all parts of Northern Ireland, but I know that the Minister is keen for it to happen.

I was pleasantly surprised when I looked at the figures for Down district, a district that, in part, I represent. I was quite impressed, not just with the investment in events in

the area and to assist our tourism economy but with the investment in the likes of Finnebrogue and others that was hoped to reap around 250 new jobs in the past year. So, there have been considerable attempts, if not always appreciated, to attract inward investment to some of the more peripheral parts of Northern Ireland and, more importantly, to try to grow indigenous companies that are embedded in those communities and are less likely to leave their area so that more opportunities can be created for local people, whether they are in deprived areas or not.

Mr McCallister: I welcome the Minister's earlier replies. He has been driving home the point about private jobs. Is he aware that Invest NI's contribution to tourism businesses in South Down was under £40,000, yet in Fermanagh and South Tyrone it was £840,000 and in North Antrim it was £400,000? South Down, as the Minister will know, has some excellent products, with the Brontë homeland, the Mourne and Saint Patrick's Trail. How will the Department address that clear imbalance when it comes to moneys going to South Down?

Mr Hamilton: You can take one area in which the Department is providing funding, and the Member has taken support for tourism businesses. There are a considerable number of tourism businesses in the broad South Down constituency, many of which, owing to the nature of the constituency, are well established. Some of the other areas that the Member mentioned do not have the same level of development.

Take the Tourist Board's support for events in the Down area in this year alone. It supported the International Bread Festival at the National Trust property at Castle Ward with £18,000. The Festival of Flight, which I mentioned before, was a very successful event that attracted over 100,000 people to Newcastle. It was given £30,000 of support from the Tourist Board. The Ballynahinch Harvest and Country Living Festival, which is in a couple of weekends' time, was given £18,000 of investment. The Hans Sloane Chocolate and Fine Food Festival in Killyleagh, which, although it is in the Strangford constituency, is in the Down district area, has received £9,000. Everybody is encouraged to come to Killyleagh this Saturday and Sunday for that. The St Patrick's Day Festival next year is due to get £30,000.

In all that, I am not counting the ongoing support that there will be for the likes of the Irish Open. That adds up to a considerable amount of support for events in the area, and that will draw visitors. The Festival of Flight is a good example, with thousands of people coming from all over Northern Ireland to Newcastle for that event and spending money in tourism businesses.

The Member has a narrow way of looking at it, which is direct support to the development of businesses. Arguably a better way of providing support is to support events that will bring floods of people into the area who will spend money in the businesses there. So, there are different ways of looking at it. I am confident from looking at the figures that the Tourist Board and the Minister are doing all that they can to support tourism and tourism businesses in the South Down and Down district areas.

Ulster Grand Prix

5. **Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the contribution to the economy by the Ulster Grand Prix. (AQO 6612/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board's (NITB) international events fund for 2014 introduced a new model to support the development and sustainability of a number of events. The Ulster Grand Prix fitted the criteria for securing one- to three-year funding following a successful economic appraisal of an agreed business plan. As part of the three years of funding, the NITB commissioned an independent count and visitor attitudes survey for the Ulster Grand Prix in 2014. The results will be available in December.

Mr Givan: I thank the Minister for that response. I thank the Department again for its continuing support for the Ulster Grand Prix, which is the fastest road race in the world. To ensure its ongoing success and to build on a successful summer this year, will the Department engage with the club and the other private sector investors who came on board this year to put resources into the event to try to help enhance the facilities in order to take the event to the next stage and to continue to improve what is a fantastic day?

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. I realised, while he was asking me that, that I could commit the economy Minister to all sorts of things in this position, and she is not even in the country. Given my other job, that might not be the most responsible thing to do.

It is worth putting on record again, if it needs to be put, the importance of road racing to Northern Ireland, not just culturally and in a sporting way but to the economy. I am sitting beside the Member of Parliament for East Londonderry, and he would remind me too of the importance of the North West 200 and other events around Northern Ireland including the excellent Ulster Grand Prix.

I think that the Minister will be more than happy to engage on the basis that Mr Givan outlined because of the previous success of the Ulster Grand Prix. I noted that, in 2011, it attracted over 16,000 visitors, some of whom were from outside Northern Ireland, and generated nearly £1 million for the local economy. You would absolutely want to support something that is as successful and as ingrained in the culture of Northern Ireland as that. I am sure that, as with all such events, the Minister will want to appraise this year's results. Subject to a business case and, of course, the availability of funds, I am sure that she would want to support the Ulster Grand Prix and other road racing events across Northern Ireland.

Mr McKinney: Will the Minister outline what discussions the Enterprise Minister has planned with Mr Donohoe's Department and others on supporting future bids for sporting events on an all-island basis?

Mr Hamilton: I could set the agenda for this meeting, and it has not even been put in the diary yet. I am sure that one thing that the two Ministers will discuss along those lines is the ongoing development of a bid for the 2023 Rugby World Cup. A lot of interest is starting to develop around next year's Rugby World Cup. There is a huge opportunity for Ireland, both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, to capitalise on the growth and development of rugby across Ireland by having a successful bid for the 2023 World Cup. I think that it would have huge benefits for Northern Ireland in particular. The Executive, have invested considerably, in particular into Ravenhill but also into Casement Park, as part of the bid. I think that there is a ground in the north-west that may form part of the bid as

well. This has been agreed by both Governments in both jurisdictions. I am sure that it is something that, if it is not on the agenda of the first meeting, will be taken forward by the two Ministers in conjunction with the sporting and culture, arts and leisure Ministers.

Trade and Investment

6. **Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what representations she has made to UK Trade and Investment regarding the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. (AQO 6613/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is a trade agreement that is currently being negotiated between the European Union and the United States of America. The negotiations do not constitute a devolved Government matter. It is the responsibility of the Westminster Government to work with the European Commission and other member states to develop a comprehensive trade and investment agreement that reflects United Kingdom priorities.

Mr Kinahan: The reason I raise this matter is because I saw a small document that had been handed out — I think, in the Lords — indicating that Northern Ireland has only one skill, namely aerospace. Yet, we have good health, agrifood, construction, IT, and high-tech skills. We have a whole mass of things going for us. If they see us as having only one high level skill, then it seems as though we should be trying, in some way, to influence what is going on there. That is why I asked the question.

Mr Hamilton: I am not sure of the origin or status of the document that the Member is talking about. Perhaps he could furnish the Department with some details. If we are being portrayed on a global stage as having only one skill — whereas, as the Member rightly says, we have many more than that — then I am sure that the Department would be keen to try to correct that and make sure that a more accurate picture of what Northern Ireland has to offer is included in any documentation associated with the free trade agreement.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I am a bit startled that the Minister thinks that the devolved institution should have no role in this, given that TTIP could devastate our agriculture industry by allowing foods of a reduced standard and GM foods into our economy, as well as opening up the possibility of privatising the NHS. Does the Minister not think that such issues should be a matter for devolved Ministers? Certainly, if Ministers here are concerned about the NHS being privatised — and maybe your Health Minister is not — they should be raising that with members of the British Government and the MEPs.

Mr Hamilton: There is a difference between being interested in an issue and being in the lead on it. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, as important as it is to Northern Ireland, is not involved in taking a lead in respect of trade negotiations between the United States of America's Government and the European Commission. That is, of course, dealt with at a much higher level than DETI is at. But it is important that there is regular input from Invest Northern Ireland through its chief executive, who meets his counterpart in UK Trade and Investment regularly and is kept apprised of developments. Where concerns are raised about the nature of any proposed free

trade agreement, just as I am sure there will be across the other 28 member states of the European Union, they will be taken up with the officials in Brussels as well.

3.15 pm

I am sure that the Minister is acutely concerned about some of the issues that the Member has raised, particularly the suggestion that is being made by some that the proposed agreement will lead to the privatisation of the health service. It has been made very clear by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in London, which is in the lead at a national level on this, that the commissioning of health services remains the domain of individual member states, and, as a devolved region, we are at a further level down. So, the involvement of the private sector in the delivery of health and social care in Northern Ireland is and will remain a matter for the Assembly to decide upon.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That brings us to the end of the period for oral questions. We move on to topical questions

Cancer Drug R&D

1. **Mr McKinney** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether, given the potential in numbers and quality, Ministers would care to reflect on the scale of our ambition were we to fully embrace the concept of Northern Ireland as a centre of excellence for cancer drug research and development. (AQT 1451/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I think that there is an increasing awareness that Northern Ireland has huge potential in commercialising the opportunities flowing from considerable public investment in cancer research down through the years. As I understand it, there are roughly 130 life science and connected-health companies based in Northern Ireland that employ around 7,500 people and have an annual turnover of over £800 million. So, whilst we sometimes think of life sciences in the broadest sense as maybe being the area of one or two big-name companies, it is much broader than that and has a wider impact on the local economy than we perhaps think.

The Member specifically talked about development in respect of cancer, and this Department, along with the Department of Health, has engaged the MATRIX panel to undertake a foresight and strategy review for health and life sciences to determine how best to grow the overall sector. Cancer will be included in that. The Member will probably recall better than I will that there was an announcement last year of a £13 million partnership to accelerate cancer-focused drug discovery in Northern Ireland. That was between Queen's University and Almac, one of our leading life sciences companies, and, as part of that project, up to 60 ovarian cancer patients will be trialled with a new locally developed drug. So, there is a growing understanding and appreciation that, as awful as cancer is, there are opportunities to tackle it in a global fight and that Northern Ireland can play a role where we punch above our weight.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister for his positive approach. In that context, will he agree that the Health Minister's approach to rejecting 40 cancer drugs that are available in England and not making them available here could undermine that ambition? In that context, will he consider reflecting to the Executive the possibility of at

least further and strengthened cross-departmental work, if not a separate subcommittee of the Executive, to look at this, given the health outcomes and economic outcomes that could flow from such an important decision as making this a centre of excellence for the whole region?

Mr Hamilton: We are at risk of the Finance Minister answering DETI questions but actually answering a question for the Health Department. We are going on a very circular journey. On the issue of what the Health Minister has and has not done, I do not think that it is a matter of him rejecting the use of particular drugs.

The Member will be acutely aware of the financial constraints that the Minister finds himself in, the difficulties that we have around meeting the huge demand right across the health service and the pressure that his budget is under — pressures that are not helped by a lack of progress on welfare reform that is denying him and the entire Executive much-needed resources. I know that the Minister has made clear his desire to get a cancer drugs fund established in Northern Ireland, and I support him in that endeavour.

I do not think that there is any denial of the ability of Northern Ireland to play a leading role, particularly in cancer research, as we have done already. We should pay tribute to the likes of Almac and other companies in Northern Ireland for the work that they do in that field. It is an area where there is huge scope for development, but a lot of work needs to be put in to support the companies that are already doing that work and also, importantly, to connect what we do in the public sector in the NHS. Sometimes I think that, allied to the type of scare stories that Mr Flanagan came out with about privatising the health service, and no matter what your views are about privatising, there is nothing wrong, in my view, with using the opportunities that are there and that have come from public investment to leverage in commercial opportunities that will create jobs on the one hand and, on the other hand, help to solve big problems around cancer and other serious illnesses.

Economic Recovery: DETI Proposals

2. **Mr Hazzard** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what proposals DETI is bringing forward to achieve a sustainable economic recovery, given the recently published PwC 'UK Economic Outlook', which painted a bleak picture of stagnant economic recovery, with wages still below the level of inflation. (AQT 1452/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I saw and noted the report from PwC. The Member has highlighted an element of it that stood out, and the media coverage described it as a patchy recovery. In some respects, I do not disagree with that; I said that over the last year. I think that we are in full recovery mode now. However, there will still be elements of the economy that will lag behind a little.

In certain sectors — retail is one and construction is another — I do not think that you will see the same degree of growth or impetus behind growth as, perhaps, you will see in other sectors, including services and the manufacturing sector, which have done quite well over the last year and other years. I do not disagree with the assessment that there will be patchy elements to it, but, from listening to the coverage and reading the report, I do not think that we should be dismissive of the tremendous progress that has been made, particularly over the last

12 months. Unemployment in Northern Ireland fell by 1,400 in July, and that was the single biggest decrease in unemployment since October 1999; so it was since even well before the current downturn. Whilst our unemployment rate is a little higher than the UK average, it is still considerably lower than our neighbours to the south.

The Member mentioned wages, and I had hoped that we might get on to the living wage question earlier, but Mr Maskey was not in his place. For the last number of years, DETI has had, through Invest Northern Ireland, a policy of pursuing companies that are paying well above the median wage in Northern Ireland. That can be seen in the long list — the almost daily list — of new companies that have been investing here in Northern Ireland over the last couple of months, and the vast majority of them are paying well in excess of the living wage and paying well above the median wage in Northern Ireland as well. I think that the whole House is agreed that the way in which we will tackle some of the underlying problems of poverty in our society is by ensuring that not only are there jobs but that there are well-paying jobs in our economy.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. Given that at least 15 major reports since the 1957 Isles and Cuthbert report indicated that economic recovery will always be patchy in this state given our lack of control of our own economic destiny, will the Minister offer his support for the devolution of the necessary tools to allow us to carve out a sustainable and equitable economic recovery?

Mr Hamilton: I do support the devolution of necessary tools. The Member and I might disagree on what the necessary ones are. In the past, I have supported the devolution of air passenger duty for long-haul flights where there was a very clear need to do that in order to retain that direct connectivity into North America, and I still support the devolution of corporation tax powers to Northern Ireland. We all know that, when we get it — I remain optimistic that we will get it. We await news later in the week about another part of the United Kingdom and what it decides to do. However, I remain optimistic, irrespective of the result there, that the power will be extended to Northern Ireland, and then it is a matter of us deciding what to do with it.

When we do get it, it will be challenging. At this moment in time, that is to the exclusion of all other possible tools, which I am not as convinced would have as transformative an effect on our economy as corporation tax would have. That is the one that I remain focused on; that the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister remains focused on; and that the Executive as a whole remain focused on. If we get that power and take the decision to reduce corporation tax in Northern Ireland, then I think that it will have that effect. Whilst not being a silver bullet for our economy, it will have a transformative effect in a way that no other tax-raising or -varying power could have.

Electricity Generating Capacity

3. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to advise what action is being taken to ensure that we have diversity in our electricity generating capacity and to ensure that we are not enabling excessive profits to be made by those generators, given the ongoing conflict

between the Ukraine and Russia, which, although it may seem to be a little bit far away, given our reliance on gas, surely must be of concern to us all. (AQT 1453/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Member may be right to characterise that situation as seemingly remote and distant to the activities of this House, but when civil unrest or crisis happens in eastern Ukraine, it has an impact further afield. The Member is right to highlight the impact that it could potentially have on gas supplies, as so many natural gas supplies for Europe come from Russia and through Ukraine. As I understand it, most of the UK's supply of natural gas that is not our own comes from either liquefied natural gas or from Norway, but those ships can be diverted mid-sea to go to other places where that gas is needed or where a higher price is paid. That is something that we should be aware of. It may not be seen as a pressing matter in this place, but that is one reason why the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister and others in the Executive, including me, have long talked about security of supply rather than prices.

We need to continue to focus on achieving our Programme for Government targets for the diversification of our energy sources. I also note that we are on track to reach our target in terms of renewables. We also have to press ahead with improving our infrastructure. That includes the North/South interconnector, which will ensure that Northern Ireland's electricity supply can benefit from having better connectivity to the Irish Republic.

Mr Beggs: The latest power station proposal in Northern Ireland has been for a sizeable power station in the scenic Inver area outside Larne. That was initially floated as being a unit for renewable energy storage, although I have noticed that it requires a high-pressure gas supply and so would be heavily dependent on gas in the future. Can the Minister assure me, perhaps from his DFP background as well as while standing in for DETI, that no public funding will be used to create yet another gas-dependent power station, as the future of that supply is insecure?

Mr Hamilton: I do not know enough about the potential power station to pass any definitive comment, and I would be cautious about doing so either on my behalf or on behalf of the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister. I will therefore refrain from passing particular comment on that. I am not sure what the status of that proposal is or whether the proposer has applied for public money. However, I am sure that officials will have heard the Member raise the query, and I will ensure that they write to him with more detail.

Underemployment: TUC report

4. **Mr Lynch** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for details on strategies to address underemployment, given that a report from the TUC has shown that locally we have experienced the sharpest increase in underemployment; an increase of 37% since 2010. (AQT 1454/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I can certainly furnish the Member with any specific elements of existing strategies that deal with the issue of underemployment. However, sometimes we focus particularly on elements of unemployment, such as youth employment. Those are problems, but I think that we are making significant progress in addressing underemployment. We are also making slow but positive progress in addressing economic inactivity in Northern Ireland. However, we must

not forget that there are many people who, whilst they are in work, are defined as underemployed because of the hours that they are doing or the type of job that they are performing. I am sure that what will come back from the Department is that much of what we are doing in trying to attract investment into Northern Ireland and to grow indigenous firms is all aimed at ensuring that, whether it is unemployment, youth unemployment or underemployment, we are strengthening our economy and creating opportunities for everyone.

3.30 pm

Mr Lynch: Go raibh maith agat. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answer. As Finance Minister, he will be aware that, as the squeeze continues on pay, more and more people become poorer and live in poverty. Can he provide assurances that DETI will deliver more permanent jobs? Otherwise, we will continue to experience increased emigration, underemployment and a growth in food banks.

Mr Hamilton: In response to Mr Hazzard's question, I mentioned the significant reduction that there has been in unemployment. There are still issues. It is still higher than the UK average, and although it is significantly lower than the EU average and the figures in Republic of Ireland, it is still higher than we would like. We need to see further progress and more bearing down on it, and we need to address issues like youth unemployment.

However, when it comes to creating permanent jobs in Northern Ireland, the Member need only look at the DETI website and the news pages to see the number of jobs that Invest Northern Ireland has supported over the last number of weeks. Thirty-one jobs were announced yesterday at Smiley Monroe in Lisburn, and 22 — these are just in the month of September — were announced at the Deluxe Group in Portadown. Thirty-five were announced at Webtech in Enniskillen, which is in the Member's constituency, and 47 were announced at Magellan Aerospace in Greyabbey, which is in my constituency. Three hundred and thirty-eight jobs were announced at Deloitte in Belfast. I could go on and on. Jobs have also been announced by Baker and McKenzie; Almac, with nearly 350; and Capita, with 400 jobs. There has been small, medium and large-sized investment supported by Invest Northern Ireland over the last six months that has amounted to a huge number of permanent new jobs coming into Northern Ireland. I think that these are things that we, on every side of the House, should be welcoming.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Time is up. I thank the Minister for standing in so capably for his colleague. Before we move to questions to the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, I ask Members to take their ease while we change the top Table.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

Culture, Arts and Leisure

Commonwealth Games 2014

1. **Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how Northern Ireland can build on its success at the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. (AQO 6563/11-15)

Ms Ni Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure)

Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Member for his question. First, I acknowledge the tremendous success of all our athletes at the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. Overall, we finished fifteenth out of 71 on the medals table, with over 6,500 competing athletes to win 12 medals at the games. I am sure that the Member will agree that that is a remarkable achievement. I hosted a reception here yesterday evening to celebrate the team's remarkable achievements. In addition, I met the chief executive of Sport NI last week to discuss the plans to build on that success.

I can advise that Sport NI will be carrying out debriefs with the governing bodies of each of the sports that had athletes competing in Glasgow. A review will also be undertaken using information that was collected as part of each of those debriefs. The review is intended as an appraisal of performance and as a mechanism to make recommendations to appropriate partners on what changes are needed to help all our sports to improve their performance. It is anticipated that that process and initial review will be completed by December of this year.

Mr Hilditch: I thank the Minister for her answer, and I welcome the reviews that were mentioned. We have seen some improvements recently in boxing facilities and that type of estate. Can the Minister give an indication of progress with any other capital schemes, perhaps including the velodrome or any other facilities?

Ms Ni Chuilín: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. It will come as no surprise — the Member is well aware — that boxing continues to achieve success despite the facilities, not because of the facilities. There has been some investment that has slowly started to take effect, but you could argue that the boxing performances well preceded the capital investment. At its board meeting at the end of the month, Sport NI will agree on how the capital programme will be brought forward. There is a long list of what is needed in terms of sports capital investment, which includes, the Member will not be surprised to hear, a velodrome.

I certainly think that we need to build facilities to help performances, and we need to build facilities in order to increase the aspiration and self-confidence of those athletes who have yet to present themselves to the sport of their choice.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra sin. What steps is the Minister taking to improve the spread of medals across the different participating sports?

Ms Ni Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. As I said to Mr Hilditch, Sport NI is planning to have debriefs around each of the sports. That includes not only the athletes who competed in Glasgow 2014 but the governing bodies. Once that happens, a review will be undertaken using that information, which will act as an appraisal of performances and will look at making recommendations, particularly about what other support is needed.

It really is incumbent upon us all to use the experience — the most recent that we have is from August — to try to build on and direct it in future. That is due to be completed by December of this year. In between times, I will be talking to the chief executive of Sport NI. Indeed, I will

have a further meeting with the forum on the Sport Matters strategy, and I have no doubt that that issue will come up.

Mr McGimpsey: I thank the Minister for her answers. Can she assure us that, bearing in mind the great success that we had in Glasgow, not least in boxing, all boxing clubs will be able to access any grants that are available, access facilities and participate freely in those facilities and will not be subject to sectarian harassment, as was proven to be the case in the past with Sandy Row boxing club? Can she assure us that any grants and support will be tied to such assurances?

Ms Ní Chuilín: First, I refute any allegation — the inference in his question is that my Department or Sport NI have been responsible for the sectarian harassment of Sandy Row boxing club; that is not the case. That is not to say that it has not experienced it before in St Kevin's Hall. It was well documented, and the Member has consistently raised it. I need to put that on record, because I do not think that it is fair, given the way some programmes are edited, to suggest that Sport NI, me or anybody else has been involved in the sectarian harassment of Sandy Row.

Sandy Row boxing club, just like any other boxing club that wants to avail itself of this capital investment, knows what it needs to do. What it needs to do is become affiliated to a governing body in order to receive funding. That is the criterion; I am not changing it to suit Sandy Row boxing club or anyone else.

Mrs McKeivitt: I apologise to the Minister for not attending the Commonwealth Games reception last night. It clashed with my meeting with the Down camogie team, which won the all-Ireland premier junior title on Sunday.

What support, financially or otherwise, is available to our young athletes who wish to compete in the 2015 Commonwealth Youth Games in Samoa?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I pay tribute to the Down camogie team; its success has been amazing. Samoa and St Lucia have been mentioned regarding the youth games. The Commonwealth Games Council has received funding. It is working with Sport NI. I cannot remember the date — it is soon — but I have a meeting organised with the chief executive of the Commonwealth Games Council to discuss this matter.

It is incumbent on us to support athletes competing not just in that forum but in other fora, because we need to ensure that their performance will be consistent. They need the confidence and contentment of knowing that they do not have to worry about funding. Their efforts should be focused on their performance.

I am due to meet the chief executive of the Commonwealth Games Council fairly soon, and I will meet Sport NI.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Members, I should have said that question 2 and question 10 have been withdrawn.

Pipe Bands

3. **Mr Anderson** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action she is taking to preserve, promote and develop the pipe band tradition. (AQO 6565/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. I recognise the significant contribution that the voluntary and community art sectors make to many aspects of life

here. Pipe bands can introduce people to the appreciation of music and start some on the road to musical excellence. This year, the Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band won its tenth and fourth consecutive world title, which is a truly great accolade for the band and the pipe band sector.

In recognition of the importance of music making in communities, my Department, through the Arts Council, provides support for bands by contributing to the costs of the purchase of instruments. In addition, the Ulster-Scots Agency makes funding available to bands through its financial assistance scheme, which can provide funding for musical tuition.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for that response. She has already congratulated the Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band for its success at the world championships in Glasgow. I record my congratulations as well. Will she now join me in congratulating the Bleary and District Pipe Band from my Upper Bann constituency, which recently won the grade 2 championships at Portrush?

I am sure that the Minister will agree that pipe bands are expensive to keep and to develop. There are a lot of young people in those bands, and I have been involved with some of the bands. To build on that success, it is vital that they get proper funding. There are a lot of family members in the bands, and it costs a lot of money.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I encourage the Member to come to a question.

Mr Anderson: Will the Minister undertake to give further support and funding to those pipe bands?

Mr Deputy Speaker: That was a very long tune.

Ms Ní Chuilín: A very long tune with a short answer: yes, I absolutely congratulate the band from the Member's constituency. All politics is local. I am certainly keen to make sure that support for pipe bands and other bands involved in the purchasing and development of musical instruments continues. The Field Marshal Montgomery Pipe Band is probably the exception, but many bands have participated in competitions and won, and some bands may not have won competitions but are certainly getting there. They need to be supported, and the Arts Council and the Ulster-Scots Agency have continued to do that to their best efforts.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for her answers up to this point. Between the Arts Council and the Ulster-Scots Agency, can she give any figures on how much is being invested in the musical instruments for bands scheme? Are there any plans to review that?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for her supplementary questions. Since 2011, the Ulster-Scots Agency has invested over £852,000, and the Arts Council has invested over £605,000. I know that both agencies plan to look at value for money in every aspect of their work. I have absolutely no doubt that that, as well as other aspects of the work and the services that they provide, will be under review, particularly given the budgetary constraints that we all face.

Ardoyne Fleadh: DCAL Funding

4. **Mr Humphrey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the departmental funding granted to this year's Ardoyne Fleadh. (AQO 6566/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Neither my Department nor the Arts Council has provided funding for the Ardoyne Fleadh for this August, although I do not preclude funding being made available to the fleadh in the foreseeable future.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Minister for her answer, brief though it was. Given the appallingly sectarian, racist and hateful remarks by the Druids' singer at the Ardoyne Fleadh, does the Minister agree that those bigoted remarks have caused damage to community relations in north Belfast and have caused great offence to the unionist, Protestant and Orange community? What sanctions does she plan to put in place on funding for the fleadh next year?

3.45 pm

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. I condemn any remarks that are sectarian or not befitting any community. I welcome the Member's sentiments. I look forward to his support when bands that are funded through the Arts Council or the Ulster-Scots Agency —

Mr Humphrey: Answer the question.

Ms Ní Chuilín: — parade in certain parts of our constituency and play offensive tunes outside places of worship. I hope that the Member will join me to say that funding and investment for those bands should also be looked at and scrutinised and, indeed, that the organisations that march with them and have responsibility for them should, too, be penalised and scrutinised. I have answered the question.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I encourage Members not to make remarks across the Chamber, please. You may not be all that pleased with me as a chairman, but I will do my best. All remarks must be made through the Chair.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Will the Minister monitor funding that is made for festivals, commemorations and bands and, if any display of sectarianism, racism etc is proven, take steps to ensure that all funding is reviewed?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for that question. I am sure that he heard the answer that I gave to Mr William Humphrey. I will indeed. I want to take the opportunity to say again that I, too, was very disappointed and saddened by the remarks that the Druids made at the Ardoyne Fleadh. I was very content with the rebuttals in statements from the organisers and, indeed, from all politicians across the House.

We all need to be careful and cautious about the way in which Question Time is sometimes used for political point scoring. Sectarianism, regardless of where it occurs, needs to be condemned. We should do that regardless of where it happens. Certainly, there is cross-party support for ensuring that sectarianism is ended and that any support for people who take part in bands, festivals or other activities and are involved in what could be perceived to be sectarian behaviour needs to be scrutinised. Any action needs to be taken after careful review.

Mr A Maginness: The Minister has rightly condemned the sectarian behaviour of the Druids. Other Members have done so as well. Does she agree with me that the organising committee acted in a forthright manner in also condemning the remarks? Will she further allow an application by the fleadh organisers to extend cross-community outreach?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. I totally agree that the work that the organisers of the Ardoyne Fleadh have done this year and in previous years has to be commended. It is regrettable that the Druids became the story of the fleadh rather than all the activities in the week leading up to that. The organisers do cross-community work. They are trying their best along with their partners in the Shankill and elsewhere. The organisers of the Ardoyne Fleadh and other cultural programmers and partners are coming together to look at ways in which they can make applications next year. I welcome that regardless of where or whom it comes from.

Brantry Lough: Fish Kill

5. **Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the advice given to anglers who wish to fish in Brantry Lough, following the recent fish kill. (AQO 6567/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. He should be aware that I have been advised that the recent fish kill at Brantry was a natural occurrence that it was not possible to predict or prevent and was brought about by a sustained period of hot, still weather. The conditions raised the water temperature and lowered the oxygen level in the water, resulting in fish mortality.

Inland Fisheries staff visit all public angling estate waters regularly to assess operational needs and respond to reports from other agencies such as the Environment Agency and, indeed, from members of the public. If angling is affected on any of the waters, anglers are informed through the NI Direct angling website.

In view of the ongoing fish mortality and reports of possible toxic algae bloom, the lough was closed for angling as a precautionary measure and a notice posted on the website. The Department also provided statements in response to a number of media enquiries. In addition, it erected a public notice at Brantry which advised of the possibility of toxic blue-green algae blooms during prolonged periods of sunshine and the risks that that could present.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that comprehensive reply. She said that the fish kill was due to the water being hot and still for a prolonged period. I do not think that the temperature this summer was as hot as it was last summer. I wonder whether there was a similar fish kill last summer, because the temperature was even hotter last year.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I will have to take the Member's word for that. I do not know what the temperature was last year in comparison with this year. The fact that I cannot remember and that there seems to be no report of fish kills last year suggest that the temperature and the possibility of toxic algae in the Brantry added to the high level of fish mortality. I will try to bring the Member's question to my officials and get answers. I am sure that the Member will join me in saying that we need to do anything that

we can to reduce the impact on angling in our public waters. I would be happy to receive any information about the river that the Member may have from anglers in his constituency.

Arts Council: Funding Cuts

6. **Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how the proposed cuts to the Arts Council budget will impact on the arts sector. (AQO 6568/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The proposed cuts are not unique to the Arts Council. All business areas across my Department and its arm's-length bodies have been asked to closely examine their budgets to meet the reductions. I met the chair of the Arts Council to discuss the potential impact of reductions and examine how best to implement them, with a view to minimising the effect on front line services. However, it is not just the end users' enjoyment of the artistic product that may be affected if programming is scaled back. Organisations may have no choice other than to make savings from other strands of work, notably, perhaps, their outreach programmes, community ticketing schemes and staff or overhead costs, as suggested by them. In addition, marketing budgets may have to be reduced, leading directly to reduced income from a consequential reduction in ticket sales. The Arts Council board met on 10 September to consider its options, and organisations are being advised of decisions on budget reductions. I am conscious of the potential impact that those budget reductions will have on programmes, staff and services. I will continue to work with the sector during this difficult period, particularly as the final position emerges.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a freagra. Will any of the £1 million allocated to cultural programmes in the June monitoring round be used to fund Arts Council programmes?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. The additional money is not to plug gaps in the Arts Council budget. It is additional money relating to legacy commitments that we made as part of the World Police and Fire Games and the City of Culture. As the Member will be aware, I made a statement in the city last November about commitments. However, it is not just for the city of Derry; it is for the neighbouring communities and villages. So, while an additional £1 million is to be welcomed, it is regrettable that some groups that have been recipients of arts funding for many years feel it appropriate to criticise those that have never received funding and are now doing so through the additional £1 million.

City of Culture: Legacy

7. **Mr McCartney** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the impact of the June monitoring round on the legacy for the City of Culture. (AQO 6569/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Building on additional funding I secured earlier this year, I submitted a significant bid to the June monitoring round to maximise the ongoing development of a social and economic legacy from the City of Culture 2013. I was disappointed that funding was not allocated to this bid. I remain committed to harnessing the momentum

created by the City of Culture and realising the full potential of the culture, arts and leisure base to transform the lives of people.

Achieving that is not solely dependent on the allocation of new or additional funds. The DCAL family of organisations, programmes, facilities and services is already actively targeting and delivering interventions across the north-west. This week, for example, the CultureTECH festival, which is supported by my Department through NI Screen, will enhance the national and international profile of the north-west as a centre for innovation, digital technologies and creative industries. Inspirational programming as part of the festival will also engage over 16,000 schoolchildren.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for her answer and welcome her continuing commitment to and delivery for Derry in relation to those projects. Will the Minister give me an outline of the current status of the development of sports facilities in the north-west? In particular, will she welcome the fact that planning permission is now being sought for the development of the Brandywell stadium?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. *[Interruption.]* God bless you.

Sport NI has confirmed that phase one of the north coast sports village was completed by August. In relation to capital investment, as part of the legacy of the City of Culture, boxing projects in Derry have received £120,000 so far for equipment. In relation to the Daisyfield/Showgrounds project, I welcome the fact that Derry City Council has awarded planning permission for the Brandywell. Also in relation to that project, the Department will receive a business case from Derry City Council for that element of the Foyle valley gateway master plan and has been working very closely with the city council on that. On the basis of receiving that final business case, funding will be awarded. I imagine that that will be a seamless process.

DCAL is also still committed to providing the £2.5 million sought by Limavady Borough Council towards the development of a sports and community complex in the Dungiven area. Provision of that funding will also be subject to a business case, as the Member would no doubt expect.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the Minister for her answers thus far and her stated commitment to the legacy of the City of Culture. I want to ask her for some clarification though. One day on Radio Foyle, she talked about £1 million being there for the cultural legacy programme of the City of Culture, and she has made a commitment today. Is it intended that all of that £1 million will go to Derry and the legacy of the City of Culture?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am happy to write to the Member and give him a full breakdown of what will be funded, where it will be funded, where the projects will happen and the duration of that funding and provide him with a status report of what I intend to bid for in the next monitoring rounds. I think that that is important, given that everybody is committed to ensuring that the legacy of the City of Culture is met but also to make sure that people have their facts right. I am not saying that there has been mischief, but some confusion has certainly been spun, either by certain media outlets or people on the media who are either really

confused, deliberately confusing or who are really not in full possession of the facts. I am happy to furnish the Member with that information.

Mr Hussey: Does the Minister agree with me that Londonderry's position as the UK City of Culture was enhanced by the participation of those pipe bands and flute bands from the Protestant/unionist community that participated in and supported the events?

Ms Ní Chuilín: Absolutely. I am sure that the Member has been to the Walled City Tattoo, and if he has not, why not?

Mr Hussey: I have.

Ms Ní Chuilín: He has. I am glad to hear it. The story of the City of Culture, particularly with the bands, is something that we can learn from across the North and, indeed, across the island. The work of the bands and Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin has been remarkable.

I think that it is important that every aspect of musical and cultural heritage is celebrated — and celebrated within a context of respect. It is really important that we continue that tradition and heritage, not just for people who enjoy what we have now but to make sure that we pass it on to the generations behind us.

Stadia: Community Integration and Benefits

8. **Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what progress has been made on the integration of new stadia into local communities. (AQO 6570/11-15)

11. **Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the progress of the stadia programme, including post-construction benefits to the neighbouring communities. (AQO 6573/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will answer questions 8 and 11 together. I thank the Member for his question.

4.00 pm

In relation to Ravenhill, the project is progressing very well, with all three stands now complete. The official opening of the stadium took place, as the Member knows, in May of this year. Completion of the remaining phases of construction work, on education and heritage facilities, is planned for early 2015. I expect that to happen in February or March 2015.

In relation to the IFA, construction at Windsor commenced on site in May after the Irish Cup final, and, provided that significant delays around any legal issues are avoided, the project can remain on programme, with completion of the construction works planned for October 2015.

The Member will also be aware that a judicial review is being heard regarding Casement Park, so it is not appropriate that I mention that.

Certainly, in benefits and integration with local communities, as part of the development plans for all the stadia, the governing bodies have been extensively engaged in consultation with local communities, and it is my intention that the stadiums will have the potential to be used every day, post construction.

Mr Spratt: I thank the Minister for her answer. In relation to the ongoing talks with community associations, at Windsor

and Ravenhill, can the Minister update us on how far that has gone? I compliment the Department on the progress that has been made with community associations.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his sentiments. I am happy to pass that on to officials in the Department. It has always been my intention — indeed, it has always been the intention as part of this development — that the opportunities for communities do not end with construction. They have to exist pre, during and post construction. It is important that those communities, that are neighbours to these stadia, are not outside looking in. They need to be involved. I am content that the discussions that have been had so far are good. Can we do more? Absolutely. I think that it is important that Members, such as yourself, have continually come forward with suggestions about how we can do that better. The ongoing relationship needs to continue with officials, regardless of who is in the Department, because it will be a 25-year relationship. All being well — if God spares us all, we will all be here, but certainly not in this place — the benefits for those communities will endure well beyond construction. Hopefully, construction will be completed in next year and the year after that.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a freagraí go dtí seo. What plans have been developed to consult local communities on the socio-economic proposals and benefits that would best suit the needs of those communities?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question. He is probably referring to social clauses and community benefits, rather than the issues outlined by Jimmy Spratt.

There have been discussions, particularly in relation to the governing bodies and community groups. I intend, once I get the Casement Park issue resolved, that that should take on a different complexion. We need to have more engagement with other Departments and, indeed, with partners and partnerships around apprenticeships and the monitoring of those apprenticeships, to make sure that whatever commitment is made is honoured and to make sure that there are training places. Liaisons and discussions need to be ongoing with schools and the construction industry and with the community, voluntary and regeneration groups that exist in south Belfast in relation to Windsor Park and in west Belfast for Casement Park. It is really important that people do not feel that they cannot avail themselves of these opportunities that are based on their road. The worst thing that could happen is that opportunities become available when it is too late. We want to ensure that this happens and that it happens sooner rather than later. As I have said, once we get the decision regarding Casement Park, I will have a different story to report as to how west Belfast can benefit.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We will now move to 15 minutes of topical questions.

North/South Language Bodies: Business Plans

1. **Mr McGimpsey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to enlighten us about the fact that, as I understand

it, business plans and budgets for 2013-14 and 2014-15 for the North/South language bodies have still not been laid before the House. (AQT 1421/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Your understanding is right. I have not laid them. I have not approved them to come before the House, because it asks for an additional 4% cut on top of what was already agreed. A 4% cut, on top of what was already agreed, will have a huge and dire impact on the Ulster-Scots Agency.

I think it is incumbent upon me and my colleagues in the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) to try to sort this out, because what you are looking at is having massive impacts, particularly on Ulster Scots.

Mr McGimpsey: I thank the Minister for that answer. I have to say that I am surprised to hear that the reason is to prevent additional cuts, since there already have been cuts. My concern, of course, is about how we manage this, how the accounting officer accounts for it, how these bodies are to continue to operate and to work their finances, how those are being evaluated and who is going to be held responsible for any potential overspends or underspends.

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Member is right to be surprised. It was a surprise to me that a decision was made by colleagues in Dublin to add additional efficiency savings, as they call them, on the language bodies which would have a huge impact on the Ulster-Scots Agency. They made a decision to split the money between waterways and languages, and they gave an uplift to waterways and left the languages to take the brunt. I am far from happy with that, particularly given what I have just said in my first answer to you. It will have a huge impact on the Ulster-Scots Agency. The Member will be aware that the payments that are being made are irregular. They are still legal. I am working on the basis that the draft business plans are going ahead, and it is business as usual.

Sports Facilities: Dungiven

2. **Mr Ó hOisín** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to ensure that her Department will continue to work with the councillors and officers of Limavady Borough Council to ensure the adequate delivery of proper sports facilities in the Dungiven area. (AQT 1422/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: In short, yes, I have done that. The Member may have been in the Chamber when I answered his colleague Raymond McCartney's question in relation to the legacy plans for Derry city and the north-west. To that end, I have a meeting organised with officials from Limavady Borough Council to see how we can progress the provision of sports facilities in that area.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. Will the Minister respond to and comment on the position on sports facilities in Dungiven as adopted, recently, by the new Causeway Coast and Glens Council?

Ms Ní Chuilín: It is regrettable that the Causeway Coast and Glens Council adopted the position that it has. I imagine that that position should be, and will be, sorted out with local representatives in the new council configuration and, indeed, with officials that are there. When I made my investment to Coleraine Borough Council, I was very clear that it was part of a north-west legacy plan. Maybe

the officials there, or even the elected reps, did not fully understand the implications and the import of that. I urge all local representatives, along with officials from both council areas, to come together to try to get the matter resolved, because proper sporting facilities are required in the Dungiven area.

Irish Open: Newcastle Legacy

3. **Mr Rogers** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans her Department has for a golf legacy in Newcastle in the aftermath of the upcoming Irish Open. (AQT 1423/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I have not received any invitations or delegations in relation to golf in the south Down area vis-à-vis Newcastle. Certainly, Sport NI is working with the governing body for golf, but I have no knowledge of, and I have not received any delegations around, additional or new investment to that area in particular.

Mr Rogers: Many groups and organisations in the south Down area hope to run fringe events, particularly cultural events, in surrounding towns when the Irish Open is on. What support will your Department give those groups?

Ms Ní Chuilín: This is the first time that it has been brought my attention, so we need to find out exactly what is being run and what Sport NI can assist with, if at all, in conjunction with local government, particularly around the achievement of sporting events and participation in them. I am happy to hear representation from the Member on how we can do that.

Newtowncunningham Orange Hall: Sectarian Attack

4. **Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she agrees that the recent attack on Newtowncunningham Orange hall, which has caused great disquiet, was blatantly sectarian and should be condemned by all right-thinking people, given that she will be well aware of the strong bond between rural communities, for example, in County Donegal and County Londonderry. (AQT 1424/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Yes and yes. I think that it is totally regrettable that the hall was attacked in the way that it was. I did not see the whole footage, but I saw a clip of some of the stewards of the hall and people who have attended it for generations. I could see how visibly upset they were, and I have to condemn the attack outright. Hopefully, the community can come together and help the Orangemen to rebuild their hall.

Mr Hussey: Thank you, Minister, for your response. It was very clear from the reaction of the people there. One of the artefacts that the cameras focused on was a First World War memorial — very appropriately, as we are now into the centenary of the First World War. Will you be speaking at any time to your counterpart in the Irish Republic to see whether anything can be done to support this small and isolated community in Donegal?

Ms Ní Chuilín: To give the Member an assurance, I am happy, particularly on the basis of the intervention that he has made in topical questions today and on the basis that it is the right thing to do, to write to my colleagues in DAHG, and, indeed, to any other colleagues who have any

influence or any potential investment, to see whether some support can be given to the area. I am certainly happy to do that, and I am happy to copy the Member in to any correspondence.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Mr Daithí McKay is not in his place.

Commonwealth Games: Stormont Reception

6. **Mr Anderson** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, following the success of our Team Northern Ireland athletes at the Commonwealth Games, why she used the term “North of Ireland” on the invitations sent to all Team Northern Ireland athletes for last night’s reception here at Stormont. (AQT 1426/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I did not see the invitation that was sent out, and if you — or any Member — stopped yourself from coming because of what is on an invitation, I think that you need to grow up. There are lots of things that I encounter in my daily walk of life that do not reflect the community that I come from, but, to support athletes or to support people, you just move on and do your best. So, if you are preventing yourself from giving support to children and young people because of something that is said in an invitation from me, I think that you need to ask yourself questions.

Mr Anderson: The Minister signed the invitation, and, if anything, I would say that it is you who is being pathetically petty and politically immature by mixing your politics and republican dogma with sport. I think that it is deplorable that invitations are sent out and that the proper —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member please ask a question?

Mr Anderson: Why was this letter sent out to all individuals and all who took part in this reception with that term on the letter?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Member made a decision not to go to the reception last night, so he made a decision to exclude himself from celebrating the achievements of the young people and the athletes who were involved in the Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2014. I did not exclude him; he excluded himself.

Ballyhornan: DCAL Investment

7. **Mr Hazzard** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to confirm whether she or her Department has had any discussions about investment in the Ballyhornan area. (AQT 1427/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Not in recent times. As the Member will be aware, I was in the constituency some months ago, and I looked at motor sport in the vicinity. I am also aware that, through him and other colleagues, including his council colleagues, there have been calls for it to be part of the master plan for that area, given that it has not seen the investment that it needs, particularly in sporting activities. I am happy to meet the Member to see how we can take that forward.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for her reply. Can I take it from her response that she is willing to meet in the weeks ahead to discuss the needs of the master plan and, indeed, what advantages this may bring to the area?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am happy to do that, and I am happy to go back to try to get that organised. I am delighted that, particularly in an area that has not seen the investment, there is a master plan where Departments, bodies and statutory agencies are coming together to try to pool their investment to make sure that there is a better outcome for people in that constituency.

4.15 pm

Belfast Central Library

9. **Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether, as part of the Library Square development and the development of the Cathedral Quarter, she has received a business case for the renewal and refurbishment of Belfast central library, which is celebrating 125 years this year. (AQT 1429/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I thank the Member for his question and for his continued interest in Belfast central library. I have not yet received a business case; I am waiting for it to arrive on my desk. It will involve substantial public money — in the region of £30 million to £35 million. We need the business case to start the process of upgrading, regrading, rebuilding and redeveloping the library.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Gordon Dunne. I apologise again and call Mr Maginness for a supplementary.

Mr A Maginness: Once the business case is received, what is the indicative time frame for giving the library the green light, as it were?

Ms Ní Chuilín: To follow up on the Member’s original question and supplementary, I will find out the exact position: when I can anticipate the business case being brought to my attention and what the process and procedure will be thereafter. The Member is aware of funding constraints, but this is one of the projects that will add to the overall attractiveness of Belfast to tourists. Also, a city the size of Belfast needs a library at its heart, particularly as the central library is at the heart of quarters and areas of massive regeneration. That regeneration cannot happen without the central library being involved.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I now call Mr Gordon Dunne.

Football: Subregional Stadia Funding

10. **Mr Dunne** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the subregional stadia funding that will be available for football clubs in Northern Ireland. (AQT 1430/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The subregional funding for soccer will not be made available until early next year. It was not supposed to become available until the next CSR, but I have started the process, in conjunction with the IFA, to try to bring forward a facility strategy. On the basis of that, we will do an outline business case and get all the bureaucratic stuff out of the way to ensure that, when the next CSR is agreed for 2015-16 and thereafter, we can start as soon as possible.

Mr Dunne: I thank the Minister for her answer. Can she indicate the approximate amount of funding that will be available? When does she see clubs being in a position to bid for that?

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Member should be aware that a political agreement was reached on the three stadia. That involved some £30-plus million for Windsor Park and the remainder, also £30-plus million, should be subregional funding. That position has not changed.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Time is up. We must now move on to questions for the Minister of Education.

Education

Mr Deputy Speaker: We start with listed questions. Questions 1 and 4 have been withdrawn.

GCSE/ A-level Results

2. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the recent GCSE and A-Level results. (AQO 6579/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): There continues to be a very strong performance by pupils here at GCSE and A level, and it is important that we celebrate and acknowledge their achievements across the North. We should not forget the teachers and parents who supported them to reach this stage in their education.

GCSE performance was the highest since Joint Council for Qualifications figures first became available in 2002. There was a 0.2 percentage point increase at A* from 8.7% to 8.9%. There was also a 0.2 percentage point increase to 28.2% in Grades A* and A. Grades A* to C increased by 1.5 percentage points to 78.0%

In A-level performance, 83.7% of entries here achieved grades A* to C, which is a 0.2 percentage point increase on last year. The overall pass rate remained much the same as last year, with 98.1% of grades awarded at A* to E. Of those, 7.3% of grades were awarded at A*. The previous figure was 7.2%.

One of my priorities as Education Minister continues to be raising standards. These results are very encouraging, but we cannot become complacent. There remain unacceptable achievement gaps at all levels in our system, and I intend to do all that I can to tackle that.

Mr McElduff: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. Is there any early indication that the signature project involving newly qualified teachers had any effect on results in 2013-14?

Mr O'Dowd: It is too early to tell. The signature project will go through an evaluation, which will give us a more informed response to the Member's questions and, indeed, to other questions. However, on the generality of it, I have no doubt that putting additional resources to proper use in a school will assist young people in achieving their exam outcomes.

Mr Storey: I join the Minister in welcoming the results this year and the outcome for pupils. I think that that is an indication yet again of the quality of education provision in Northern Ireland. However, the Minister will be aware that the gap between girls and boys is still prevalent, with 37.6% of boys not attaining grade C or above in their GCSEs compared with 21.4% of girls in areas where there is the application of free school meals, which is worrying. Will the Minister tell the House what specific actions he

and his Department plan to take to address that gap? He always refers to gaps in other sectors, but on the gap between girls and boys, what specifically can be done to address that problem?

Mr O'Dowd: It is a challenge that faces many education systems across the world: the improving results of girls compared with those of boys. I believe, however, that we have an advantage in our education system, because the flexibility of the curriculum allows teachers in classrooms to adapt the teaching and the coursework to the requirements of the students before them, including adapting a subject in a way that makes it interesting and lifts it off the page for boys as well. We continue to work at that; it is a challenge for us all. As I said, it is a question that has been asked of education systems throughout the world.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. Ba mhaith liom a fhiafraí den Aire cad é a mheas ar líon na ndaltaí atá ag dul don Ghaeilge i scoileanna Béarla ag an dá leibhéal atá luaite sa cheist. I thank the Minister for his answers. What is his assessment of the trends regarding pupils taking Irish at GCSE and A level over the last number of years?

Mr O'Dowd: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as a cheist. I do not have the figures before me, but I am happy to supply them to the Member in writing. Over the last number of years, we have been seeking ways to improve the uptake of all modern languages, including Irish. I only recently signed off on more funding for further studies into how we encourage young people to take on another language, including, as I say, Irish. I am happy to share the exact figures with the Member in writing.

Mr Cree: Minister, what consultations is your Department having with schools, principals, governors and the like regarding the future of GCSEs and A levels? Do you recognise the importance of keeping our standards in line with those of the rest of the UK so that equal status is afforded to pupils?

Mr O'Dowd: Throughout the process of change, which was originally initiated by the then Secretary of State for Education, Minister Gove, in his day, I have been involved in detailed discussion and consultation with the education sector. I established a working group, which involved educationalists from my field, the further and higher education sector, the business sector and others, to study where we should move forward to with our qualification system. Throughout that, they have engaged with the education sector and young people.

A significant report was published around June or maybe even earlier this year. It set out a pathway and made recommendations that I have followed. That body will continue its work to look at the long-term programme of change, if required, to our qualification system. Core to that will be ensuring that our qualifications are recognised throughout these islands and that no young people will be disadvantaged in any way if they choose to travel with those qualifications, whether for further or higher education or for employment.

Educational Psychologists

3. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the current number of educational psychologists available to produce statements of special educational needs. (AQO 6580/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The most recent staffing survey across the education and library boards (ELBs) indicated that 166 educational psychologists are available across the five board areas. All the ELBs have recently reported that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, they are meeting their legislative target to complete the statutory assessment and statementing process within 26 weeks, subject to valid exceptions.

In addition, my Department continues to provide financial assistance each year for the doctorate in educational child and adolescent psychology (DECAP) course at Queen's University, a course that provides an output of six graduates each academic year. In October 2013, the DECAP steering group discussed the need for an increase in DECAP intake. However, after further discussions with the chief executive officers of the Belfast Education and Library Board and the South Eastern Education and Library Board, it was decided that that would not be necessary.

Mr Beggs: I thank the Minister for his answer, but does he not accept that a 26-week target is half a year of a child's education and an unacceptable delay? Will he ensure that there is a much faster process and that the multi-agency support team for schools, which is available to only some young people in some primary schools in my constituency, will be available to everyone so that all have the best opportunity to reach their full potential?

Mr O'Dowd: One of the reasons why I have been working through an education Bill is to reduce the timescale, admittedly to the maximum of 20 weeks, but I also want to ensure that the identification of special educational needs takes place much earlier, that there is a joined-up response to the needs of a young person and that those children who have to move forward to the new statementing process will be identified much sooner, thus trying to avoid any damage being inflicted on their education because of a delay in the recognition of their needs.

Mr McCarthy: The Minister will be aware of the ever-increasing number of youngsters with autism in our society. Is he happy that his Department has the resources to ensure that all youngsters with autism get the treatment and education they deserve as early as possible rather than having to wait an inordinate amount of time?

Mr O'Dowd: No. I am on record since coming into post as saying that the Department of Education is underfunded and that many of our services remain underfunded. Although we have ring-fenced and protected special educational needs and its resources, I can assure the Member that I would like to inject further funding into it. Special educational needs is one of the areas of increasing pressure on education across the education and library boards. Indeed, during the most recent monitoring round, I made a bid for £10 million of additional funding for the provision of special educational needs in the education and library boards. I was unsuccessful, which will place further pressures on my Department. I have never stated that the Department of Education is well resourced. We

require further funding, particularly for special educational needs.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Will the Minister outline any current plans that he has to bring forward special educational needs legislation?

Mr O'Dowd: As I said in response to one of the Member's colleagues, I am in the process of bringing forward legislation to the House on special educational needs. It will herald significant changes, at board level and in the classroom, in the way in which we deliver special educational needs provision. I have spent considerable time working through the detail of that legislation. I welcome the input of the Education Committee to its preparation, and I intend to continue to work with the Committee on that, because I am of the firm view that no one wants to have a political spat over the Bill. We want to make sure that the Bill is right and that it protects and enhances the educational needs of our young people.

Mr Rogers: Given that there is an increasing need for more effective interventions on behalf of children with special educational needs and the need to shorten the time between the referral and the first appointment with an educational psychologist, is it acceptable that, in the most recent academic year, 2013-14, 900 days were lost to the education psychology service through retirement?

4.30 pm

Mr O'Dowd: I do not have the exact details in front of me, but I refer you to my original answer. In October 2013, there was a review of the number of child psychologists available to the boards. After discussions with senior executives from the boards, it was decided that the number of trainees going through the system was sufficient to meet demand at this time. That review was almost a year ago. I am more than happy to return to the subject to ensure that we meet the needs of young people ahead of the introduction of the SEN Bill, which I think will see a significant improvement in the delivery of the special educational needs service.

Schools: Religious Impact

5. **Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact that religious organisations have on primary and post-primary education. (AQO 6582/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Churches and religious bodies have a long history of involvement in education here as the founders of schools and as transferors and trustees. As such, they have made a significant and positive contribution to our education system over many years and continue, through their involvement on boards of governors, to shape the ethos of our schools and play their part in helping every child to reach his or her full potential.

Mr Givan: In light of what the Minister said, would he like to take the opportunity to apologise to the Protestant Churches for what he said in an interview to the 'Belfast Telegraph' about how they needed to step up to the mark around their social responsibilities in education? Given the role that Churches — Protestant and Roman Catholic — have played in establishing education and the roles that they play as transferors on boards of governors, particularly in my constituency, where I can see that, among working-class communities and young, male

Protestants, the Churches are to the fore in trying to tackle educational underachievement, would he now want to apologise for the insult that he made about them?

Mr O'Dowd: I in no way insulted the Protestant Churches. The Member should not take the story from the lavish headlines that news editors choose to print in their newspapers. The Protestant Church leaders and I had an interesting and informed debate on one of the radio shows the Sunday morning after that. I explained on and off air to the Church leaders present my view of their role. I did not insult them during the interview, in the newspaper or on the airwaves afterwards, but I listened to the Member quite recently stating that the pillars of society, government and state are open to challenge, as are Churches and Church leaders.

The challenge I put out to the Protestant Churches, the trade unions, civic society and other opinion formers was that they needed to take up the mantle of challenging academic selection and the ills that it brings to our education system and society. I continue to put that challenge out to all Churches and other bodies mentioned.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. Given that the RE syllabus in Northern Ireland has been approved by the four main Churches here, does the Minister recognise that there is a strong school of thought that any further religious instruction should be the responsibility of the individual Church organisations, parents and guardians and not the responsibility of schools?

Mr O'Dowd: The RE syllabus is under review, and there will be a report published in due course on how we believe the teaching of RE should move forward. Churches still play a significant role in the day-to-day lives of people. They play a significant role, as I said to Mr Givan, in our education system. As it is laid out, religious education should be delivered in schools and contained within the ethos of a school, which is set by the board of governors. There is significant autonomy for the board of governors to set that out. I believe that religious education, when delivered in a way that explores Christianity, Islam, Judaism and all other faiths that are out there, allows young people to approach life from a more rounded position than simply being taught one faith or the teachings of one faith, but it is a matter for the schools at this stage. As I have also said, the RE syllabus is under review, the results of which will be reported in due course.

Mr A Maginness: Does the Minister recognise the tremendous historic contribution by the Churches across the board — Catholic and Protestant — to education in Northern Ireland and Ireland as a whole and the current contribution that the Churches make to education? If so, will he affirm that?

Mr O'Dowd: I have never said otherwise. I attended a very interesting lecture given by your former colleague Dr Seán Farren in Queen's about a year ago. He outlined the history of education on the island of Ireland. It was a very informative and interesting debate. He touched on, as you would have to, given the subject matter, the role of the various Churches pre partition and since partition. They have clearly played an important role in our education system and will continue to do so. However, as I said to Mr Givan, Church leaders are open to challenge, and I reserve my right to challenge them in the same way as

they challenge political leaders. It assists a healthy and democratic society if civic leaders can challenge each other in a respectful manner. That was the manner in which I challenged the Protestant Church leaders on this subject.

Welfare Reform: Education Budget

6. **Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Education to outline the extent to which his departmental budget has been affected by the penalties imposed by HM Government as a result of the failure to implement welfare reform. (AQO 6583/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have negotiated strongly to protect education from Budget cuts, in line with the protection afforded to health. I welcome the decision by the Executive, as part of June monitoring, to protect my Department from cuts.

The success of our economy and of society in general depends on there being a high-quality education service that can compete with the best internationally. Equally, all our young people have the right to a quality education that enables them to reach their full potential. That is a right enshrined not only in our own legislation but in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Following the outcome of the Budget 2011-15, it was clear that I would need to make over £300 million of savings across the Budget period to simply balance my budget. Whilst I sought to protect front line services, it was necessary to initiate a series of strategic cost reduction exercises that resulted in over 2,900 school-based redundancies and 450 non-school-based redundancies.

Although considerable efforts have been made to reduce the pressures on the education budget, the financial outlook continues to be very challenging. I have demonstrated a commitment to prudent budget management whilst maximising the use of the resources available to me.

Lord Morrow: I heard what the Minister has said. He gave a fair long answer, but I am not sure that he gave the answer that I would like to have heard. However, we will try it another way. Is the Minister telling the House that there will be no cuts as a result of the impact of the position that his party has taken on benefit cuts? Is he telling us that there will be no cuts, that the programme will go on as stated and that the penalties will have no impact at all?

Mr O'Dowd: I answered your question quite clearly. The Executive voted to protect the Department of Education's budget. I will continue to argue very strongly that that remains the case.

You should listen to the figures again. This is in the absence of anything to do with welfare. This is due to the Conservative Party's economic policy towards the Executive. There were 2,900 school-based redundancies, the majority of which were teachers. They are lost to our education system — lost. Those are not figures that have been produced to generate shock and awe in the media and among the general public; they are real. Those people have left education and are no longer available to teach our young people, assist our young people or promote good education. There were 450 non-school-based redundancies. Those people were support staff who worked in the education and library boards to assist the delivery of education.

So, the Department of Education has already suffered as a result of the Conservative Party's economic policy towards the Executive. What I am saying is that welfare cuts — I note that you are now referring to them as “benefit cuts”, which is exactly what they are, as they have nothing to do with reforms and are cuts to people's living standards — will have an impact across the North. I welcome the fact that the Executive have said, “No, we are protecting our education system against any further cuts.” I emphasise the term “further cuts”.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Can I ask the Minister to outline how Westminster cuts to the block grant have affected his ability to oversee a fit-for-purpose education budget and the educational opportunities of our young people?

Mr O'Dowd: As I said at the outset, when I took over the post in 2011, the education budget was £300 million down from the previous budget, which was not fit for purpose by any means. I had to secure savings of that amount. In late 2011, I went to both the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the then Finance Minister and outlined to them in very graphic terms the type of education system that we would end up with if we had to continue with the £300 million of cuts. I had that conversation in 2011. The Finance Minister and the First Minister and deputy First Minister recognised that the education system could not cope with the scale of cuts that were envisaged and secured an additional £120 million for my Department over the next rolling years. That has ensured that the job losses in our schools are not in the region of 4,000. That has ensured that 1,000 non-teaching staff have not lost their posts.

Understandably, there has been a significant debate around the impact of welfare cuts. However, it is the Conservative Government's economic policy towards the Executive that is having the most detrimental impact. In 2009, the block grant was £10 billion — that term “block grant” sticks in my throat because it suggests that we do not pay taxes — and, in 2014, the block grant is £10 billion. That means that we are having to deliver our services with the same money that we had in 2009. So, while welfare cuts are significant, the economic policy being directed towards us is having the greatest impact.

Shared Education: Limavady

7. Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Education for an update on the shared education proposal from Limavady High School and St Mary's, Limavady. (AQO 6584/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I was pleased with the response to the call for expressions of interest for the shared education campuses programme and was able to announce the first three successful projects to be supported in July. The Western Education and Library Board has advised that it is working with CCMS and both Limavady High School and St Mary's, Limavady on preparing a business case to move the project forward.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht an fhreagra sin. Could I ask the Minister for an overview of the shared campus programme that was recently announced and, indeed, whether the programme is on schedule?

Mr O'Dowd: We had initially hoped to start off with 10 projects. While there was a significant interest in the programme — around 16 applications — only three meet the criteria at this stage. However, we have been in correspondence with all unsuccessful projects. My Department will be having conversations with them on how they can move their projects on to the next stage. So, it is a start and, I think, a good start.

A number of MLAs visited the St Mary's, Limavady and Limavady High School project along with the Chair of the Education Committee. Those are two schools that, like many other schools, have been involved in shared education for many, many years. The actual placing of shared accommodation is a natural progression for them. So, I am happy to support that, as I am the other projects. I have no doubt that, when we go out to a call for further expressions of interest for shared education campuses, we will have as equally a supportive return from our schools.

Careers Guidance

8. Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking in response to the Committee for Employment and Learning's Inquiry into careers education, information, advice and guidance. (AQO 6585/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am committed to the continuous improvement of careers education in schools through the implementation of the joint DE and DEL careers strategy, Preparing for Success. It was always planned that this strategy would be reviewed in 2014, and that work is well under way. Minister Farry and I have been able to ensure that the key issues raised in the Committee for Employment and Learning's inquiry report are integrated in the review's terms of reference.

4.45 pm

The aim of the review is to ensure that everyone has access to high-quality careers education, information, advice and guidance and is supported in the development of good career decision-making skills. The careers review is being conducted by an independent panel that includes representatives from industry, schools, colleges of further education and universities. The review will conclude in the autumn, when the independent panel will put forward its recommendations to me and to Minister Farry for our consideration.

Mr P Ramsey: I thank the Minister for his response. The Minister will be aware of the amount of time and investment that the Employment and Learning Committee put in, in a very intensive way, in looking at careers guidance. Can the Minister assure the House as best he can that, in going forward, we will have in place the most consistent, accurate, best-practice and, as he says, high-quality provision, ensuring that our young people going forward in careers are given the best advice?

Mr O'Dowd: I will certainly assure you that that is what we aim for, and I think that the review and the terms of reference that we have put in place and the Committee report, which is a significant resource for that review, will allow us to significantly improve our careers advice moving forward. It is a big ask for me to guarantee it, but certainly my approach is that we need to significantly improve upon the improvements that have been achieved in our careers

advice strategy, and we need to give our young people the most up-to-date careers advice and opportunities possible moving forward. The people who we have brought together and who they represent in that careers review is important, because we will receive that through collaboration between schools, business, universities and the most important careers advisers out there, who are, in my opinion, parents. We have to inform them to ensure that they are aware of the most up-to-date careers advice.

Coláiste Feirste: Transport

9. **Mr G Kelly** asked the Minister of Education for an update on his deliberations on the transport needs of children from north Belfast attending Coláiste Feirste. (AQO 6586/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Following discussions with elected representatives Carál Ní Chuilín and the Member himself, and the parents of pupils, on the issue of support for pupils from north Belfast who attend Coláiste Feirste, I have made available a grant to the school. The grant is to be used for the purpose of removing transport barriers for some pupils attending the school, primarily those for whom public transport or other transport services are not readily accessible. The grant will be available for three years to give the board of governors of Coláiste Feirste time and space to actively engage with Translink and other transport providers to establish a long-term solution to the transport needs of pupils attending the school, with a view to the grant no longer being required.

To assist pupils, Translink has already agreed to put on an additional route from north to west Belfast each morning. That route has been operational since the start of term, and I understand that it is well used by many Coláiste Feirste pupils. The grant will be reviewed after the three years but may also be subject to change earlier if, following the outworking of the independent review of home-to-school transport, any changes are made to home-to-school transport policy that have a significant impact on the transport arrangements for pupils attending Coláiste Feirste.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I am afraid that there is no time for a supplementary, because time is up. We will now move on to topical questions.

Shared Education: East Antrim

1. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Education to advise what progress there has been in encouraging shared education facilities that might benefit the children in the East Antrim constituency, given that, in times of difficult financial budgets, shared education facilities can bring economic benefits and, equally as important, are beneficial to young people and communities. (AQT 1431/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I outlined during the previous question session how we are contributing to the physical character of shared education in terms of the provision of campuses and facilities for schools, and I believe that, in the coming days, OFMDFM will be making a significant announcement in relation to how we can contribute towards the resources required for schools to carry out shared education as well.

Mr Beggs: In the past, there was a significant opportunity to promote shared educational facilities when the then St Comgall's College and Larne High School had a close

working relationship, with shared classes and children being exchanged from each school, but, sadly, the decision was made to amalgamate three schools in the maintained sector and to transport those children some 17 miles outside of the town.

So, my question, Minister, is this: in the future, will one education sector's priorities trump those of the people of Northern Ireland, and how do we try to ensure that we have the best system to suit everyone and maximise the opportunities that exist?

Mr O'Dowd: I suspect that each Member would answer your question differently, depending on which sector they were talking about. I believe that shared education can be a significant driver in changing attitudes in our society and in improving the educational outcomes of our young people. Shared education is in area planning, along with part of the terms of reference for the different participants in it.

However, we are at a stage in shared education where I think that it would be a mistake to impose solutions, whether that is on communities or sectors. I believe that we have a role to encourage and to perhaps nudge them along the road. However, I think that if we were to impose solutions on sectors or communities at this stage of the journey, the concept is doomed to failure. As I said in previous answers, there are many, many schools out there that are involved in shared education programmes on a daily basis that have been doing so quietly for many, many years and have been leaders in this programme. So, yes, there is a central role for government to play in this, and there is a central role for the Department of Education and the Minister to play, but I believe that, at this stage, encouragement will reap more benefits than imposing solutions on people.

Priory College/Holywood Primary School

2. **Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the proposed new capital builds for Priory College and Holywood Primary School. (AQT 1432/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am aware of the proposals, and they also relate to Holywood Nursery School, as it is also in the loop. They were not successful during the last round of capital announcements, but that does not mean that they will not be successful in the future.

Mr Easton: I thank the Minister for his answer. Will he explain to the House the criteria used to choose schools and in what order they are chosen for capital new builds? How does his Department process who gets and who does not?

Mr O'Dowd: I have published the criteria on the Department of Education's website, and I am more than happy to make it available to the Member. In choosing schools for capital announcement, there is a scoring mechanism against which schools are scored. No doubt, any Minister or Member would like to be able to stand up and announce more schools in capital announcements; however, I have to match it against my budget.

Since I came into office, I have been conscious of the fact that many schools have said to me, "We were promised a build in 2003, 2004 or 2005, and it never materialised". I have consciously made a decision not to announce long lists of schools that may never be built. I have announced small numbers of schools at a time to ensure that we can

move them through the process quite quickly and get them built. When I talk about quickly, I mean that it may take two or three years to get them to the stage of having diggers on the ground. So, I do not intend to go down the road of making available lengthy lists of schools that may be built some time in the never-never.

I will return to capital builds in the new year. I will examine very closely the case for the three schools that you mentioned, and they will be judged against the criteria that I have had to establish, because I do not have enough money to build all the schools that are required.

Higher Education: Cross-border Students

3. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Education how many students from the North have progressed to higher education institutions, including universities and institutes of technology, in the South this summer. (AQT 1433/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am not in a position to make those figures available to you, and I suspect that some of them may fall under DEL's remit. However, I welcome Trinity College's announcement that it is going to review its entry criteria. Its entry criteria discriminated against pupils from the North because of the way in which it scored, which made it virtually impossible for our young people to gain access to Trinity. I welcome the work of Dublin City University, which has been very proactive on the matter. I believe that you have a friend, or a connection, there. It has been very active in the matter, as have other further education institutions and universities in the South. I do not have the figures in front of me, Mr McElduff, but if I have them available, I will share them with you.

Mr McElduff: Will the Minister detail what efforts have been made in recent years to remove barriers to access for students from the North going to universities in the South and vice versa? I understand that both Minister O'Dowd and Minister Farry have been involved in this work, but what more can be done to increase that student flow?

Mr O'Dowd: It has been raised at the highest levels of government. It has been a regular topic at the North/South Ministerial Council plenary sessions and at educational sector meetings. We have shifted Trinity and others to a position where they are now openly reviewing the matter because they want to have students from the North in their schools. They see it as being very important to the mix in their universities. They have students from all over the world but very few from the North. They recognise that as nonsensical and know that they need to do something about it.

I have engaged with senior university representatives from the South and have made the case very strongly to them. I also note that, for instance, Dublin City University sponsors a conference for careers guidance teachers every year. It is making its presence very much felt at these fairs where students are given advice on their future educational pathways. I have ensured that, in any review of our qualification system, no young person will be disqualified from bringing those qualifications to any part of these islands, including the South.

Schools: Inner South Belfast

4. **Mr McGimpsey** asked the Minister of Education, in reference to the amalgamation of three primary schools

in inner south Belfast — Blythefield, Donegall Road and Fane Street — and the proposal that has been sitting on the books for some 10 years, which was blocked by the Minister's predecessor for four years and has been with the Minister for three and a half years now, when these inner city communities of Sandy Row, Donegall Pass, the Village and the Lisburn Road will see a proper investment in educational facilities for their children. (AQT 1434/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I do not accept the term "blocked" when used in reference to myself or my predecessor. The responsibility for planning the controlled estate in Belfast lies, in the first instance, with the Belfast Education and Library Board. The board has advised my Department that it is liaising with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on the matter and that the potential site in the Belfast City Hospital complex remains available for the proposed new south Belfast primary school. The board has also confirmed that it has identified two other potential sites. All three will be assessed in an economic appraisal in order to determine the preferred option.

Capital investment in a new school cannot be considered by my Department without a development proposal to amalgamate the three schools. The Belfast board will have to publish a proposal that I will then consider carefully following the statutory consultation process. However, to date, no such proposal has been published by the board.

Mr McGimpsey: For four years, the Belfast Education and Library Board sought permission to spend £16,000 on a planning feasibility study and that was blocked by the Minister's predecessor. It was not allowed and was only freed up when the Minister's predecessor left office. The Belfast Education and Library Board regards this as a high-priority capital project and asked the Minister, almost a year ago, to include it on his list of capital priorities. The Minister failed to do so in his June announcement.

I repeat the question, as he keeps telling this House how concerned he is about working-class Protestant children from disadvantaged communities: when will the children of Sandy Row, Donegall Pass, the Village area and the Lisburn Road get proper investment in their education at primary school instead of this continual prevarication and delay year after year ?

Mr O'Dowd: The Member is literally barking up the wrong tree. If he wants to bark and make speeches, he needs to make them to the Belfast Education and Library Board. How many times do I have to repeat myself? The Belfast Education and Library Board is responsible for the controlled sector in Belfast. It needs to publish a development proposal. That is the next step. That is where you need to go. Urge it to publish a development proposal, and I assure the Member —

Mr McGimpsey: You blocked it.

Mr O'Dowd: If the development proposal is approved, I will move to ensure that young people — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister will resume his seat. Members, as I told you earlier, you are not to make remarks across the Floor.

5.00 pm

Mr O'Dowd: I have lost my train of thought. If a development proposal is published and approved, I assure the Member that I will follow it up with capital investment.

School Engagement Programmes

5. **Mr McKinney** asked the Minister of Education what efforts are being made to safeguard and enhance school engagement programmes with further education colleges. (AQT 1435/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I assume that the Member is referring to the entitlement framework, which involves our colleges and funding assigned to our post-primary schools, which this year is to the value of around £4.5 million. In previous years, it was £9 million. How much, if any, I can assign to that programme will depend on the budgetary settlement for 2015-16. Our schools have been planning for the entitlement framework since, I think, 2006. They have been told constantly that it has to be a core part of their work and budget moving forward. I have facilitated additional moneys over the last number of years, but I do not know whether I will be able to facilitate additional moneys in coming years.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister. How does the Department monitor the level of service provided in area learning communities? How are examples of good practice disseminated in other learning communities?

Mr O'Dowd: When area learning communities have worked together, they have been very successful. Only recently, my permanent secretary visited them all and involved himself in detailed discussions with them on their work and how we share best practice. Best practice can be disseminated within the area learning community and throughout area learning communities by the personnel involved and through my Department, the education and library boards or CCMS — whichever is the best conduit to do that. Area learning communities are one of the success stories of our education system. They have ensured that schools have been able to engage with other educators. As simple as that may sound, our educators are very busy, and when we bring them together in a format such as the area learning communities, it allows them to think outside the box and their schools, quite literally, and share best practice across the board. I hope to be in a position to put in place a pilot scheme in which I will also involve primary schools in area learning communities.

Assembly Business

Lord Morrow: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I want to clarify an issue. During Question Time, when the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure was answering a question from one of my colleagues, she referred to the fact that maybe the DUP boycotted an event organised to recognise the success of Team Northern Ireland in the Commonwealth Games. I make it very clear that the DUP was not present because the former First Minister's funeral was held yesterday. All DUP offices across the Province were closed as a mark of respect, and DUP MLAs made a decision not to attend any public events on the day.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I thank Lord Morrow for his contribution. He has made himself perfectly clear. I invite the House to take its ease for a minute while we change the top Table.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Executive Committee Business

Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill: Consideration Stage

Schedule 2 (Amendments)

Debate resumed.

Mr Deputy Speaker: We now come to the second group of amendments for debate. With amendment No 14, it will be convenient to debate amendment Nos 15 to 18 and 20 to 22.

Amendment No 21 is consequential to amendment No 20. Amendment No 22 is consequential to amendment No 18.

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I beg to move amendment No 14: In page 9, line 12, leave out "the first".

The following amendments stood on the Marshalled List:

No 15: In page 9, line 15, leave out "the first".— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

No 16: In page 9, line 18, leave out "the first".— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

No 17: In page 9, line 21, leave out "the first".— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

No 18: In page 12, line 19, leave out paragraph 5 and insert

*"5. In section 46(1) for paragraph (hb) substitute —
'(hb) the Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland,'—
[Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]*

No 20: In page 19, leave out lines 16 to 19 and insert

"and after '20(2)(b) or (d),' insert '20A,,'— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

No 21: In page 21, line 3, at end insert

*"The Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (c. 24)
9A. In section 84 for subsection (4) substitute —
'(4) In Article 46(5) after "20A," insert "27A,,"— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]*

No 22: In schedule 3, page 21, leave out lines 18 and 19.— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

Mr Ford: This group relates to the Assembly's control mechanism for the making of statutory rules under the new rule-making powers in schedule 2 to the Bill, and there are two technical amendments to explicitly include the proposed Legal Services Agency within the ambit of Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI).

I will turn first to the amendments to schedule 2. During the Justice Committee's scrutiny of the Bill, the Examiner of Statutory Rules queried why four rule-making powers in the Bill should be subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure on first exercise and negative resolution thereafter.

The rule-making powers referred to relate to the assignment of solicitor and counsel; the establishment of a register of solicitors and counsel eligible to be assigned; the restriction of disclosure of information, which all

relate to representation provided in criminal cases under the Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (Northern Ireland) Order 1981; and the setting-up of appeals panels to deal with appeals regarding applications for civil legal services under the Access to Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2003. The Examiner of Statutory Rules advised that those were significant powers in their own right and that there should be no change from the position set out in the 2003 order; namely, that those pieces of secondary legislation that are subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure should be subject to that procedure on the first and subsequent exercises of the power.

Mindful of the respective roles of the Committee and the Assembly in the management of the Assembly's full secondary legislative programme, I agreed to accept the advice of the Examiner of Statutory Rules if the Committee was content. The Committee noted the position at its informal clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill and subsequently confirmed, in its report on the Bill, that it supported the Examiner's advice. In the light of the Examiner's advice and the Committee's approval, I would welcome Members' support for the amendments.

I will now turn to amendment Nos 21 and 22. Section 46(1) of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2002, which sets out the organisations that are subject to inspection by Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland, includes powers to inspect the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission. As introduced, the Bill provided simply for the repeal of section 46(1)(hb), reflecting the dissolution of the commission. On that basis, the new agency would automatically have come within the ambit of CJINI, which has power to inspect the Department of Justice in so far as it is concerned with the operation of the criminal courts. However, on further consideration, I concluded that it is preferable to amend the relevant provision; namely, section 46(1)(hb) of the 2002 Act, so as to substitute the Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland in place of the current reference to the Legal Services Commission. That would give CJINI an express power to inspect the new agency. The role played by CJINI in inspecting criminal justice agencies is an important one.

Agreeing to amendment Nos 14 to 18 and 20 will ensure that all rules made under the new article 36A, 36B, 38A and 20A provisions will be subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure on the first and subsequent exercises of the power. Agreeing to amendment Nos 21 and 22 will put it beyond doubt that the new agency will benefit from CJINI's expertise.

I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr Givan (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): I welcome amendment Nos 14, 15, 16, 17, 20 and 21, which were brought forward by the Minister. As he outlined, he brought them forward following a decision by the Committee that amendments to the delegated powers contained in the Bill to strengthen them are necessary in two specific areas following advice provided by the Assembly's Examiner of Statutory Rules.

The provision in schedule 2 for the framework for the constitution and procedure of appeal panels, which will decide appeals on individual applications for civil legal services, is clearly significant. Given that the Bill provides for a regulation-making power in that respect, rather than placing some of the key provisions in the Bill, the

Committee is of the view that the subordinate legislation should be subject to the draft affirmative resolution procedure on the first and subsequent exercise of the powers rather than on the first occasion, with subsequent regulations subject to the negative resolution procedure as currently provided for in the Bill.

The Department outlined that the regulations would be very detailed and would include provisions relating to operational matters, and indicated that the current provisions would give the Assembly a say in the initial setting up of the appeals panel, but after that would not require minor or technical amendments to be subject to debate. However, the Committee is firmly of the view that any subordinate legislation that provides for the constitution and procedures of the appeals panel should be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure, given that the appeals mechanism is one of the key safeguards, as highlighted in the earlier debate.

The second area relates to the rules in respect of the assignment of solicitor and counsel where a criminal aid certificate has been granted. Again, those are significant powers in themselves and are also intended to replicate provisions in the 2003 order. That order recognises their significance by making them subject to the draft affirmative procedure on first and subsequent occasions, rather than on the first occasion, and with subsequent regulations subject to the negative resolution procedure, as currently provided for in the Bill. The Committee sees no reason why the level of Assembly control should be changed from that envisaged in the 2003 order given the significance of the powers.

The Committee had intended to bring forward those amendments. However, in light of our decision, the Department advised that it would instruct legislative counsel to draft the necessary amendments, which the Minister brought forward today and which the Committee fully supports.

This is again a demonstration to the House of how, when a Committee decides to do something, the Department responds positively. That is to be welcomed. If the Department had not responded positively, the Committee would probably have had to do it itself, so maybe the Minister did not have a choice on this occasion but to follow the will of the Committee. It is an example of how Assembly scrutiny can, in my view, enhance the outworkings of the legislative process and get a Bill that is more robust and suitable to the Members of the House.

Mr A Maginness: I just want to agree with the Chair of the Committee. I think he was slightly ungracious towards the Minister. I am sure that, on foot of the comments made by the Examiner of Statutory Rules, the Minister would have taken his own initiative and introduced the amendments. The amendments are to be welcomed. They mean that the Assembly has a further input into the drafting and the legislation in relation to the rules. That is to be welcomed.

The panels are a very important mechanism. I will just take this opportunity to pay tribute to those who have taken part in the appeals committee for the legal aid fund over the years. They performed their work very well and very responsibly, in my opinion, and did so in a very dedicated, professional fashion.

I know that this is not strictly *ad rem*, but, nonetheless, I hope that membership of the panels will be made up

primarily, if not exclusively, of lawyers. I know that the Minister conceded that lawyers should chair the panels, but it is my view that they know what they are doing in relation to difficult and complex legal issues and are in the best position to make a judgement. I hope that lawyers will at least be in the majority — at least two out of the three, including the chair.

In relation to regulations in the appointment of counsel, solicitors and so forth; again, that is an important function and the Assembly will have an input to that. I hope that we will have a further discussion and consultation with the relevant stakeholders in relation to that important issue. It has to be dealt with in a manner that is reasonable and practical to the legal profession.

I will leave it there. I welcome and support the Minister's amendments.

5.15 pm

Mr Ford: After such a lengthy debate, I shall not take long to respond to the House. Sadly, we did not have the Elliott fireworks this afternoon that we had earlier in the day, but it is always a pleasure to find that most of what we are doing can get agreement through the detailed work that is done during the Committee Stage and Consideration Stage. I do not need to repeat the points that I made earlier. I believe that, by listening to what was said by the Examiner of Statutory Rules, we have improved the functioning of the Bill to ensure that the Assembly will have full scrutiny powers.

Mr Maginness said that the Committee Chair was a little ungracious. Of course, Members of this House being a little ungracious is always preferable to those Members of the House who are always completely ungracious. I am grateful for that.

The Examiner made a good case for going through full affirmative procedure on all aspects when rules might be made. I am very happy with that. Similarly, I think that it is entirely appropriate that, while CJINI would have had powers over the agency, it is now explicit in the Bill.

In winding up, I want to remind Mr Maginness that, while it is agreed that any panel will be chaired by a lawyer, that does not exclude lawyers applying for the other places. There is no doubt that, given the abilities and knowledge that lawyers would bring to such a public appointment process, they may feature well in that. However, they will not be specifically required by statute to have other positions beyond that of the chair.

I thank all of those who have contributed to the second debate and to the first debate earlier today. I extend genuine thanks to the Examiner of Statutory Rules, Committee members and staff and my officials for the engagement that they had, the cooperation that was shown and, indeed, the probing that we had from Tom Elliott earlier, all of which, I believe, has contributed to ensuring that what was already good legislation is now better. As the Chair said, that is exactly the function that should be performed by the Assembly at this Stage. I commend my amendments to the House. Amendment No 14 made: In schedule 2, page 9, line 12, leave out "the first".— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

Amendment No 15 made: In schedule 2, page 9, line 15, leave out "the first".— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

Amendment No 16 made: In schedule 2, page 9, line 18, leave out “the first”.— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

Amendment No 17 made: In schedule 2, page 9, line 21, leave out “the first”.— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

Amendment No 18 made: In schedule 2, page 12, line 19, leave out paragraph 5 and insert -

“5. In section 46(1) for paragraph (hb) substitute—
(hb) the Legal Services Agency Northern Ireland.”—
[Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

Mr Deputy Speaker: I will not call amendment No 19 as it is consequential to amendment No 2, which has not been made. Amendment No 20 made: In page 19, leave out lines 16 to 19 and insert

“and after “20(2)(b) or (d),” insert “20A, “;”.— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

Mr Deputy Speaker: Amendment No 21 has already been debated and is consequential to amendment No 20. Amendment No 21 made: In page 21, line 3, at end insert

“The Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (c. 24)
9A. In section 84 for subsection (4) substitute —
(4) In Article 46(5) after “20A,” insert “27A,.”.— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

Schedule 2, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 3 (Repeals)

Mr Deputy Speaker: Amendment No 22 has already been debated and is consequential to amendment No 18. Amendment No 22 made: In page 21, leave out lines 18 and 19.— [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

Schedule 3, as amended, agreed to.

Long title agreed to.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That concludes the Consideration Stage of the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill. The Bill stands referred to the Speaker.

I ask Members to take their ease for a few moments.

(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker
[Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair)

Private Members' Business

Altnagelvin Hospital

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes in which to propose the motion and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Mr P Ramsey: I beg to move

That this Assembly recognises the importance of Altnagelvin Hospital in delivering excellent health care in the north-west of Ireland; praises the professionalism and commitment of staff working throughout the Western Health and Social Care Trust; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to ensure that the radiotherapy unit and cardiac centre at Altnagelvin Hospital are progressed without delay resulting in the delivery of critical services to the population of the north-west.

Altnagelvin Hospital serves the population of the north-west of Ireland with vital and high-quality health care. In 2010, the present Minister announced that a much-needed radiotherapy unit would be completed and opened by mid-2016. The Minister is not in the Chamber, but I am sure that he will be. It was most welcome news that the Minister, after a few weeks in office, approved the radiotherapy unit — the Minister enters the room. Yet, in a recent letter to the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Minister announced a potential six-month delay due to a budget shortfall. Delays of that kind do and will put lives at risk and could have a serious detrimental effect on the quality of care that staff are in a position to provide. The Minister of Health must ensure that that type of delay never happens and that such critical and vital services are never threatened with such delays.

I would like to emphasise our praise for the admirable level of professionalism and dedication that is displayed by the staff in the Western Health and Social Care Trust. This weekend, for example, they met their target of a four-hour turnover for every patient who was admitted to accident and emergency. It is important that we key off the debate on a very positive and constructive note. The commitment and hard work of staff saved the life of a local taxi driver, Christie O'Donnell, who suffered a heart attack. The quick action of the staff in Altnagelvin ensured that Mr O'Donnell was seen to and placed in a bed in the hospital's coronary care unit within one hour. To be able to continue to provide that exemplary model of care, Altnagelvin has to have the necessary funding in coronary care. Its high-quality health care cannot continue in the face and the threats of cuts and delays. Whilst meeting the challenging targets is certainly not a rare occurrence in the trust, credit is due for the tremendous effort by medical and non-medical staff that made that particular incident over the weekend possible.

Again, the Western Trust is leading the way in providing outstanding care and the delivery of ambitious initiatives, and I have no doubt that the newly opened primary coronary intervention (PCI) unit at Altnagelvin will provide

the same high standards of care and professionalism. However, in order to maximise the quality of service that that new unit can deliver, I urge the Minister — I am delighted that he is in his place — to do his utmost to implement the next phase of that project. It really is crucial.

This is 24-hour access to a safe and high-quality cardiac catheterisation laboratory, which will service people and patients seven days a week. With almost 40% of hospitalised heart attack patients suffering from STEMI, the most serious kind of cardiac attack, the PCI unit in Altnagelvin will complement the unit in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. So I have to say that this is not an issue of bolstering what we have in Derry. It is a facility and provision for Northern Ireland and the cross-border regions. It is envisaged that the Belfast unit will serve 75% of patients and will be supported by Altnagelvin, which will handle the remaining 25%.

Yet disturbing uncertainty surrounds the radiotherapy unit, which is an enormous worry for staff. In a meeting of Derry City Council's regional services committee on 2 September, the chief executive of the Western Trust, Elaine Way, welcomed the fact that the infrastructure will not be affected by budget cuts, yet she clearly expressed concern about the very real possibility that the funds would not be available to recruit and train the necessary staff. As the capital funds for the radiotherapy unit and a new north wing have been agreed, it is imperative that the revenue funds needed to bring the capacity of staffing to that new unit are well financed.

In the face of Northern Ireland running out of radiotherapy capacity, the Minister's announcement that the unit faces delay is extremely worrying. It is expected that, as soon as 2015, radiotherapy demand in Northern Ireland will exceed capacity. The radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin needs to play a critical and crucial role in tackling that.

5.30 pm

Northern Ireland radiotherapy capacity will reach "saturation point" if the new radiotherapy unit is not in operation by the year 2016.

I want to focus on some issues to ensure that the Minister gets the point of why the SDLP felt it appropriate to prioritise this motion.

"A reduction in funding of £1.1 million would be taken from project's revenue funding in 2014/15 financial year".

That would impact on the trust's plans to:

"advance recruitment of key staffing disciplines whose appointments are critical for service planning. Any proposal to freeze the revenue funding allocation until the end of the current financial year would delay the appointment of at least 20 key personnel".

That includes clinical and medical staff.

"The consequences would be significant for the vast majority of these hard-to-fill posts and there is a real risk",

Minister,

"that potential candidates would seek posts elsewhere instead."

This morning, I saw a report in 'Radiotherapy News', a UK-based magazine, that gives details of the Minister's announcement on the cuts that will delay the cancer unit at Altnagelvin. At the best of times, it is difficult to attract, encourage and motivate staff to come to the north-west. However, when highly qualified potential candidates see that, it will certainly put them off. I am saying, Minister, that we need confidence and we need to acknowledge that, for Altnagelvin and the trust to encourage and attract the best possible candidates, this type of news is not good. The radiotherapy project team has endeavoured to plan for the recruitment of staff only at the key time periods required, and we therefore argue and suggest that any further delays will clearly impact on the operational date of the opening of this unit.

I acknowledge that, literally within days of the Minister coming into office, he overturned a prior decision and took the brave decision to proceed with this unit, which was welcomed not just by those in the north-west but across Northern Ireland. It is for the capacity of Northern Ireland. This is not a wee project in Derry, and it is not a whinge from the Derry ones; it is a project and a unit that will provide care and treatment for half of the Northern Trust, the entirety of the north-west and all of Donegal and further afield. So, I do not want to hear any sniping. I am sure that I will not, under the circumstances.

"Should recruitment be delayed, any proposal to recruit larger teams of staff during 2015/16 would be very challenging for the Northern Ireland Cancer Centre to provide capacity to support the disciplines of medicine, therapeutic radiography and medical physics."

So, I think that it is an eye-opener for many of us who have been working on this project. We have all been working on it. The parliamentary team representing Foyle has been very diligent, with a unity of purpose, in trying to ensure that we are getting the importance of this message through and giving hope to so many people in our communities. There is nobody in the Chamber, including me, who does not have family members who have cancer. Those family members are dependent on the hope and desire that they are going to have treatment closer to home rather than facing the delays involved in having to come to spend a few days in Belfast, or in many cases weeks at a time, to get a 10-minute treatment during the day. That is what is happening at the present time.

Minister, I appeal directly to you to carry out your function to enable Altnagelvin and the trust to fulfil their obligation to provide a radiotherapy centre for people in Northern Ireland and, in a contract with the Irish Government, for those suffering from cancer in Donegal. Minister, I think that you have to examine and scrutinise forensically your other finances in the Health Department to ensure that crucial, vital, important services, such as radiotherapy and cardiac services, are protected.

I think that we have to be clear that we are demanding this. We are not saying that this is a need; we are saying that this must happen. We cannot under any circumstances allow a delay in the opening of the radiotherapy unit in Altnagelvin.

Mr Wells: I suspect that this will be one of many similar debates that we will be holding during this financial year. In his letters to the Health Committee in April and August, the Minister made it very clear that he cannot deliver the

health service that we all want within the present budget. He has outlined commitments of £160 million, which were put to the Executive, and he secured £20 million. So, we are at least £140 million short of where we want to be in funding.

The Minister and the Department have been very committed to the Western Trust. In the Minister's time, the Western Trust has had a brand new acute hospital in Enniskillen, for instance; we have the start of a new hospital for Omagh; and, of course, there has been the £66 million capital commitment to the radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin. So, I do not think that the Western Trust representatives here this afternoon can complain about a lack of commitment to their area. Indeed, many of us in other parts of Northern Ireland feel somewhat envious of the new capital build in that trust area. The capital for the new radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin is, of course, committed. However, the problem is that there are considerable costs in the manning of the unit — and I use “manning” in the widest possible term, because I am sure that some of the staff will be ladies. That is going to be very challenging, and we have to accept that it will cause great difficulties.

The Minister finds himself in a very difficult position. No one in the Chamber has contested the fact that he needs the extra £160 million. Everyone accepts that we need extra money, but so much of the budget is tied up in salaries, wages, national insurance and pensions, and in contracts — if he tried to get out of those, we would be straight into court — that the actual amount of money available to make the cuts is relatively small as an overall part of the budget. Therefore the Minister has to find options that may not be the most desirable but which are the most deliverable. Unfortunately, that means areas of expenditure where we are not committed legally to deliver, and Altnagelvin —

Mr Beggs: Will the Member give way?

Mr Wells: Certainly.

Mr Beggs: Does the Member accept that the fact that such cuts have had to be implemented at the last minute shows a degree of mismanagement of the Budget by the Northern Ireland Executive?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Wells: I accept entirely that, had the Executive in their wisdom decided to give the Minister the money that everybody accepts he needs, we would not be in this position. As you know, however, a lot of horse trading went on, and many people went into denial and did not give the money that was required. Having made that decision, we will have to live with the consequences. The Minister is not going to hijack or ambush Members; he is going to say it as it absolutely is and tell all 108 MLAs what the implications are for their area if we do not provide adequate funding for health. That is the open and honest way of doing it rather than letting us drift through the financial year and suddenly finding that we have not sufficient money and that services start to deteriorate.

I also accept that the primary percutaneous coronary intervention (pPCI) unit is an excellent facility, but similar problems arise with it. It is unfortunate that both facilities are based in Londonderry; I can understand the

concerns of the representatives for that area. Remember, however, that this is a Minister who has already delivered £490 million of savings in his three years in office. That is an incredible achievement and, of course, is more than the annual budget of three of our Departments put together. That has been achieved, and there is a further commitment of £170 million for the present financial year. That £170 million is going to be extremely demanding of the five health trusts, plus, of course, the Ambulance Service.

Let us not underestimate for one minute how hard the trusts are working to achieve that. Five hundred and sixty million pounds' worth of savings have been achieved. We will find that the cumulative effect of this will have a very difficult and deleterious effect on health, and we have not even considered the issue of welfare reform. People say that welfare reform is not related to this. This year, we are handing back £87 million to the Exchequer in London. If that £87 million were passed over to the Health Department in the monitoring round, it would go a very, very long way to deal with this issue, including Altnagelvin. We have to look forward and think that things are going to get much more difficult if we do not resolve this issue.

We all hope and pray that we will be able to find the money to deal with these issues. The Altnagelvin radiotherapy unit is an excellent unit, and we should give it full support. The honourable Member for Foyle said that, several weeks after he came into post, the Minister committed himself to reversing Mr McGimpsey's decision. He did not; he did it on his first day in office.

He went up to Altnagelvin that day and reversed the decision, so that is the Department's level of commitment to Londonderry. I think that we are being a little bit naive in criticising him for that.

This is a difficult issue. As an Assembly, the best thing that we can do is not to pick off individual projects that we are concerned about but to lobby together for adequate resources to be given to health so that Mr Poots and the Department can deliver an adequate service.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. I thank those who tabled the motion and welcome the opportunity to speak in this important debate. The motion quite rightly recognises the importance and status of Altnagelvin and its regional capacity to deliver excellent health care in the north-west. I fully endorse those comments. The motion calls on the Health Minister to ensure that the radiotherapy unit and the cardiac centre at Altnagelvin proceed as planned. As someone who is familiar with the campaign for the radiotherapy unit, as many others in the Chamber are, I acknowledge the role played by individuals and groups, particularly the local Pink Ladies group, in making a very strong case not only for Derry but for the wider north-west region.

It is clear that, on that issue, an outcome was agreed and a consensus was reached that the people of the north-west deserve, which will ensure that there is a fully functional radiotherapy unit that will serve the needs not only of the Western Trust area but of Donegal. It is correct and apt to point out that cancer remains a leading cause of death across the island, and it does not respect class, creed, gender or borders. In some ways, the radiotherapy unit has set a model of best practice on the island in looking at how we deliver health across the island. Increasingly, we are seeing this mindset in the delivery of health care across

the island. We see it with the current debate on children's heart services. We see it in the current discussions on an air ambulance, and, hopefully, we will see it when we reflect on the need for an all-Ireland addiction strategy.

As someone who took part in the launch of the construction of the radiotherapy unit during the summer, I can assure the House that the unit is being built, the equipment has been bought, and it will become operational. However, as some Members pointed out, it is not useful to hold up a potential £1.1 million cut across the radiotherapy unit. That creates negative commentary and would or could impact on recruitment. I am sure that the public, when they reflect on this debate, will see how the health budget is being spent to date, with £34 million going to consultants for bonuses and £60 million going to the independent sector annually for elective care, and struggle with the fact that we cannot find £1.1 million for a vital project that is already on stream.

On 30 September last year, the Minister announced the roll-out of the regional cardiac service for heart attack patients. As Mr Ramsey said, only on Friday, we heard the story of a local person, Christie O'Donnell, who felt unwell and drove to Altnagelvin to be informed that he was having a heart attack and would undergo surgery within an hour. I acknowledge the front line staff and others who made that happen, because we do not often hear good stories about the service.

5.45 pm

So, the roll-out of the cardiac scheme is good news for patients suffering the most severe form of heart attack. The next phase was due to go ahead this month. Anything less than 24/7 would mean a secondary service for the north-west region and seriously undermine delivery there. I support the motion and urge the Minister to proceed as planned with those two vital services for the north-west.

Mrs Dobson: I also welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. It is a case of *déjà vu* all over again.

From the outset, I want to make my party's position absolutely clear. We want to see the Altnagelvin radiotherapy unit and the cardiac centre open as soon as possible. Indeed, it was Michael McGimpsey who backed the project for a radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin from the very start and reiterated his backing on 23 March 2011, when he spelt out to the previous Assembly that there simply was not enough money for it in the DUP/Sinn Féin Budget. He was very clear that the Budget passed by the Assembly, despite warnings from him and his most senior departmental officials, seriously —

Mr Campbell: Will the Member give way?

Mrs Dobson: No, I want to make my points. He was clear that the Budget seriously undermined the ability to deliver it, especially because of the absence of revenue funding. At the time, some political opponents said that it was a heartless decision. Nevertheless, the DUP and Sinn Féin claimed that the project would go ahead as proposed. That was in 2011, and look where we are today. In fact, at the time, the First Minister said:

"We are going to proceed with the Altnagelvin extension for cancer care and that's the end of the matter."

Once again, history has proven the First Minister wrong. It was not the end of the matter, as today's debate proves.

To be fair to the Health Minister, however, by 2016, he may well have a very nice new building; he will just not have staff with the required training to run it. When my party warned of that scenario in 2011, it was lambasted by, among others, the deputy First Minister, who described the warning as:

"shameful, highly political and sectarian".

He went on to say:

"If you can be sure about anything in life, you can be sure that this radiotherapy centre will be built."

How true — it has been built, but without the full funding behind it and with no staff to operate it. You have to ask who was being political.

The cardiac centre has, regrettably, also been caught up in the Budget fallout. As has already been said, the 24-hour emergency PCI service was proposed in 'Transforming Your Care', but, like so much else in the document, it is losing its focus, and time frames are slipping.

Altnagelvin was to become Northern Ireland's second primary PCI centre. I hope that that can still be achieved, sooner rather than later. Unfortunately, until then, patients outside the Belfast service's catchment area will remain disadvantaged.

The most frustrating thing about the current situation is that it was entirely avoidable. The Minister left it so late to acknowledge the problem that it is probably too late to do anything about it without causing immense hurt elsewhere. Any Minister, alongside senior officials with responsibility for budgets and expenditure, should have been able to see that the figures simply did not add up. Nevertheless, rather than asking for extra support in the summer of 2011, in 2012 or even in 2013, he left it until now. Speaking out earlier would have made it much easier to fill the £160 million gap in his budget over a number of years, rather than in less than one year. The Minister is in the position of making the best of an incredibly bad situation. The people of the north-west deserve better.

Minister, although you refuse to acknowledge it, this is a problem that was created in 2011. I am glad that you have asked for help now, although you should have done it long ago.

My party is determined, however, to work cooperatively with you in order to ensure that public safety is not further compromised and that the radiotherapy and cardiac units are progressed as quickly as possible. Therefore, I support the motion.

Mr McCarthy: I welcome the debate and I am happy to support the motion. These investments in the north-west are matters of huge importance but have always been marginal in the budgetary commitments. The project was in major jeopardy at the end of the last Assembly mandate, as has been mentioned already. In fact, as I understand it, the project had been withdrawn at that time. Indeed, at the time, the local people and their representatives were shocked and dismayed, despite the fact that the then Derry health chief said that these developments and the operation of the satellite radiotherapy unit at the Altnagelvin site were vital.

At that time, there was cross-party support in the Health Committee for the service, which also had the support of the Dublin Government. Thankfully, after the 2011 election, promises were given to build these new facilities but once again, in the context of the massive Budget uncertainty, this is back in question as the Minister has indicated that development of projects such as the Altnagelvin radiotherapy centre and cardiac centre, along with others, may have to be delayed in the short term or even longer term.

Although the Health Committee, the Assembly and others will want to scrutinise what the Minister is saying in general about the overall health budget and the potential or otherwise for reform, today provides an opportunity for us to restate our commitment to these investments in the north-west. There is a very strong logic to this; we are all too familiar with the scourge of cancer on our society and the very real difference that early diagnosis and effective treatment can make to prospects of recovery and full life expectancy. Moreover, the siting of such facilities at Altnagelvin Hospital is strategic in nature. In particular, the radiotherapy unit holds out the prospect of effectively servicing a wide catchment area that significantly spans the border counties. We have also taken advantage of support from the Dublin Government.

Many of us have regularly stressed the opportunities for a more efficient use of resources through the shared delivery of services on a North/South basis, and this is surely a golden opportunity for that. I am, however, disappointed that these items have appeared on the Minister's proposals for so-called savings. Many of the proposals he has set out are, in fact, false economies; short-term measures or deferred expenditure will simply delay opportunities to do things better.

It is difficult to have this debate in isolation from the wider financial situation facing the Health Department and the Executive as a whole. First, there are major questions to be asked about how the Department ended up in this situation. This pressure has clearly been building up over several years and the fact that a mess has arisen now predates the crisis in welfare reform as, no doubt, we will hear. Secondly, what is presented by the Health Minister needs to be properly scrutinised. Although problems have been building in the health service over time, it is difficult to understand how things can tip into crisis on the basis of a funding gap.

The failure of the Executive and the Assembly to agree the way forward on welfare reform means that money has to be handed back to Westminster that could otherwise have been invested in health. This is a shameful, disgraceful and unforgivable situation; no one in this House supports the welfare cuts. I desperately appeal to both blocs in the Executive to come together and agree a way forward for the benefit of all our constituents to ensure that no funding has to be handed back to Westminster.

Let us remind ourselves of all those in our society who are crying out for cancer drugs, our multiple sclerosis, ME and muscular dystrophy patients and our elderly dependants. Let us remind ourselves of the shortages in our A&E departments and our community meals schemes, all of which are at risk. The list goes on. It simply would be a dereliction of MLAs' duties — in fact, totally obscene — if we have to return moneys to Westminster coffers when we know the need is desperate at home.

Alliance is open to considering additional resources for health and social services, but that has to come in the context of a proper strategic review of expenditure across the board by the Executive.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr McCarthy: I hope that the Minister will give assurances today that these will be provided.

Mr G Robinson: I welcome the opportunity to compliment the management and staff of the Western Health and Social Care Trust at Altnagelvin Hospital. I would especially like to thank the chief executive and her senior team and staff for all their assistance in the provision of essential health services over the years.

I can truthfully say that when I had cardiac problems a few years ago, I was treated with great dignity, dedication and professionalism by all health care staff at Altnagelvin Hospital. Therefore, as someone who deeply appreciates their professionalism and diligent work, a thank you for the critical work that they carry out is well deserved from me personally, my family members, and indeed the entire population of the north-west and further afield.

During briefings with the Western Health and Social Care Trust, the important role that it has played and will play for those of us in the north-west and western areas of Northern Ireland was very apparent, despite the current budget pressures, which the trust has managed skilfully. Indeed, contracts have been signed for the construction of the much-needed radiotherapy unit.

Mr Campbell: I thank the Member for giving way. He talks about the resources that have been made available for the radiotherapy unit. He spoke earlier about the truth. Would he agree with me that the truth is unlike what we heard from Mrs Dobson a few moments ago, when she indicated that the previous Minister did not have the resources to commence work on the radiotherapy unit? The present Minister managed to get those resources in his first week in office, and they were already there when the previous Minister was there. If we are talking about truth, people should stand up, put their hands up in the air and say that they were guilty of not proceeding with the unit when they had the opportunity to do so.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Members should keep interventions short. The Member has an extra minute.

Mr G Robinson: I fully agree with my colleague's assertions. The radiotherapy and cardiac units are essential and very welcome. They will also relieve pressures on the services being delivered in Belfast and, importantly, reduce journey times for patients and relatives alike. Those are points that patients and relatives will greatly benefit from and appreciate. Patients from the glens of Antrim to Enniskillen will benefit greatly from the new development and service provision at Altnagelvin.

There is no doubt that cancer is widespread throughout our population. Therefore, it is essential that, when finances permit, the best treatments are delivered by the health trusts for the benefit of the population. The Altnagelvin centres for radiotherapy and cardiology will provide exactly that.

The Minister last September outlined the benefits of a PCI service for patients. This enables lifesaving treatment such as stents to be deployed even if the patient is having

a heart attack. I believe those to be value-for-money procedures that have an immediate and positive benefit for patients.

I fully appreciate that the Minister is under severe budgetary pressures not of his own making. We cannot deny that. I also appreciate the great need for those services to be provided in the west and north-west of Northern Ireland. However, I fear there may be a delay in the timetable we would all want due to the unwillingness of some Members of this Chamber, i.e. Sinn Féin and the SDLP, to agree the implementation of welfare reform. Where is the benefit to society of denying much-needed medical services? Is it proper that they deny society improvements in cancer and cardiac care? Perhaps they can tell us how the Minister will find the £140 million shortfall that has been caused.

Urgent progression of the radiotherapy and cardiac units is essential, but I have also highlighted the problems of refusing to face our Budget crisis, which is damaging the patients who need life-saving treatment.

When those parties responsible for the Budget cuts realise the consequences that their actions are having in this community, the Minister will be able to progress these critical health projects with the speed the motion calls for.

6.00 pm

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Príomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Beidh mé ag labhairt i bhfabhar an rúin seo. I support the motion. Given the tone and the way it has been presented, most speakers have accepted the crucial importance of Altnagelvin hospital to Derry and the greater north-west region. People have rightly praised the staff and the dedicated professionals who staff that hospital and other aspects of the health service, not just in the north-west but across the North. That is welcome. Christie O'Donnell must be the most recognised taxi man in Derry because of his situation and how it was remedied.

Mr Campbell: The Member said "most of the speakers" have recognised the importance of the project. I have not heard anyone say that they did not recognise that. I got the distinct impression that there was unanimity on the project.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McCartney: I did not say that to challenge anyone. Some Members spoke about particular aspects of the debate and did not centre on Altnagelvin. I am not saying that anyone is questioning the importance of Altnagelvin hospital if that is the point that the Member is trying to make.

I made the point about Christie O'Donnell, and we should wish him well. The Speaker will know the benefits of Altnagelvin hospital because that is where he is currently housed, and I am sure that he is getting the best of treatment.

I do not think that any of us would argue, particularly in terms of health and the health budget, that there are not always pressures and strains on the system. That is where good management, good leadership and good direction can come in by sometimes bringing efficiencies into the system and alleviating some of the issues that we are addressing.

Too often, and this can be a comfortable way of doing things, the situation is labelled as a "crisis". "Crisis" is the first word that comes to people's lips, which creates a reaction in itself and sometimes we lose sight of the debate.

Mr Wells: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCartney: I have limited time and have already given way.

That is what we have to watch, because even in the debate on this issue we have heard people in the DUP talk about "the aura of a crisis". So, we have to define the problem.

Jo-Anne Dobson gave a particular commentary about the radiotherapy unit in Derry, which was challenged by Gregory Campbell. In my opinion, Michael McGimpsey made a mistake. He may have had particular pressures and he may have had particular concerns about his budget and how it was being deployed, but he picked on something because he felt it was the most vulnerable and would get the most reaction. However, he got the wrong reaction. There was total unanimity, particularly in the north-west and Derry. It featured greatly in the election campaign, and all the people who stood for election in the area were in favour of the radiotherapy unit. Indeed, the First Minister and the deputy First Minister publicly stated that, if they got the mandate, one of the first things that they would do would be to ensure that the decision was reversed. Credit to the Minister, he delivered on that promise.

However, therein lies the problem for the Minister. The radiotherapy unit is on schedule, it is near completion, the equipment has been ordered and recruitment is going to take place. It is not tenable to have a scenario where the unit is built and not staffed. To use it as one of the areas of contention in the particular stresses and strains that you find your Department under — and you are entitled to fight your corner — was not proper. You will come to realise, like Michael McGimpsey, that it was a mistake to use the radiotherapy unit in that way.

Maeve McLaughlin has said on a number of occasions in the Assembly and in the local media that we have not heard any interrogation of the fact that £32 million in bonuses is being paid to consultants. Many, many people out there are asking, "Why is it that, when it comes to this type of debate, it is automatically the radiotherapy unit, or the cardiac unit, or hips or all the good things that the health service does, but we never ever seem to talk about the fact that £32 million is paid out in bonuses? Why not seek some way to address that as we go forward?"

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Will the Member give way?

Mr McCartney: Yes, sure.

Mr Poots: If the Member were looking to attract to this radiotherapy centre people who are currently on bonuses, would he not pay them that and not have those doctors come? I am proud that, in Northern Ireland, we have some of the best doctors in the world. However, you will only get the best by paying the best. That is what we are doing. If you do not want the best doctors in the world, that is a matter for Sinn Féin. I want the best.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost finished.

Mr McCartney: I have no issue with recruiting the best. However, when people hear about £32 million bonuses on top of good wages, that is where the issue is, and perhaps you have to explain that. The run to microphones to close things down rather than to say "I am going to tackle other inefficiencies" — that is the point I am making, and that is the point that has to be taken up. Pat Ramsey has shown you the Journal. It may be unintended —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr McCartney: — but your comments may have put doubts into people's minds about whether a post in Altnagelvin is a good post to apply for. I think that that is the mistake that you have made.

Mr Buchanan: I rise to briefly add my voice to the debate this evening. I agree with the sentiments of the motion and acknowledge the importance of Altnagelvin Hospital in the delivery of excellent healthcare services in the north-west region. I also want to praise the professionalism and commitment of staff to delivering that service throughout the Western Health and Social Care Trust area.

I find it ironic that a member of the party opposite is questioning the payments and so forth that are given to professional people who are delivering an excellent service for people throughout Northern Ireland and not only in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area. When we have occasion to visit any of the hospitals in the trust area — should it be the new acute hospital in Enniskillen, Omagh, Altnagelvin or any of the other healthcare provisions — we see at first hand that professionalism and commitment being demonstrated. When we talk to patients, their testimonies bear out the excellent service that they are receiving.

I take this opportunity to again lobby the Minister and the Department for the progression of the radiotherapy unit and cardiac centre and having it delivered and up and running with the minimum delay. The delivery of this service is critical to the population of the Western Health and Social Care Trust area and beyond. No doubt, when this building is complete, it will be one of the most important healthcare facilities for people living with cancer in the western area. When we consider the number of people living with cancer in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area, and the many victims and the families who have had a loved one taken from them by cancer, we can see the importance of having that professional help and care close to hand and the comfort and confidence that it brings in times of great need.

Given that existing services in Belfast are expected to be full by 2015, it is essential that work at Altnagelvin continues and that this service is delivered with the minimum delay. However, I have to say that I am conscious of the financial pressures that the Minister and his Department are under and the tight financial constraints that he is facing. I want to commend him on how he has managed, and is managing, his budget. The difference between Minister Poots and the previous Minister is that Minister Poots has delivered whereas, in a lot of areas, Minister McGimpsey failed to bring forward the finance and deliver.

Mr Wells: Will the Member give way?

Mr Buchanan: I will.

Mr Wells: Does the Member accept that, although Mr McCartney talked about scaremongering, the Minister never raised an issue of funding in the first three years of his tenure? It was challenging, but he was able to deliver. It is only more recently that things have become more difficult. There has not been a running to the Minister of Finance until recently. Four years ago, Mr McGimpsey was constantly whingeing about a lack of money when, in fact, there was at least £490 million of savings still to be made.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member will have an extra minute.

Mr Buchanan: The Member makes a good point, because the previous Minister failed to make the efficiency savings and was afraid to face and to meet the challenges. However, Minister Poots did that.

Mrs Dobson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Buchanan: No, I will not give way any longer.

I call on all Members in the Chamber this evening to support the Minister in his call for the extra funding that he requires because it is only then that he will be able to deliver on the various healthcare issues that people are asking for around the Chamber. It is all very well for Members to, on the one hand, call on the Minister to deliver, while on the other hand, they are part of the problem, in that they are continually refusing to agree to welfare reform, which we know will strip the Minister's budget even further. I believe that it is now time for Sinn Féin and the SDLP to give the leadership that is required on welfare reform and to stop further cuts to our budget, because only then will it be taken seriously that you folk have a concern about the delivery of quality healthcare provision in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area.

Mr Dallat: I came here with a prepared speech, but I am not going to use it, because I am rather annoyed and upset at the point scoring that has been going on. I loved my parents dearly. My father died from a massive heart attack, and my mother died a painful death from cancer. I am sure that if those people were looking in on the debate today, they would be quite horrified.

Many years ago, when we had similar financial problems, the cancer centre in Belfast was built. It is now overflowing, but, my God, what a gift that was to the people of Northern Ireland. If we apply the same principles today, surely the people of the north-west and far beyond are entitled to the same hope and inspiration from their elected Members as happened in times that I think were more difficult than those we are in now.

My interest in Altnagelvin is not because I am supporting my Derry colleagues. Altnagelvin plays a major part in healthcare in the more immediate area that I represent. The partnership and cooperation between the Causeway Hospital and Altnagelvin is exemplary and something that I hope the Minister, who initially supported it, will continue to support. That is because, if you are on the balcony looking down on healthcare, you do not see borders or health trusts; you see people, and those are the people of Donegal, Derry, Coleraine, Ballymoney and beyond.

There was, rightly, mention of the taxi driver, and that lovely story that came out yesterday, but I can tell Members that good stories come out of Altnagelvin and the Causeway every day. I hope that the Minister is pleased to hear that. They are beautiful stories, and I think

that that is a solid reason why every Member should put their party political hats to one side and say, "We will do this collectively and provide the facilities that are badly needed for generations to come". In doing so, we will not only provide for Altnagelvin but will sow the seeds of a very strong medical care service with our neighbours in Donegal, whose government help to fund this, and will help people in the Causeway. I am not suggesting that the Causeway is in any immediate danger of closing, but I know that, if Altnagelvin had the full range of services, that relationship would be strengthened and would give comfort not just to Altnagelvin but to the Causeway.

I think that we probably got off on the wrong foot today. We have probably disillusioned people outside who may have been watching. This is not about party point scoring; this is about people and their future. It is about the people who, as we speak, are given bad news one way or the other. I do not think, quite honestly, that we would want to leave the Chamber having created the impression that we had another wee point-scoring exercise in the Assembly. God knows, we create enough bad images for ourselves without using something as serious as a motion on cardiac and other facilities to save people's lives. I think that it is a step too far.

6.15 pm

I do feel a bit emotional about this. I appeal to my colleagues right across the Chamber, and I am not identifying any party in particular: for God's sake, this ain't the debate for a bit of craic; this is not the debate for a bit of smirking and laughing; this is serious business. I passionately believe that each and every person in the Assembly has the capacity to deliver what the people need in Altnagelvin Hospital. Despite everything that I saw here today, I trust that, on reflection, they will do what is required. As with the cancer centre in Belfast —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Dallat: — it is possible. There are plenty of financial models out there that should be looked at.

Mr Beggs: I thank the Members for bringing forward this important motion. I, too, rise to support the motion. I recognise publicly the important regional role that Altnagelvin Hospital plays and will play increasingly in the future, not only for the city of Londonderry and the north-west region but, as has been said, its linkages with other hospitals such as Coleraine and the South West Hospital. There is the opportunity for the mutual benefit of the regional centre, not only for the people of Northern Ireland but for the people of Donegal. Collectively, a much better service can be provided for everyone.

The Altnagelvin radiotherapy unit was first identified as essential to meet the future needs of the people of Northern Ireland in 2008 when the project was kicked off by the then Minister, Michael McGimpsey. I understand that capital budget has always been available, but it has been the resource budget that, in previous times, created some difficulty. We are being told again that it is the resource budget that is causing difficulty today. There is no point in building such a centre with the resource and not manning it and providing a service. Therefore, it is essential that the project be taken through to completion.

In 2011, the outgoing Health Minister expressed his concern about the health budget. He questioned what

had been given and expressed concern that the opening could be put in jeopardy with the budget that had been handed to him. I agree with other Members that this is not just about the north-west; this is a regional centre, and a centre for Northern Ireland. Those who are following cancer and health issues will be aware that the cancer centre in Belfast is reaching capacity. Therefore, unless it is built and operated, there is the possibility that it will even affect me and my family. I feel passionately that this must proceed on the schedule that was agreed.

On coming into office in May 2011, Minister Poots advised:

"I have confirmed that I will make the necessary current and capital funding available." [Official Report, Bound Volume 64, p42, col 1].

Minister, what has happened since then?

In 2011, it was also indicated by the Finance Minister that the Health Minister would have flexibility in his budget without recourse to the Executive but that he could not bid for in-year monitoring and had to live within his budget. Since then, inflation in the UK has generally been lower than had been expected. Yes, I understand that health inflation is always considerably higher than general inflation. However, during those three and a half years, approximately £300 million of additional money in in-year monitoring has been provided.

My understanding of the 2011 Budget was that that money would not be available to the Health Department, so I am pleased that those who set that Budget agree that there were failings in what they did and are trying to correct it quietly. We will get better value for money if it is done in a strategic fashion rather than it being dealt with through in-year monitoring, because that mechanism can create a stop/go effect.

It is vital that the Altnagelvin project is put back on track and that the essential staff who will be required to man the units — professionals who will be giving up secure and important jobs elsewhere — feel totally secure about their futures so that they can be attracted to undergo the necessary training to man these posts. We cannot play about with it; it is essential that this is put to bed quickly and that the necessary funding be found. I support the Health Minister unequivocally in that that additional money must be found to ensure that this happens. I am not playing politics.

It would be helpful if the Minister were to clarify something in his letter to the Health Committee in August in which he indicated that —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Beggs: The Minister indicated that there would have to be £160 million in savings: does he have to save all that, or is it £80 million or now £60 million? It is essential that this project continues not only for the people of the north-west but for everyone in Northern Ireland.

Mr Dunne: I also welcome the opportunity to speak to the motion about what continues to be a very important issue for people throughout Northern Ireland. Our health service is crucial for everyone — young or old, rich or poor — and it must continue to be a priority for our Executive. There is no doubt that Altnagelvin Area Hospital in Londonderry offers an important service to the people of the north-west

and beyond. I endorse the opening words of the motion, which praise the professionalism and commitment of the staff in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area. Our health service staff are our greatest asset, and it is vital that we continue to acknowledge their dedication and commend their first-class level of service so that they are not taken for granted.

Funding remains a key challenge across our health service, and, unfortunately, the knock-on impact of the current financial challenges may affect our whole Province. Both the primary PCI service and the radiotherapy unit are key priorities for our Health Minister. I know that he recognises the importance of these services for the people of the north-west. That was underlined when he gave the green light to the radiotherapy unit shortly after taking up office in 2011.

The Minister also visited the hospital recently to confirm the commencement of the 24/7 primary PCI service, which provides state-of-the-art treatment for approximately 300 patients annually: those suffering from heart attacks. It is very clear that our Minister fully supports investing in and improving services in Altnagelvin. We should all stand and work with him and our Executive colleagues at this time to get the best possible deal for our health service as we move forward.

I call on our Minister to work with his Executive colleagues to make available the £1.5 million per annum that is required to ensure the full range of services at the cath lab and to fund the appointment of critical staff to avoid any further delay at the new Altnagelvin radiotherapy unit. This is an important development because it will serve the people of the Western Trust area who currently have to travel to the regional cancer centre in Belfast City Hospital, which, as was mentioned, is working at almost maximum capacity. A local cancer treatment unit will provide for the people of the north-west and beyond, into the border areas of Donegal, providing a service for such treatments on a repayment basis.

There is no doubt that savings and streamlining must continue to be a priority across our health service. I know that the Minister will continue to prioritise effective and necessary savings while reducing wastage. We must stand united on this issue and ensure that our health service continues to deliver and develop for our day and generation.

Mr Poots: The motion states that the Assembly should recognise:

“the importance of Altnagelvin Hospital in delivering excellent health care in the north-west”.

The motion:

“praises the professionalism and commitment of staff working throughout the Western Health and Social Care Trust”.

At the outset, I wholeheartedly endorse the recognition of the hospital, the staff and their professionalism. Every one of them is worth every penny.

At the heart of the debate is the future funding of the PCI cath lab service and the new radiotherapy unit. I never had, nor do I have, any intention of not continuing with those services. I merely pointed out to Members the reality of the situation because of the budget that was awarded to

me in June. We are already making £170 million of savings this year on top of the £492 million made over the previous three years. That is just over £660 million. I met the First Minister and the deputy First Minister on 6 April to explain that there was an additional gap of £160 million that we needed to address. My party was always of the opinion that we could do with something less than £160 million but that we needed considerably more money. Therefore, we were looking to get £40 million in the June monitoring round and £40 million in the October monitoring round. However, when we got to the June monitoring round, which came out five weeks late, we were told, “You’re getting £20 million. That’s all you’re getting for this year. Now, go away”. Those are the circumstances in which we find ourselves. If we got £20 million and no more in this financial year, that is the extent of the cuts. I said that I was not prepared to deliver those cuts. I needed the support of the Assembly. I sought the support of the Committee. I thought at the start of the meeting that it was going to support me, but, by the end of it, the Chair was not that keen on providing that support, for whatever reason. I hoped to have a Committee Chair who would have been more supportive of delivering those services, to be quite honest. It reflects very poorly on the Committee Chair that she did not have the will to give leadership to that Committee to ensure that I received the support to get more than £20 million for the rest of this year.

As we take the situation forward, we have proceeded with the primary PCI unit. It has been live 24/7 since 15 September. I would have hoped that Mrs Dobson’s people who assist her would have advised her better: she said that she hoped that we would go ahead with it, but it has already started. In any event, I was up at that facility last week. We have the most state-of-the-art equipment available anywhere in the world in Altnagelvin Hospital. That is good news. A taxi driver came in and was sitting up in bed an hour and half later having had the treatment. He potentially has a very good outlook as a result of that intervention. That is the service that we want to provide. We do not want to provide it just at one o’clock on a Friday or from nine to five. We want it available at 12 o’clock at night or four o’clock in the morning — whatever time it happens to be. I do not want it to be available just to the north-west and people from the Northern Trust area; I want it to be available to people from the Republic of Ireland as well. We can assist the Republic of Ireland by providing top-class health care, and they can pay a contribution, which will ensure that we can sustain the service. That makes completely logical sense. As we move forward to looking at the potential of having an air ambulance and all of that, there could be a major expansion of the services at Altnagelvin Hospital. That is where I come from; that is my commitment to that service. It is not just for the service we are going to provide at this stage. I want to expand it further and provide assistance to others.

6.30 pm

I visited Altnagelvin the day after I took ministerial office and, within a week, I made the decision to proceed with the radiotherapy unit. I did not think that it was good to create uncertainty about such an important subject. Mr Beggs rightly pointed out that the service is not just for the people of the north-west, though it is focused on them. Given the increasing numbers of patients who require treatment for cancer, Belfast City Hospital cancer centre would not have

been able to cope: 300 people use that service every day as things stand. It is absolutely essential for everybody in Northern Ireland that we proceed with it, given that one in three people will contract cancer at some point in their life. That is why it is important that we have quality cancer services across Northern Ireland that are fit for purpose and able to deal with the numbers going through.

I have no intention — none whatsoever — of delaying this, but I am dependent upon the October monitoring delivering for me. I did not take on the battle to get more funding for the health service on this occasion without having the intention of winning it. I am very hopeful that I will win the battle so that I can ensure that those services will proceed as planned without any hiccups or delays.

Obviously, other people may be silly about it and say that you just have to cut your cloth and live within the budget, and they may raise red herrings about things like clinical excellence awards. Let me say something about clinical excellence awards. They have been around for years and years, going back to the Sinn Féin Minister's time, I believe. Legally, they are regarded as contracts. So, if I go into a situation of saying that I am not going to give people clinical excellence awards, which have been pre-existing, I will be challenged and more than likely defeated in court. I would then have to pay the money out in any event. So, clinical excellence awards are not something that I think are necessarily the best arrangement; I think that we should be asking for a continuum of excellence as opposed to a demonstration of excellence at a particular point in a career. Nonetheless, they are there and they are contracts that we are obliged to honour.

We have top-class doctors in Northern Ireland, and we are delivering excellent services and results. Last week, I spoke to a couple of young consultants who are working in the primary PCI facility in Altnagelvin. I was absolutely delighted that they chose to work in that facility. They will save life after life after life in the north-west, and I honestly think that they are worth what we pay them. I know that doctors are well paid, but they are the cream of the class at school. It is the brightest young kids who go into the service; I want to attract the brightest young kids into medical service.

I diverge slightly, but I think of Dr Jimmy Douglas, who worked in the renal unit of Belfast City Hospital. I am sure that Mrs Dobson has come across him, although I think he has retired. He started out in life to be a lawyer, and he did not like it, so he went back to university having decided to become a doctor. I always thought that here was a man who could have spent his life doing conveyancing and giving advice on legal matters, but he saved hundreds of lives. He and Professor McGeown were out there doing work that was transforming in terms of kidney transplants. I want people like that. You know what? If I have to pay £20,000 or £30,000 on top of their wages to get them, I am prepared to do it as opposed to having mediocrity in our medical services.

I do not know where I am in my speech, but nonetheless.

We are in a difficult financial situation. It did not start three years ago; it started last year when the trusts started to report around August that they were facing greater pressures than they anticipated. They moved from having a £7 million underspend to a £60 million overspend. We have not recovered from that. Could I save £140 million in

the health service without hitting all of those things? Yes, I could, but I cannot do it when I am asked to do it in August, because we have already lost four months of the year.

We have, for example, reduced the length of stay in hospital. That has been reduced by 10% over the last three years, from 6·9 days to 6·1 days. We have saved tremendous amounts of money on drugs. I hear people saying that, if we go down the route that the drugs companies want us to go down, we could supply all of those other drugs. Yes, we could, but that would mean reducing services from something else. That is a hard decision that we have to make.

Considerable amounts of money have been saved. I think Sinn Féin said that it would want an inspection of the books, or something of that kind. I am quite happy to throw the books open. I am very happy for whoever to inspect the finances of the Department of Health, because we are committed to spending all of the money that we have on health, social services and public safety. If money is being misspent, I want to know about it so that we can cut that out. You ask me whether every penny of a budget of £4·7 billion is being spent right. Of course it is not. I want it to be spent right, so if people are aware of things that we are not doing right, let me know, and we will pursue it, seek to reduce that waste and cut it out. I have no doubt that there is still waste there to be cut out.

We can reduce the amount of spend required, but we have to do it over time, in a way that is thought through. We will have additional services to provide at the same time, so health is always going to be a problem for every country in the world. I think we have heard about Scotland facing problems that perhaps have not been as well explained to its public as they should have been. I note that Dr Varadkar has been in trouble with his Prime Minister, Mr Kenny, for shouting about needing more money for health down there. Some things do not change.

I think that there is a circumstance that people do not really understand: we are looking at a 6% growth in health each year and at 1·5% to 2% more funding. Finding and squeezing that 4% out each year will be more difficult. It becomes more of a challenge, but our willingness to do the right thing should not be underestimated. We are quite determined to have first-quality services not just in Belfast but right across Northern Ireland.

I want to attract the right people to serve in the best facilities in Altnagelvin in both radiotherapy and PCI. We have already done it in PCI. I would be shocked if we do not get the funding in the monitoring round to help us sustain that, so I am going ahead at risk. I have no doubt that we will proceed quickly after the October monitoring round to ensure that there is no delay in the opening of the facility at Altnagelvin, unless people are very silly and decide that Poots is calling everybody's bluff. He is not. We need additional resources to make those things happen. I believe that I have the support of all of the parties, but we need to see the colour of the money in October.

Mr Eastwood: Members will note that the wording of the motion was designed to be helpful rather than critical. Most of the debate has shown that we have support right across the House for what needs to be done. There is obviously a recognition of the financial difficulties. There is obviously going to be a bit of discussion and debate around why we are in those financial difficulties and what has actually

caused them. However, I think that what we can take from this debate is a commitment from the House to ensure that we do not again end up in a scenario where people in the north-west and beyond hear things on a radio or television programme that make them very fearful of some of the really important projects and proposals that the Executive and Assembly have for them.

I think that one of the difficult parts of the financial debate that has been going on since the June monitoring round is that it seems to us — some people might say that we have a bit of a complex — that every time an argument is made about welfare reform or anything else, the example that is used is one that affects people in our city, whether it be Magee campus, radiotherapy or whatever else. I think that we just need to be mindful that people are very hopeful. People came out on to the streets of Derry, went to meetings, wrote letters, signed petitions and did a lot of things the last time that this issue was used to advance a political argument about budgets. We just have to be mindful that these decisions and, sometimes, these statements have an effect on people.

Everybody in this House will know somebody who has to travel the long distance to the fantastic cancer centre that we have in Belfast. We often complain that we have to come up here from Derry three or four times a week. Imagine trying to do that, maybe for a 10-minute appointment, if you are going through cancer treatment and all the difficulties that that presents. We have to say that we were and have been very glad that Mr Poots, in his first week as Minister, made a very positive announcement for the north-west. Think about people from Derry travelling to Belfast: even more horrendous in this day and age is that people from Malin Head maybe travel to Dublin or Galway. We come at this in a positive way. The response from the Minister today has been positive. The response from most of the Members who have spoken has been positive. I think that that is a good thing.

We also deliberately put in the motion a reference to the health workers who interface with the public every single day. I think that sometimes we do not say enough about that. I think that people need to be very mindful of the difficult circumstances. When we talk up here about budgets, it is the people on the ground at the front line who have to deal with the issues and difficulties that they face because of budget cuts. Mr Ramsey highlighted that, last weekend, in Altnagelvin's A&E department, a target was met by those workers and staff to treat every single patient within four hours. It is important to point out that, in the 24-hour period from midnight on Thursday, the A&E department treated 160 patients within that time frame. While we are often all very good at complaining about those kinds of things, it is important that we recognise good work when we see it.

I know that Christie O'Donnell has been mentioned. I know Christie. I have been in his taxi many times. He is a very grateful recipient of very good care. He actually drove his taxi to Altnagelvin while he was having a heart attack and was treated very swiftly and well by the staff there. That is something that needs to be said. It is because of the good work around the new cardiac centre that Christie was able to avail himself of those services. Thank God for it.

I am glad to hear what the Minister said about the 24/7 aspect, because it should not be the case that, if you turn up at a certain time, unfortunately, you might die because

the service is not there 24/7. I think that the Minister said that we are going ahead at risk. I think that that is a sensible decision. I know that he was there last Friday when it was not just quite as clear whether we were going for the 24/7 model. Maybe that is where some of the confusion came about today. We are very glad to support that and to see it come forward.

A number of Members spoke very well. I note that Mr Wells talked largely around the financial implications of this. I think that we are all aware of them. He also recognised that, when you look at the figures, you see that this is not necessarily a welfare reform issue. There has clearly been a very real problem in health. I know that some people will debate when and why that started. However, we have to commit to a new budgetary process to ensure that we can resolve that.

6.45 pm

Nobody wants to see front line services cut. Nobody wants to see a radiotherapy centre with all the mod cons — equipment and buildings — being held up over £1.1 million, which is a lot of money to some of us, but, in the grand scheme of things, not really a lot of money. We need to ensure that, in whatever negotiations and discussions around October monitoring — if we have an October monitoring round; there are rumours that we might not get one — that type of project is put at the very forefront of all that we do.

We have to recognise the work that was done. Ms McLaughlin talked about the Pink Ladies, and about the people of Derry coming out onto the streets to ensure that it happened. It is important to recognise that. She also said that cancer does not respect borders. I have already spoken about somebody from north-east Donegal having to travel even further, to Dublin or Galway or somewhere, to get cancer treatment. The work being done alongside the Irish Government to ensure that there is a proper, functioning radiotherapy centre at Altnagelvin is important. Politics should never impede progress in healthcare outcomes. It is important that that has been recognised.

Mr Dallat made a very emotional and emotive speech about the need to put people before politics. I ended up having to scrap half of my speech because of it, but he made a very good point. An issue like this is far too important for us to use to beat each other around the Chamber. It is important that we also recognise that issues like this should not be used in bigger debates, around welfare reform or financial constraints, to try to get an easy win. We know the impact that that has on people out there. Mr Robinson was able to talk about his own experience of the staff dealing with cardiac issues. I think that we should all resist the urge, on the radio or in the Chamber, to make announcements about things that have a real impact on people's lives without the issues having been worked forward.

There is a major job of work to be done to try to get over some of the issues, not least welfare reform. However, outside welfare reform, there is massive difficulty around the health budget. The SDLP and, I am sure, other parties are committed to dealing with those issues. We have a few issues to deal with. Peter Robinson spoke last week. We now have even more issues than we thought we had. However, this party and other parties will, I hope, come to the fore when it comes to dealing with those. For far too long, people and their issues have been thrown out there

around these kinds of things. Sometimes we do not have due regard for the impact that announcements on 'The Nolan Show' or wherever else have on people's lives and experiences.

To sum up, I am glad to see a positive approach and response from the Minister. We offer our support —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Eastwood: — to try to bring about those two vital services and ensure that they stay for all the people who need them.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly recognises the importance of Altnagelvin Hospital in delivering excellent health care in the north-west of Ireland; praises the professionalism and commitment of staff working throughout the Western Health and Social Care Trust; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to ensure that the radiotherapy unit and cardiac centre at Altnagelvin Hospital are progressed without delay resulting in the delivery of critical services to the population of the north-west.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Motion made:

That the Assembly do now adjourn. —
[Mr Deputy Speaker.]

Adjournment

University of Ulster: Magee Expansion

Mr Deputy Speaker: The proposer of the topic for debate will have 15 minutes in which to speak, and all other Members called to speak will have approximately six minutes.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this topic, which is another important issue in connection with the expansion of the University of Ulster's Magee campus. I suppose that it is important to point out that, since I brought a similar motion to the House in June last year, there have been quite positive developments in the issue on a number of fronts. The Minister for Employment and Learning gave clarity on the need for a business case, which was causing some confusion in the city and beyond. At that stage, he stated:

"If a proposal were to be taken forward to expand the Magee campus in line with the vision set out in the One Plan, then a full economic appraisal would be required."

The city, thankfully, is now very clear on that, and a new education and skills implementation group has been established to take forward the skills escalation strategy and, of course, the Magee expansion. RSM McClure Watters has been appointed to develop the business case, which Derry City Council, in partnership with the University of Ulster, has commissioned. Phase 1 of that business case, which covers the needs analysis, is with the Minister, and the complete and final business case will hopefully be with him in October or November.

Therefore, the Minister provoked a strong reaction in August when he said on the airwaves that the Magee expansion was shelved for the foreseeable future. We rightly challenged that and asked this again: why Derry? Importantly, we also asked how a project could be stalled when the business case had not even been received. That was followed by a delegation to the Minister from the civic, political and business leadership of the city. At that meeting, the Minister clarified that he would receive the business case and would not rule out a bid for expansion going forward. Following that, the Minister's office issued a statement, in which he stated that he was:

"sympathetic to the potential further expansion of the Magee Campus".

He also stated that his Department would:

"scrutinise any business case received in order to be in a position to make any bid in relation to the 2016-2020 Budget period."

I welcome that clarity and ask the Minister to reinforce that position in his comments today.

The university has also restated its commitment to the project, as has Martin McGuinness, who recently met with

the business community and the University for Derry lobby group and stated his full support for the Magee campaign.

For a minute, I want to consider the Programme for Government commitment to the Magee expansion. We may differ on that and may argue about whether it needs to be stronger, but the key commitment is to develop the One Plan for the regeneration of Derry. The Magee expansion is a critical catalyst project in the One Plan. So, let us clear up any confusion that may exist. There is a commitment to the One Plan, and it is the same commitment that we used for the City of Culture, the Foyle valley gateway master plan, the Brandywell and early intervention city status.

There are very clear targets in the One Plan. For the record, they are the expansion of the university at Magee to 9,400 full-time equivalents, including 6,000 full-time undergraduate students over the 10-year period to 2020. They are also about securing a 1,000 increase in the maximum student number (MaSN) by 2015, doubling the MaSN by 750 full-time undergraduate students to 1,500 over the 10-year period to 2020 and, equally, accelerating the development of the C-TRIC facility.

The other challenge that has been left to us is to demonstrate that the expansion of Magee will benefit the entire North. It is important to point out that, as it stands, Derry has the lowest level of higher education (HE) provision of any major city on the island of Ireland, and that is lower when compared with similar-sized cities. Derry's students represent 2.9% of the resident population, while those in Belfast, Cork, Limerick, Dundee or Lincoln make up 9.6%, 15.8%, 20.6%, 14.1% and 13.6%. I suggest to the Minister that the expansion of the university fits with all the key strategies and plans for the North, such as: the Programme for Government, the economic development strategy, the draft innovation strategy, the MATRIX report, the One Plan, the EU higher education area, the DEL higher education strategy and many more.

However, despite the constraints that Derry and the north-west see, there exists a range of knowledge-based assets with significant growth sectors: health technologies, stratified medicine, software engineering, ICT, renewable energies and sustainable technologies. It has been well recognised that the city is at the heart of international telecommunications awareness, has an enhanced positive reputation resulting from the City of Culture, and a young population.

I ask the Minister to reinstate his support for the business plan, commit to the expansion of the University of Ulster at Magee campus and ensure that the project, as agreed, becomes a departmental priority.

Mr P Ramsey: I thank Maeve McLaughlin for securing this debate on what is, once again, one of the most important subject matters in the city. I serve on the Employment and Learning Committee, and the Minister knows full well that we all believe in this. To be honest, a debate like this goes to the heart of the city, Minister; it is like a wound in the heart of the city. As Maeve McLaughlin said, you provoked anger, frustration and absolute disappointment with your press release during the summer.

I know in my heart — I have met the Minister I do not know how many times, and I do not know how many times we have had this discussion — and I genuinely believe that the Minister is behind Magee and supports the importance of the One Plan that Maeve McLaughlin talked about.

I want to place on record that the One Plan's priority and objective is for a university campus serving 9,400 full-time students, including 6,000 full-time undergraduate students, supported by an enhanced provision of 750 full-time undergraduate students at North West Regional College, bringing the total number of full-time undergraduates to 1,500, over the 10-year period to 2020.

I am just going to use the wording again, and it is important to say this: the One Plan encompassed, consulted and surveyed every household in the city. As a result, the key economic driver for the importance of Derry and its regeneration — culturally, socially and every other way — was the Magee campus. It was adopted with great aplomb by the First Minister and the deputy First Minister coming to the city and welcoming it. It was in the Programme for Government, but I am sure that the Minister will tell us that Magee was not specifically identified in that document.

At the same time, I have every confidence that the Minister will be positive today. In the Programme for Government, and given that the One Plan was key, certainly for representatives of the north-west, how many times did the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister seek an update on the progression, development or out-workings of the One Plan, as it was identified to Maeve or myself? I would be keen to hear that from the Minister.

We have to be clear: the business case has to be approved and endorsed by yourselves, and, because of the levels of it, it has to go to DFP. However, I assure you that, even before that took place, I would have said to the Minister, at a very early stage, given the politics surrounding it, "You should be taking this to the Executive". Irrespective of whether the business case is being sustained, it is important that you take that and test the Executive.

Mr Swann: Will the Member give way?

Mr P Ramsey: I will.

Mr Swann: Just a query: the Member has received the same briefing from the Minister as I have. He says that he has met the Minister a couple of times. In relation to the business case, if no business case is put forward, does the Member have any idea how much the Minister has saved by not bringing forward Magee? If there is no business case, surely there is no value there? Surely, that is something that the Executive should be taking forward.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has another minute.

7.00 pm

Mr P Ramsey: I thank the Member for his comments. Clearly, a business case has been presented. The Minister and the Department have a draft business case in their possession, which the Minister will confirm that he has received. We have been told that it was sent to him, and we have a copy of the outline business case that was submitted. We all got it five or six days ago by email, so I do not think that there is any doubt about that. I am making the point that we can develop and sustain an argument for the development.

I think back on the previous debate. On many occasions, unfortunately, Members go down the route of saying, "The Derry ones are at it again". These are not places for the people of Derry. The increased numbers for Magee are for Northern Ireland, the border counties and to encourage students from England, Scotland and Wales who may want

to come here. There is clear and obvious evidence, locally and regionally, of ever-increasing student numbers moving away who might stay at home. The increased fees, for example, might mean that students may want to stay here. We see evidence of that.

My time has almost run out. Around November 2011, the University of Ulster paid a deposit for the land acquisition of Foyle and Londonderry College. This is key to the business case and in ensuring that the Minister has a legacy. They will have until 2016, when Foyle and Londonderry College moves campus to the Waterside. At that time, a decision will need to be taken to buy that land. I want to know the Department's position in ensuring that that happens, and I want us to have it.

I have to finish on a positive. I understand the Minister: he brings great initiatives. There are some good initiatives at present, such as the hairdressing apprenticeships at the North West Regional College, which will make a difference. I know that there are some difficulties over the economic inactivity strategy. I hope that we can iron those out, because they will make a difference. By God, I can tell you this: there is only one real project in the north-west that will give people a big lift, and that is the campus at Magee. There is a hurt in the heart of the city, Minister —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr P Ramsey: — and unless we get some resolution to give confidence to people, we cannot go on. Again, I thank Maeve for securing the debate.

Mr Hussey: Mr Deputy Speaker, do I have your permission to remain seated? Mr Deputy Speaker? I will.

Mr McCartney: Aye. [Laughter.]

Mr Hussey: Once again, I am delighted to represent my colleagues from the constituency of Foyle. I am pleased to speak this evening on a matter that affects the maiden city of Londonderry. As you can see, I am the only unionist here to do that, but I am pleased to be here to do so.

I welcome the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party in the Adjournment debate on the expansion of the Magee campus of the University of Ulster. In doing so, I am conscious that I am giving a perspective from outside the city walls of Londonderry. I can assure Members from the maiden city that this issue is of interest to those of us who represent constituencies like West Tyrone and the wider western and north-western part of Northern Ireland. As was said by Mr Ramsey, we want this institution for all of Ireland and further afield. I have certainly no problems in supporting that. For the record, the Ulster Unionist Party is in favour and wants the expansion of Magee.

When Minister Farry made his announcement on the biggest radio show in the country — I cannot remember the name of that show — he talked about the pressures on his Department's budget, and he probably did not realise the storm that was about to fall onto his head. Dr Farry effectively said that the proposed expansion of the University of Ulster's Magee campus was off the table due to the Northern Ireland Executive Budget cuts. The loud condemnation of the Minister, in part understandable, has been well documented and, predictably, repeated here today.

It is very easy and tempting to engage in Minister-bashing, especially when the Minister is not from your own party, but let us step back and try to calmly assess where we stand with the expansion of Magee. I note that Foyle Members have been asking questions about whether the Minister for Employment and Learning has received a business case for the expansion at Magee. It would be helpful if the Minister could be crystal clear on that issue this evening in the Assembly.

On 17 September last year, in a similar Adjournment debate, my colleague Sandra Overend asked a very salient question that cut to the heart of the question:

“the Minister has said that no business case is needed, and the Magee provost, Dr Heenan, also said that detailed costings are not being sought. So, we need to have clarity on the expansion. We in the House are all aware that budgets are stretched throughout all Departments, and the higher education budget, I am sure, is no different.” — [Official Report, Bound Volume 87, p219, col 1].

In response, the Minister said:

“I want to address the specific issue of whether a business case is, indeed, required. In the context of a specific proposal on a stand-alone basis to expand Magee, we would need a business case for that purpose. For what we have adopted to date, which has been a policy of incremental growth of university places that adopts a pan-Northern Ireland approach, albeit, I have to confess, with a certain skewing towards the University of Ulster and Magee, we do not need a business case to proceed.”

He concluded:

“I stress that, without a business case, incremental growth can still continue.” — [Official Report, Bound Volume 87, p221, col 1].

Members should note that exchange and consider how much more pertinent it is one year on in the context of a Budget that is more broken and stretched. I have to say that I do have some sympathy for the Minister, not with the way in which he blurted the news out on the radio but with the problems with his budget. Having said that, I have to remind the House that the Alliance Party did vote for the four-year Budget in 2011.

The Minister stated last year that incremental growth can continue. In December 2011, he said that an extra 700 undergraduate places would be made available in Northern Ireland by 2015. At the same time, the University of Ulster stated that the 322 extra places being awarded to it would all be allocated to the Magee campus. The question is this: have those commitments been put in abeyance by the Budget stand-off and the Minister's August statement? That is the simple question that should be answered today. If it is, this Adjournment debate will have been worthwhile and not just another exercise in Minister-bashing and a pretext for issuing angry press statements to the 'Derry Journal' or the 'Londonderry Sentinel'. As I said, the Ulster Unionist Party supports the expansion of Magee college. We call on the Minister to clarify the numbers, the plan and the budget.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liom fáilte a chur roimh an

díospóireacht seo inniu. I welcome the fact that we are once more debating this issue. I suppose that it is welcome, because sometimes Adjournment debates can be very constituency-based. I welcome the fact that Ross Hussey is here and representing, if you like, the wider Ulster Unionist interest and the wider north-west.

Mr Hussey: I hope that that is not me being wider that you are talking about.

Mr McCartney: No. I heard you say that you are the only unionist here, but I want to acknowledge —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Can all remarks be addressed through the Chair, please?

Mr McCartney: — Mr Swann's presence as well, no doubt supporting the expansion of the university. That is maybe for another day.

In fairness to the Minister, he has met on a number of occasions delegations from the city and from the wider interest. I think that he will acknowledge how important an issue this is, particularly for people who represent the constituency of Foyle and Derry city. It has been on the political agenda for a long, long time.

The last time that we debated this, I reflected on the numbers of students in other cities throughout Ireland. Indeed, this week, it was particularly interesting during the Scottish debate to hear of the impact of universities, particularly on the economy of Scotland. I will say it again: Dublin has 53,000 students; Belfast has 32,000; Cork has 19,000; Galway has 17,000; Limerick has 12,000; Coleraine has 8,000; and Derry has 4,000. When the Minister is addressing this type of issue or reflecting on this debate, I think that it is worth him asking himself why he thinks that has been the case and continues to be. Given the economic impact that a university has on the other places that I have named, why does Derry not have a higher proportion of students? That, in many ways, would have addressed many of the problems that Derry has faced down through the years.

The expansion of the university will be and should be a key element in addressing the many, many issues of regional imbalance and regional disadvantage, which has always featured in the Programme for Government. When people look at unemployment figures in Derry, I do not think that it can escape any of us, including the Minister, that the lack of university places has an impact, as do other issues. Collective responsibility, as much as this should be a collective responsibility, should feature in that as well.

Maeve McLaughlin outlined some of the meetings that have taken place, and I have no doubt that the Minister has shown support and, in many ways, played a vital role. From a Derry perspective, we felt that the case was made in the most rigorous way possible. At one or two meetings, the Minister said that the absence of a business case was not exactly showing us in the best light. Perhaps because there was just an outline business plan, or a sense of what we needed, that was not hitting the mark with the Department, and the Minister said that very clearly.

Perhaps the fact that it was in the One Plan provided the strategic imperative for us to take it forward. In recent times, however, the strategy board, and the University of Ulster, which accepted the expansion, played a crucial role. Then came the need for a business case to be delivered. As Pat Ramsey said, we have all received

a copy of the outline business case. We know that the Minister has also received a copy and that the timeline is that he should have the full business case by October.

In August, when the Minister announced that the expansion of Magee was on the shelf, it came, as Pat said, as a bit of a shock to all of us because, until then, the commentary had always been positive. I refer to the previous debate. There is no doubt that, in the heat of argument or debate, it is easy to say, "If my Department's budget is being cut, this is what will go to the wall or on the shelf." I think that we have to avoid that. Certainly, there has to be honesty at all times, but it can be easy to say what will suffer, which leads to the most negative reaction. That is what you got from people in Derry, Minister. They said very clearly, "This is not what we want, and we will bring it to your door." They said that because all that we do should be based on evidence, and I think that the business case and the figures that I presented provide that evidence. I will not go into the figures for the economic impact of universities on cities as I accept that you are well acquainted with those —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr McCartney: However, we know that, historically, we have been left behind, so our job is to make sure that we catch up in the future.

Mr Eastwood: We often say that a week is a long time in politics, and, given the last week that we have had, it definitely is. In Derry, half a century is an eternity. It is coming up to 50 years ago that the Lockwood report, which was basically a sectarian document, announced Coleraine as the site for the new University of Ulster. This is not just about looking back, but it is important to put it in context: that decision left a very negative legacy in our city of, amongst other things, economic deprivation. The failure to address that in the subsequent 50 years has made it much more difficult for our city to see the peace dividend that other places may have seen. It is a well-worn phrase, but we do not wear being known as "the economic and unemployment black spot of the North" as a badge of honour. We really wish that it was not the case. However, it is, unfortunately, true that our city lags behind when it comes to the employment figures. We come here and argue for all sorts of different tools for economic expansion, but we all recognise that no matter how many roads we build, we need a proper university. We talk about the figure of 9,400. For us, that was a compromise, a starting point. Unless we get at least to that point, we have no chance of redressing some of the difficulties that we face.

7.15 pm

Census figures relating to employment were revealed in July and were revised this month. They showed that there are 15,000 more jobs in the four Belfast constituencies than there were in 2009 just after the financial crash. However, the picture in Derry is very different: in the same period, we lost nearly 2,000 jobs. Derry is supposed to be alongside Belfast and, as part of the economic strategy, one of the major places that we look at for economic expansion.

Derry's employment figures are contracting, so, for us, the issue around Magee is not just, as Pat Ramsey said, that we want more Derry people to go to university. It is a fundamental economic issue that needs to be resolved,

but it just never has been resolved. We need the proper number of students doing the proper kind of high-tech courses. There was welcome news today in the opening of the science park at Fort George. That is fantastic, but if we want to properly maximise and utilise that opportunity, we need to ensure that we have high-tech graduates going from the University of Ulster at Magee into that site so that we can build another building at Fort George, employ more people and ensure that we have more people in the city earning a decent wage and contributing to the economy for the whole of the North.

I sometimes feel for the Minister, although I did not feel for him when he made that announcement on the radio in August. It was an insensitive way to make a point. We all know the point he was making, but people in Derry saw through it because, as I pointed out earlier, this is a 50-year old debate and not one that has just arrived as a result of welfare reform. It was insensitive, and it was a mistake, and, to be fair to him, the Minister has recognised that, and he has again committed to the expansion of Magee.

My view is that it is a much bigger issue than just the Minister. It is an issue that needs to be at the heart of our Executive and trumpeted by the First Minister and the deputy First Minister. It is shocking that there is nobody from the DUP on the opposite Benches this evening who cares enough to come into the Chamber to fight for the economic survival of our city. That, for me, is a very worrying development. As far as we are concerned, this needs to be handled at the very top. I am glad to see that the deputy First Minister said on the front of the 'Derry Journal' that he would spearhead the campaign. We are going to hold him and the Executive to that.

Ms McLaughlin and I will disagree about this, but there was no proper mention of the expansion of Magee in the Programme for Government. It said that they wanted to develop the One Plan, but, as far as I was concerned, we had already developed it. What we need to do is implement it, and we needed specifically to mention Magee and some of the other aspects of the plan in the Programme for Government. Some of them were mentioned. Ebrington and Fort George were mentioned, as were jobs targets, but there was no specific mention of the expansion of Magee and no budget given to the Minister to make it happen.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I ask the Member to bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Eastwood: In terms of a positive ending, we are rowing behind the commitment given by the deputy First Minister and the commitments given by the Minister for Employment and Learning. I hope that the First Minister shares in those commitments, because we need to ensure that we deliver this. I do not welcome the fact that we are back here a year later.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Eastwood: I do not want to be here next year.

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): I welcome this debate, as it provides an opportunity for me to set out my approach to the delivery of the expansion of our university sector and in particular the expansion of the University of Ulster at Magee in Derry. It also allows me to set out the pre-existing funding challenges facing our universities and the much deeper pressures that are

now being experienced in light of the ongoing budgetary difficulties facing the Executive.

My central objective is to ensure that Northern Ireland continues to have a world-class and internationally recognised higher education sector and, indeed, that we can further build on this strong platform over the coming years.

Our universities are key partners in the economic transformation of Northern Ireland. Indeed, they are central to our inward investment narrative and efforts to create more jobs and business start-ups locally. They are also key providers of higher-level skills and research.

Over the past three years, I have put in place Northern Ireland's first higher education strategy, Graduating to Success, and the first widening participation strategy, Access to Success. In this time, I have also added just over 1,200 university places, all in STEM subjects. We are on course to double the number of publicly funded PhDs over the decade. We have also made fresh investments in university research.

It is particularly important to emphasise the relationship between universities and our economy. However, I remain concerned at pockets of graduate unemployment and underemployment, and I am keen to stress the importance of investment in employability skills and developing a greater relationship between the degree programmes offered and the requirements of the economy. My Department's increased focus on a new strategy for apprenticeships, including higher-level apprenticeships, with the opportunity to link up with higher education pathways, is particularly relevant in this context.

The decision to freeze tuition fees for local students at local universities was the right one. It is a recognition of the Executive's commitment to widening participation. However, we must at the same time recognise that it does curtail the universities' ability to generate additional income. With the efficiency savings asked across the public sector during the current Budget period, combined with this restriction on income generation, our universities have a major challenge to match the rate of growth of the leading universities across these islands.

To put this in perspective: the amount invested per university place in Northern Ireland is between £1,000 and £2,500 less than in English universities, depending on the funding band. To put this another way: the universities require an investment in the region of £25 million per year to remain competitive.

It is important that we retain a quality higher education system and, indeed, build further upon that. I do not want to see lower tuition fees being matched with an inferior form of higher education — that is not something in the interests of our young people or the economy, and I am sure that Members would share that concern.

It is important to set out this context before looking at the specific ambition to expand the University of Ulster campus at Magee.

I do understand the impact that the creation or expansion of a university campus can have on any location, including Derry and the wider north-west. I also understand the history around this issue and the frustrations over the past 50 years. The One Plan provides my Department with the strategic context and targets for the expansion of the

Magee campus. However, it is important to be clear how it is framed within the Programme for Government. While there is a general commitment to the One Plan, only the regeneration of Fort George and Ebrington are specifically mentioned. Importantly, my Department is not measured or scrutinised in relation to the expansion of Magee in any respect.

When I assumed office in May 2011, there was no Executive budgetary commitment or resources within my departmental budget to facilitate the expansion of Magee. However, through two bids to the Executive — the first arising out of the tuition fee settlement and the second relating to the jobs and economy initiative — and from redirecting resources in my pre-existing budget, I have been able to expand higher education by around 1,600 places across Northern Ireland, with 1,200 being directed to our universities.

The University of Ulster has received more than its proportionate share of those places, receiving 652. In line with its stated commitment, the university has allocated those places to the Magee campus. So I do believe that solid and steady progress was being made towards the interim target of 1,000 additional places by 2015 as set out in the One Plan, before budgetary uncertainty and now cuts have forced a pause in our expansion plans.

I appreciate that the Derry/Londonderry strategy board is developing a business case in relation to the much greater proposed expansion of the Magee campus in line with the One Plan target through to 2020. The business case is required given the location-specific nature of the proposal. We have received the needs-analysis aspect of the business case, with the remainder expected to arrive during the autumn.

However, we are receiving this business case at a time when the Executive are facing an unprecedented budgetary crisis. My departmental budget has already been cut in-year by 4-5%. The previously indicated level of cuts to be formally ratified in the October monitoring round may well be exceeded. Furthermore, we are staring into the abyss, with even greater levels of cuts facing us in future years unless there is a major reassessment of the approach being adopted on some critical financial and policy matters in the Executive.

I have had no alternative but to pass on 4% cuts in-year to our universities, with further uncertainty over forthcoming budgetary periods. My first responsibility is to work with the universities to manage the pressures as strategically as possible, with a particular focus on the direct needs of the local economy and the steps necessary to maintain international standards.

I am sympathetic to the potential further expansion of the Magee campus of the University of Ulster, but I cannot be expected to both cut public spending and increase it at the same time within the context of higher education; it simply does not add up. Indeed, it is worth stressing that the resourcing of the One Plan's student numbers would represent a significant challenge in terms of funding and would require an investment of over £30 million on a recurrent annual basis.

That said, my Department will scrutinise any business case received in order to be in a position to make a bid in the 2016-2020 Budget period. Any bid to the Executive for additional resources would only be viable once financial

circumstances are different and the overall Northern Ireland Budget and the resourcing of my Department are placed on a sustainable footing. Any bid would have to represent additionality and not be at the expense of quality elsewhere within the higher education system. It must also be considered in conjunction with other investments required to consolidate the world-class standard of our universities and the wider development of skills in our economy in areas such as apprenticeships. Also, on the particular issue of capital investment relating to the proposed teaching block, my Department will seek to process that business case over the coming months and will consider making a bid in the 2015-16 Budget.

In conclusion, I stress that we will process the business case in order to be in a position to make bids if financial circumstances allow us to do so. However, it is important that Members are under no illusion about the extreme financial pressures that are facing my Department and the Executive.

The higher education system is under great pressure, and the pressure is set to increase. Until that situation is reversed, we will not have a credible environment for my Department to realistically seek to expand the Magee campus. So, while the door is open to the bid being made, it is important that people understand the wider context in which we are operating. If we can work collectively to address budget uncertainty to ensure that we have a fit-for-purpose higher education system that is properly resourced, those opportunities will become viable.

I have been very clear about my position. It is important that Members appreciate that we are in a situation where we face cuts in higher education. It is difficult to see how you can make cuts and make an argument to expand at the same time. We have to address and reverse those cuts, and then we can look to future opportunities.

I thank Members for the debate and the opportunity to respond. I have met a number of delegations from the city and will no doubt continue to do so. I have never turned down a request for a meeting in that regard. We look forward to receiving the remainder of the business case in the autumn and giving it scrutiny. As it is a very complex piece of work, it will take us some time to go through it, and no doubt there will be some different iterations of the business case required. However, that will provide us with a foundation to make a bid, subject to those financial circumstances changing. That will allow us to have a higher education system that we can embed within our community, ensure is of international standard and then seek to expand even further.

Adjourned at 7.29 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 22 September 2014

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon (Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I would like to advise Members that I spoke to the Speaker this morning. Members will be glad to know that he is in good spirits, but he is following medical advice and recuperating at home pending further treatment for a heart problem in the weeks to come.

As a result, the initial arrangements from last week continue, as, on 18 September, the Speaker wrote to notify me under Standing Order 5(2) that I have been authorised to exercise all his procedural functions relating to the proceedings of the Assembly. Furthermore, the Speaker has authorised me to oversee the management of engagements relating to the Speaker's representational role, which will be undertaken between me and the Deputy Speakers in line with the normal practice. A copy of this letter will be placed in the library.

I want to make it clear to Members that I will, of course, be exercising these functions from a procedural and impartial perspective in the same way as would be expected of the Speaker. In recognition of that, I am taking steps to withdraw from my roles on Committees for the time being. In addition, I will not be speaking or voting in any plenary business on the Floor of the House until further notice.

The Deputy Speakers and I are grateful for the continuing cooperation of Members during this period. If Members have any issues that they wish to raise or discuss, they should approach the Speaker's Office in the usual manner. I know that Members and staff of the Assembly will join me again in wishing the Speaker well and hoping that his absence from the House is as short as possible.

Matter of the Day

Scottish Referendum Result

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Speaker has agreed that this matter was brought forward in the appropriate fashion. Mr Mike Nesbitt has been given leave to make a statement on the Scottish referendum result, which fulfils the criteria as set out in Standing Order 24. If other Members wish to be called, they should indicate that by rising in their places and continuing to do so. All Members called will have up to three minutes to speak on the subject. I remind Members that I will not take any points of order on this or any other matter until the item of business has finished.

Mr Nesbitt: I begin by repeating this party's best wishes to Speaker Hay for a full and speedy recovery.

I believe that it would be remiss for the House not to mark one of the most important constitutional votes anywhere in these islands in the last 300 years. Obviously, as unionists, we rejoice in and are delighted with the result. The case for Scottish independence was never made, and common sense has prevailed.

The links between Scotland and Northern Ireland cross every strand of our existence: cultural, sporting, political, economic. Earlier today, I was sent a construction assessment that stated that £7 billion of construction contracts were on hold as companies waited for the result of the independence vote, and local construction and engineering companies would no doubt have been among those that would have lost out had the vote been pro-independence.

During the campaign, I was dismayed to hear a leading proponent of independence criticise the Better Together campaign for patronising the Scots. He argued, "Didn't we, the Scots, bring the world the scientific and intellectual liberation called the Enlightenment?" It is a half-truth, and that is a dangerous thing, of course, because the man who inspired the Scottish Enlightenment was not a Scot but was Francis Hutcheson from Saintfield in County Down, who was born in 1694 to a family of Scottish-Irish descent. He was a man of immeasurable influence, counting among his students Adam Smith, who wrote 'The Wealth of Nations', and David Hume, who famously argued that desire rather than reason governed human nature.

Francis Hutcheson makes a case regarding ties that are rooted in that most important of all commodities: blood ties. Scots came to Ireland to become the Ulster Scots. They moved further west to become what the Americans now call the Scots-Irish, and the Scots-Irish have provided

no fewer than 17 of the United States' 44 presidents. Admittedly, some may have slightly more tangential links than others, but the point is this: for countries the size of postage stamps on the world stage, Northern Ireland and Scotland together punch very much above their weight.

The United Kingdom is a family of nations. We are united through social, economic and cultural ties. We have a joint history of standing up for the weak and of facing down tyranny. It is a history that can never be erased and that will, I believe, continue to bind us together. Let us now go forward proudly and confidently into the inevitable debate that is coming concerning how we build an even better and greater Britain that is fit for the 21st century and a United Kingdom of which Northern Ireland is more solidly a part than ever before.

Mr Campbell: Like Mr Nesbitt, I join in recognition of the decision by the people of Scotland to vote in the way that they did. That said, I and others made it very clear throughout the campaign and even before it started that it was entirely and exclusively a matter for the people of Scotland to decide on. Now that they have done so, it is appropriate that we should comment on that and, more importantly, outline what we see as our vision for the way forward with Scotland as a part of the United Kingdom.

The voting in the two principal cities is no coincidence in that the relatively more affluent Edinburgh was 61% no and the relatively less affluent Glasgow was 53% yes. The referendum was more to do with disaffection from central government and the sense of economic isolation from the south-east of England, and that can resonate with people in Northern Ireland.

Whatever the reasons, the people of Scotland have spoken and settled the matter. Now that they have, the issue becomes a UK-wide one, and the Prime Minister indicated his intention to proceed with changes throughout the UK. All of us must play our part in that, and, of course, to play our part in those changes, we need to be in the Parliament of the United Kingdom, where the table will be laid out for discussions about how and when changes will happen. Hopefully, everyone can play their part in that, and we will not have the position that some — namely Sinn Féin — adopt in which they complain when decisions are taken and then, when there is an option to try to change them, boycott the place where the changes will occur. So hopefully, we can move on. As I said, the Scotland referendum is now finished. It is done and dusted, and we now get down to the hard work of ensuring that people do not feel disaffected, irrespective of which part of this United Kingdom they live in and belong to.

Mr McKay: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. All has changed, and changed utterly. I do not think that anybody could not agree that these islands have changed as a result of the result in Scotland.

What happened in Scotland was a true exercise in democracy. We saw 16- and 17-year-olds voting for the first time, and there is absolutely no reason that that franchise cannot be extended to here as well. We also saw a turnout of 85%, which is absolutely extraordinary by modern-day standards. Of course, politics should not be left to just the politicians. In terms of our future on this island and where the North's best interests lie, we should have the same debate. It was a healthy exercise in Scotland. There was some scaremongering, but, across

the world, Scotland has been held up as a shining example of how to hold a mature debate about future governance. We should have a poll in Ireland about whether Ireland is better together and, like I said, no scaremongering.

The public in Scotland and the public here do not want their politicians to continue to bend the knee to the Tories and the British Treasury. There is a tendency for politicians here to accept whatever the Treasury says as gospel. If the Treasury says that we owe a certain amount of money, we will not even question it. The Scottish Government did question it and did their own figures, whereas the Department of Finance here does not want to know. That is not acting in our best interests or in the best interests of the public.

Of course, economic report after economic report — I think that there have been about 15 in recent years — shows that the North lacks fiscal levers and that it suffers because of that. Any figures for economic output and growth show that we continue to suffer, whilst the South, even with its difficulties, continues to have greater levels of growth. That is because we do not have the fiscal levers, and our fiscal policies are set at Westminster by the British Government in the interests of the island of Britain. We need to wise up to the fact that we need fiscal levers here. We need those levers to ensure that the policies set here are in the interests of the people in the North and are set with the realisation that we live on a different island and therefore need different policies.

Mr Attwood: We also convey our best wishes to Speaker Hay.

Whatever the different views in the Chamber — that of Mr Nesbitt and others who are for the union and that of I and others who were for Scottish independence — we should first and foremost recognise the people of Scotland, the contribution that they have made and the gratitude that we owe them. The people of Scotland demonstrated the power of the democratic approach — what Alex Salmond referred to as the democratic and consented process. What they have achieved and how far they have travelled puts into sharp relief how little we have travelled because of those in our society on the state and non-state sides who, for many a long year, opposed the democratic approach and used coercion.

The people of Scotland have forever changed the character of politics and the nature of the union. Whether it be devo max, home rule or independence in the future, the people of Scotland, by the decisions that they took and the votes that they cast, have put all of that on the radar. From our point of view, we will argue for the maximisation of devolution here, and it is the people of Scotland who have opened the doors to all of that.

We also recognise the young people of Scotland. If people who are 16 and 17 can be given the opportunity to shape the constitution of their nation, they should also have the opportunity to shape the politics and government of their nation, and that applies to all parts of these islands.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to the SNP. More than any other party or Government, it has demonstrated the difference between being in government and being in power. The vote they got was recognition of that. People in our Government should draw conclusions from the power and success of what they have achieved if we are to follow likewise.

12.15 pm

Finally, we should acknowledge Alex Salmond, because he created new standards for democracy, for leadership and for Governments. For all of that and for all of his colleagues in government, I think that we all owe him a lot.

Mr Ford: Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues, I echo your words of good wishes for the Speaker.

As Mr Nesbitt said, there is no doubt that the result of the Scottish referendum was a very significant event, but, by its nature, referenda or referendums, whichever way you put it, in the United Kingdom tend to be about significant matters —

Mr Nesbitt: Referenda.

Mr Ford: Try the Greek rather than the Latin, gentlemen.

They are significant issues because they are those that are put to the people, rather than being determined by those in legislatures. However, we also need to be clear that the victory for the Better Together campaign was not actually a victory for unionism over nationalism. It was a victory based on the promise of devo max from the two parties in the current Westminster Government and the party that might or might not be part of or form the next Government. That, because it was devo max and not just unionism and nationalism, is what has fundamentally altered the nature of relationships within these islands in general. There is no doubt that the Prime Minister recognised that at 7.00 am on Friday when he clearly addressed the issue of the English question.

However, it is also clear that it is a major issue for Wales and Northern Ireland. For example, we know that Wales is looking at potentially increasing its powers in the field of devolving justice and extricating itself from the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice's responsibilities. However, where are we in Northern Ireland? Unfortunately, in this place, we have a record of failure to deal with those difficult issues. We are currently running through a crisis because of our inabilities and our immaturity, so how could we possibly make a case for suggesting that we should be looking for additional powers until we seek to resolve those problems?

In his contribution, Mr McKay said that it was time that we wised up, which may or may not be parliamentary language. I tend to agree with him, but I do not know that it is in exactly the way in which he would have intended, because it seems to me that, at the moment, we have a complete immaturity on economics, which is matched by an irresponsibility on some of the issues around parades and flags, and we have a group of victims from the past who are utterly let down by our failure in this place to deal with the key issues for us. It is great to talk about what the Scots have achieved, but unless we are prepared to knuckle down and engage in real and meaningful talks here to solve our problems, then we have nothing to say.

There is an issue that will need a proper constitutional convention for the UK at some point. However, it is much more urgent for us to tackle the issues that confront this society, not just the financial issues but those that we failed to deal with at the end of last year, and start to show some leadership in this place.

Mr Allister: I join in the best wishes to Mr Speaker. I trust that his health will radically improve.

I greatly welcome the result in Scotland and, unlike the union-agnostic Mr Ford, I recognise that it was a victory for the union and one that one very much appreciates and supports. It was good to see the canny, wise Scots refuse the invitation to break up the United Kingdom, and I believe that the cause of those who sought to break it up may well now wane in consequence.

The Prime Minister said that, after the referendum, there is a need for constitutional reform. He is probably right, but he would be totally wrong in so far as this House is concerned were he to say that this House, which cannot handle the powers that it has, needs more powers. This House does not need more powers. This House has structures that, in the words of the First Minister, are unfit for purpose, and therefore it is unable to handle even the powers that it has.

What this House needs is parity of democratic rights with the rest of the United Kingdom. There are components of Scotland and Wales's settlements that we take for granted. The very right to have an opposition is taken for granted in Edinburgh and Cardiff; indeed, it is taken for granted across the democratic world. Yet here, even that basic democratic right is denied in these institutions. On top of that, the people of Scotland and Wales have the basic democratic right to change their Government; to vote a party that they are disillusioned with out of government. Of course, because of the import of an unworkable mandatory coalition, we do not even have that right here. If the Prime Minister is talking about constitutional reform, he should start at the point where one infuses the democratic imperatives into the structures that we have in this House.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Allister: Let me be very clear: the enemies of Stormont are those who refuse to contemplate the democratisation of Stormont. That is who they are.

Mr Wilson: I also pass on my best wishes to the Speaker at this time.

I congratulate the people of Scotland for recognising the benefits of the union, despite the tartan terror tactics of the SNP during a very contentious referendum campaign: one that saw academics threatened; civil servants abusing their power; public meetings broken up; businessmen told that there would be consequences if they did not keep their mouths shut; and people afraid even to show their loyalties and where they stood for fear of having their property attacked. It was typical of the nasty face of nationalism. We have seen it in Northern Ireland, and the people of Scotland witnessed it during the referendum campaign.

Despite all of that, the people of Scotland saw the benefits of the union. They saw the security benefits in an unstable world, the economic benefits in a world with increasing globalisation and, of course, the historical benefits that have been reaped over a long period. We, in Northern Ireland, owe to many people in Scotland a great debt of gratitude for the way in which soldiers joined the British Army and defended the people of Northern Ireland against IRA terrorism and sacrificed their lives here. For that reason, we ought to be grateful: first, for the sacrifices made; and secondly, for the fact that the Scottish people

have not only recognised in the past the importance of the union through their sacrifices but have voted on the importance of the union.

There is a message for the people of Northern Ireland in this, for those who might be enticed by a border poll. I am surprised that Sinn Féin wishes to have a border poll, given that 25% of its own supporters do not support its idea of a united Ireland. A vast majority of people here are in favour of the union. Of course, Sinn Féin will wish to divert attention away from its incompetence in this place — its economic incompetence, which, despite its hatred of the Tories in Westminster, means that it is happy to hand £9 million of our money back every month, rather than make decisions that have to be made in this House.

To the people of Northern Ireland, I say that the people of Scotland saw the benefits of the union. We in Northern Ireland know the benefits of the union.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Wilson: In any border poll that there might be in the future, should there be one, I am sure that the people of Northern Ireland will make exactly the same decision as the people in Scotland.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I beg your pardon; I was distracted by the last person to speak. I call Mr Jonathan Bell.

Mr Bell: I think that we were right to stay silent as the Scots made probably the most momentous decision of their generation or, as the Scottish First Minister, Alex Salmond, said, a decision that has been made for a lifetime. That does not mask or take away from the fact that many of us were passionately committed to the retention of the Union, but it was for the people of Scotland to decide. The Scots have chosen for their generation, for their lifetime, and I believe that they have chosen wisely.

Our great Union is a benefit for every part of our United Kingdom, and we are a greater place today with Scotland strongly within that Union. I come from a constituency where Ulster Scots has a profoundly deep, long-lasting and positive impact — many of our families, including my own, can trace our ancestry back to there. It is not just a temporal thing; the Union has benefited all of us through not only the generations but the lifetimes.

Like my colleague Mr Wilson, I pay tribute to the Scots who helped to protect democracy here; in particular, three Scottish soldiers who lost their lives when I was just a child, but also the many other Scottish soldiers who live with physical and psychological injury as a result of defeating terrorism and defeating the terrorists of democracy here in this part of the United Kingdom. We owe them a huge debt that we can never repay.

On economic, cultural, social and tourism grounds, the link of our Union is so profound, and it is to be celebrated that the Scots have chosen so wisely.

I listened to the — I would not say incompetent economics; I go a step further and say the incontinent economics of Sinn Féin. I never laughed as hard as when I heard one of its spokesmen talk this morning about how he was going to get £10 billion, which, by the way, is what we get extra from the Treasury compared to what we put into Her Majesty's Treasury. He was going to get that £10 billion back because he was going to cut the Civil List. It was

comedy hour and completely economically incompetent, because the House is facing a whole range of Sinn Féin cuts: cuts to vulnerable people, cuts to disabled people, cuts to the National Health Service. These are Sinn Féin cuts that are being driven forward, and still they would like to draw a mask —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Bell: — that they could get some £10 billion back. The Scots have chosen; they have chosen wisely; and we need to continue to proclaim the benefits of the Union, so secure here now in Northern Ireland.

Mr McCallister: I join colleagues in wishing the Speaker a full and speedy recovery.

Like many colleagues here, I welcome Scotland's decision to stay within the United Kingdom. There is a general recognition that the outcome of this campaign has resulted in the Union entering a period of constitutional change. The Prime Minister's timetable for Scottish devolution also brings up the West Lothian question, and it means that this debate is happening now. We must get it right. We cannot act in haste and repent at leisure.

I ask these questions. Are the Northern Ireland Executive ready to participate in such a debate to get the best outcome for our citizens? Have the Executive even agreed any type of joint position on negotiating a new settlement for Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom? Were additional fiscal powers to be devolved, are the Northern Ireland Executive fit to deal with them and the responsibility that that would bring?

A little over a year ago, I set out what I called how you might deal with a road map to building a normal society. At the top of that was reforming the Assembly, getting a proper Government and opposition. We are seeing the need for that at the minute, with the paralysis in the Assembly and our Executive. We needed a fiscal powers commission to look at the various powers that we might devolve and their effects. Will the Executive's policy change if Scotland gets corporation tax powers? Where are we down the road, when Scotland and Wales have had Calman and Silk reporting?

Welfare illustrates the changes. Scotland is now looking for welfare to be devolved, and we are talking about not being able to deal with it. The First Minister suggested perhaps giving it back to Westminster. One of his predecessors also suggested that. We are going in the opposite direction with many of these things. Getting beyond tribal politics, how do we move away from the them-and-us politics? Sinn Féin talks about getting a border poll when it is failing even to operate this like a functioning Government and face up to its responsibilities on welfare reform.

12.30 pm

The big difference that Scotland has had over the last 15 years of devolution is that it has had a functioning Parliament and Executive. That is in stark contrast to what we have done. At the minute, we look on being part of the Union as a right, not a responsibility. We need to face up to those responsibilities and to what being part of a great and modern United Kingdom means.

Mr Attwood: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is in relation to the comments that were made by Mr

Wilson, who is on his phone at the moment. If somebody in the Chamber, in the course of a debate, commented on another political party involved in a political campaign in the following terms, referring to the SDLP's "green terror tactics", I would like to think that the Speaker would take action. During the course of the last half an hour, Mr Wilson referred to — Hansard will confirm this — the "tartan terror tactics of the SNP". I ask that you, as a matter of urgency, review the record of Hansard and rule on those comments. Those comments were made about a party that is exclusively democratic, as Mr Wilson knows because he sat in the room with it often enough in relation to issues of government and politics. I ask you, as a matter of urgency, to rule on that matter.

Mr Wilson: Further to that point of order, I hope that, when you are reviewing the comments that I made — let me repeat that it was not "green terror tactics" but "the tartan terror tactics of the SNP" — you will also review the comments that were made afterwards, which illustrated the kinds of tactics that were involved during the campaign and which clearly embarrass another nationalist party that has such great ties with the SNP.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: On this matter, I will consult Hansard and make a decision on that. People should not see it as an opportunity to draw the business of this House into whatever passed in the course of the referendum discussions and remarks or actions by parties that have no part in this Assembly.

Mr Nesbitt: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am satisfied that "referendum" is a gerund of Latin extraction. Therefore, I encourage the Minister to use "referenda" when referring to the plural.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I will take that as a point of information.

The House will take its ease while we change the top Table.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

Ministerial Statement

North/South Ministerial Council: Aquaculture and Marine

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. With your permission, I will make a statement in compliance with section 58 of the 1998 Act regarding the twenty-fifth meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council in aquaculture and marine sectoral format. The meeting was held in Derry on Friday 27 June 2014. The Executive were represented by Minister Nelson McCausland and me. The Irish Government were represented by Fergus O'Dowd TD, the then Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. Minister Rabbitte was unable to attend the meeting. I chaired the meeting.

This statement has been agreed with Minister McCausland, and I am making it on behalf of us both.

Ministers congratulated John Pollock, who was appointed chief executive of the Loughs Agency. The Council received a progress report on the work of the Loughs Agency from its chairperson, Winston Patterson, and the chief executive.

Ministers welcomed progress on the activities of the Loughs Agency, including its ongoing conservation and protection efforts and participation in Operation Salar, which is the result of a multi-agency approach to tackle fish poaching and protect fish stocks. The PSNI is working alongside the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Loughs Agency to enforce fishing regulations and educate the public on fishing and the importance of protecting fish stocks.

We also heard of the agency's participation in the planting of over 5,000 native broadleaf trees of various species in the Glenshane Pass area as part of the climate change adaptation initiative.

The Council welcomed the report on the activities of the Loughs Agency in promoting and marketing Foyle and Carlingford loughs, including the Foyle Maritime Festival 2014, angling development and promotion, the delivery of INTERREG IVa programmes, the provision of a portable event platform for Carlingford lough, various food festivals and other tourism initiatives.

I pay tribute to the Loughs Agency staff, Derry City Council and all those involved in the Maritime Festival 2014, which saw the return of the prestigious Clipper Round the World Yacht Race to the city. That event was an outstanding success.

We were told how the Loughs Agency has developed a number of initiatives to animate the River Foyle and provide local people and visitors with an opportunity to experience the river and learn more about its history and biodiversity. That programme will include education and outreach to local schools in Limavady, Derry and Donegal as well as an adult education programme of lectures, which will be delivered as part of walking, bus and canoe tours.

As part of their joint marketing activities, the Loughs Agency, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and Inland Fisheries Ireland continue to attend a number of trade shows annually, at home and abroad, that are aimed at boosting Irish angling tourism. For 2014-15, a number of shows have been identified as targets, which will see angling promoted in a number of European countries as well as closer to home. We received an update on the drafting of regulations by the Loughs Agency, which will require NSMC approval in late 2014. The draft legislation will also come before the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee.

I am also very pleased to report that steady progress has been made on the management agreement between the Loughs Agency and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Loughs Agency chaired a meeting on 29 May with relevant Departments and agencies to start a discussion on the operational issues associated with the development of the management agreement. The interdepartmental group that is examining the long-standing jurisdictional issues and other issues also met on 29 May. The group received an update on the significant challenges being faced in resolving those issues and is considering possible ways to progress matters.

The Loughs Agency is arranging further meetings with the agencies of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in that context and to consider proposals relating to the operational issues that may arise from the transfer of aquaculture licensing and development functions to the agency. Ministers also received an update on the progress of the IBIS research projects, angling development and the very successful recent angling conference.

The Council approved the continuation of the framework designed to support the Loughs Agency in dealing with emergencies, such as a serious pollution incident, for a further period of one year, with effect from 20 July 2014, and agreed to review the operation of this procedure before 20 July 2015.

One of the highlights of the sectoral meeting was the presentation that Ministers received from the Loughs Agency on the Foyle ambassador project. That project brought 12 young people from different communities from across the city together for a 10-week environmental programme, in conjunction with St Columb's Park House. Funding was provided by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister and Co-operation Ireland. Loughs Agency staff developed a programme that focused on personal and skills development, with a view to improving the young people's outlook on their future goals. The initiative had a strong environmental theme, with a focus on the River Foyle. The young people received an increased understanding of biodiversity and the value of Lough Foyle in recreation and commercial use. They were involved in water-based activities such as canoeing, angling and power boating as well as leadership and personal development sessions.

I thank and pay tribute to the Loughs Agency staff and the local anglers and others from Lough Foyle who willingly gave of their time to educate and mentor the 12 young people. From the presentation, I know how much the young people got out of this unique and worthwhile project. I congratulate each and every one of them and wish them well in the future.

The Foyle ambassador project shows what can be done to bring young people from different backgrounds and skills together, and the Loughs Agency is looking at ways to roll that very successful project out to other areas.

The Council welcomed the report on the activities of the Loughs Agency in promoting and marketing Foyle and Carlingford loughs, including the Foyle Maritime Festival 2014 and angling development, which I mentioned earlier. Those activities also included the delivery of INTERREG IVa programmes, the provision of a portable event platform for Carlingford lough, food festivals, the greenway project at Carlingford and the Foyle and Carlingford sailability projects. We also heard that arrangements are under way for an all-island aquaculture shellfish conference to take place in June next year.

The NSMC approved the Loughs Agency's corporate plan 2014-16, the business plan 2014 and noted the relevant budget provisions. We also noted the agency's annual report and draft financial statements for 2013 and that, following certification of the financial statements by the Comptrollers and Auditors General, they will be laid before the Assembly and the Oireachtas.

The Council approved the determination made by the Loughs Agency to amend the Foyle Fisheries Commission Pension (Amendment) Scheme 1979. The Council also approved the Loughs Agency (Foyle Fisheries Commission) Pension (Amendment No.3) Scheme 2014, which is to allow for employee contribution rates to be increased, and that this amended scheme shall apply to the body.

Following a request from the Health Minister, I was pleased to present the Food Safety Promotion Board's corporate plan 2014-16 and its business plan for 2014. The Council approved both plans and noted the recommended budget provision and indicative budgets for 2015 and 2016.

The Council agreed to meet again in aquaculture and marine sectoral format in late autumn.

Mr Frew (The Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development): The Minister will be aware that I have constantly asked about the lack of a management agreement for the seabed leasing in Lough Foyle and when that issue will be resolved. There are references in the statement, of course, about steady progress. Can the Minister elaborate on that steady progress and give us a likely date for the agreement to be finalised?

Paragraph 14 refers to the drafting of regulations to come to the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development at some stage. Can the Minister be more specific and provide details of what those regulations will legislate for?

Mrs O'Neill: I thank the Member for his question. I want to reassure the Member and the House that I have given the Loughs Agency my full support as it attempts to finalise the management agreement with the relevant Department in the South. As I said in the statement, I am grateful to Minister Pat Rabbitte and his officials for their effort in helping us to progress the management agreement in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

There has been a lot of significant progress, particularly around the fact that the Loughs Agency chaired a working meeting on 29 May with the relevant Departments, Bord Iascaigh Mhara and the Sea-Fisheries Protection

Authority to start a discussion on the roll-out of the operational issues associated with the development of the management agreement. The interdepartmental group also met on 29 May to discuss other issues.

The agency is proactively arranging other meetings with the relevant agencies to consider the proposals, particularly in relation to operational issues. We are very confident that we are coming to the end of the discussions and will be able to move forward with the final management arrangement, which will be brought back to a future NSMC meeting, perhaps even the next one.

I believe that we will discuss the legislation further at the next NSMC meeting and are looking towards the end of this year for the Committee to discuss the regulations. Obviously, the Committee will be briefed in detail in due course as that comes up.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I want to place on record my appreciation of the work of the Loughs Agency and congratulate the new chief executive on his appointment. The Minister referred to the great work that young people have been doing as part of the Foyle ambassador project. Are there any plans to continue and extend that work?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes, and thank you for the words of encouragement. As I said, I congratulate all those involved and those who willingly gave up their time. It really was an effective project.

When I watched the promotional video, which the young people put together themselves, on the outworkings of the project, I could see the benefit of it. These were young people from across the city of Derry who perhaps had never engaged with members of other communities. At the end of the programme, they certainly had got an awful lot out of it, so I hope that it will be rolled out further. I have asked the Loughs Agency to consider all that.

We were fortunate in that we received funding through OFMDFM and Co-operation Ireland. We are looking to them again but also to other funders to allow us to roll out the project on a wider scale and into other areas, because the benefits were clear to be seen.

People got an understanding of themselves through their own personal development, and they also had an education in biodiversity and the environment in a fun way but also in a very practical way because they were out lifting rubbish and taking part in all sorts of activities. I certainly want to see it continued and enhanced and ensure that we can get as many young people as possible on board for future roll-out of it.

12.45 pm

Mr Byrne: I thank the Minister for the statement. Can the Minister state what implications there are for the budget of the agency going forward in relation to its activities? Secondly, can the Minister enlighten us on whether it is her intention to broaden the spectrum of opinion on the board so that more of the fishermen who fish with rods or anglers are represented on it?

Mrs O'Neill: On the budget position, as I set out, we had agreed our corporate plan and the business plan, and the draft financial statements were all set out at the last NSMC meeting. The Member will be aware that we have set out very clearly our key objectives around conservation and

the protection of the fisheries in the Foyle and Carlingford Loughs: licensing and developing aquaculture; developing marine tourism and angling; and effectively and efficiently delivering on its statutory mandate and responsibilities.

The NSMC meeting approved the business plan and the spending plan, and both plans were approved by the Finance Ministers, North and South. Obviously, they are now on the public record.

I absolutely appreciate that the Loughs Agency is working within a tight budget, as are all Departments and agencies, so there certainly are financial constraints, particularly as income has dropped for the Loughs Agency due to a shortfall of applications for angling licences. So, the board and the chief executive are looking at how they can make efficiency savings, and they have set out in the corporate plan how they plan to deliver 4% efficiency savings going forward.

On your point around fisheries, such an amount of work has gone into promoting angling and education around angling, so we want to make sure that, in moving forward with the work of the Loughs Agency, fishermen have to be represented on the board. They very much have to be given a voice on decisions moving forward, and I have made that very clear to the Loughs Agency. I know that it has made improvements over the last number of years, particularly in that representation. I am sure that that will continue.

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for the update. She talked about an initiative to deal with fish poaching, and I wonder how widespread fish poaching is in the area. Have there been many prosecutions in regard to it in that particular area?

Mrs O'Neill: There have been particular issues down through the years with poaching, and the Member will probably be aware that we have had attacks on staff as well whilst they are out trying to protect the fisheries stock. Thankfully, this year, we have seen a dramatic fall in those numbers. We have had no new cases of attacks on staff this year, which is to be very much welcomed. The operation that I talked about in the statement is called Operation Salar, and it involves cross-agency working. It involves the PSNI, the Loughs Agency, DCAL and the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime all coming together, and that has been very effective in dealing with poaching. I do not have the figures on poaching, but I am very happy to provide them to the Member. As I said, we are absolutely delighted that the number of attacks on staff who are protecting the Loughs has decreased.

Mr McCarthy: I thank the Minister for her statement. Item 29 refers to the relevant budget provisions, and item 33 talks about indicative budget provisions. Can the Minister assure the Assembly that, given the very serious financial situation across the island, there will be sufficient budgets to carry out the duties that the Loughs Agency is set up to do?

Mrs O'Neill: For clarity, point 29 refers to the NSMC's approval of the Loughs Agency corporate plan and business plan, but, in point 33, I presented a paper on behalf of the Health Minister in relation to the Food Safety Promotion Board's corporate plan, which is why it is referred to as indicative. I can assure the Member that, as I said earlier, we have approved a budget, and the chief executive and the board are working to live within their budget. Obviously, it is a difficult financial climate

for everybody, but I am confident that it will be able to achieve the savings that it has set out to achieve and that it will have the budget. Of course it would always want more money, and who would not? As I said, for rolling out projects such as the Foyle ambassador project youth scheme, we are looking towards other funding sources that would complement the Loughs Agency budget.

Mr Irwin: Paragraph 13 refers to the joint marketing activities between the Loughs Agency and DCAL, based on boosting angling tourism, which I welcome. Will the Minister outline how much money the Loughs Agency contributes to that, what the outputs of that activity are expected to be and how her Department will evaluate whether that type of marketing activity has a real impact?

Mrs O'Neill: We have a beautiful natural resource, and we are really trying to market it. Loughs Agency staff go to other European countries to promote what we have to offer and to try to encourage anglers to come forward. We have been successful in achieving a number of international angling competitions. All that is very positive, but we need to do more to promote what we have. That is ongoing work. Loughs Agency staff are absolutely committed to making sure that they take forward the promotion of the Foyle and Carlingford areas.

Next year, we have an aquaculture conference, which will be significant in looking at the challenges for growers and what we can do to assist them. There is very positive ongoing work, and that will continue. I do not have a breakdown of the money that we spend on marketing with me, but I am happy to provide it to the Member. As I said, the group is very active in promoting the tourism potential. The fact that we have been involved with the clipper race for a second year is fantastic. It also does great educational work with young people about what they have on their doorstep. There is quite a lot of positive work.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I congratulate the Minister on her statement. Paragraph 15 refers to the management agreement and the steady progress being made. Will you give us more detail on the progress being made?

Mrs O'Neill: As I said, quite a large body of work has been taken forward to make sure that all the partners to the management agreement are on the same page. As I said, I want to reassure Members that we are doing all we can to make sure that I give the Loughs Agency my full support in an attempt to finalise the management agreement. We are hopeful that we will be able to do that towards the end of the year. There is a lot of ongoing work and operational meetings so that we are able to iron out any differences or kinks.

Mr Buchanan: I note from paragraph 12 that the Loughs Agency has developed a number of initiatives along the River Foyle, with an educational programme in schools in places such as Limavady, Londonderry and Donegal. Are there any plans to widen the horizon and extend that programme to schools outside those areas?

Mrs O'Neill: Obviously, we work within the Foyle catchment area. As I said, fantastic educational work is being done, and we often get presentations on its roll-out. The number of people who visit both centres is fantastic. We are always looking at how we can expand it and whom we can reach. Expansion is an ongoing operational issue for the Loughs Agency.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Minister for her statement. With reference to paragraph 19, Minister, what are the implications for the local aquaculture industry with the transfer of licensing and development functions to the agency? In particular, will we have more consistency on both sides of the lough?

Mrs O'Neill: The aim is to get to that position, and the management agreement will allow us to do that. To make it fair for everybody, there should be only one licensing system. The principle behind taking that forward is to have one consistent system. At next year's aquaculture conference, we will look at, among many other things, disease prevention and control. We need to focus R&D funding. I know that the Member has concerns about oyster growers and the problems that they have suffered, particularly in Carlingford. There is great potential for us to scope things out and improve things for those growers.

Mr Allister: The resource accounts for the Minister's Department for last year show that, on three occasions, the Minister made payments to the Loughs Agency without DFP approval, as is required by the 1999 legislation, and that she therefore made irregular payments amounting to over £1.8 million to the Loughs Agency. Has the Minister desisted from that practice? Is she now committed to complying with the law of the land and to seeking DFP approval for payments to the Loughs Agency and any other cross-border body?

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware that concerns were raised by DFP in terms of the regularity of expenditure incurred since the outset of the Loughs Agency's financial year and the approval of its business plan. Similar concerns were raised with other Departments and, as far as I am aware, the matter is still under consideration and discussion. However, in addition to the 2014 business plan being approved by Finance Ministers and the NSMC in June, a draft 2015 business plan has already been prepared, with a view to having all the necessary approvals in place before the start of the Loughs Agency's financial year, which is 1 January 2015. So, I assure the Member that I am committed to doing things properly.

Committee Business

Justice Bill: Extension of Committee Stage

Mr Givan (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): I beg to move

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 27 March 2015, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Justice Bill (NIA 37/11-15).

The Committee Stage of the Justice Bill began on 25 June. The Bill is wide-ranging and diverse, consisting of 92 clauses. There are six schedules to the Bill, which is divided into nine parts. It has three main policy aims, which are to improve services for victims and witnesses; to speed up the justice system; and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of key aspects of the system.

Some of the key areas covered by the Bill include the creation of violent offences prevention orders; the establishment of victim and witness charters providing statutory entitlements for information provision and treatment; changes to committal proceedings; a single jurisdiction for County Courts and Magistrates' Courts; and streamlined arrangements for the disclosure of criminal records.

As I indicated at Second Stage, the Committee particularly welcomes the provisions relating to victims and witnesses that are as a result of the Committee's inquiry into the criminal justice services available to victims and witnesses of crime and that aim to redress the balance in the system and ensure that improved services are provided for them.

To assist its scrutiny of the Bill, the Committee has sought views from an extensive range of organisations and key stakeholders. It has placed notices in the local newspapers and on the Assembly website. The Committee has also taken the opportunity to seek views on a range of amendments that the Department has indicated that it intends to bring forward at Consideration Stage, including an amendment that Mr Jim Wells MLA advised the Committee at the meeting on 2 July that he intends to move at Consideration Stage and an amendment proposed by the Attorney General for Northern Ireland that the Committee first considered in the context of the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill. Given that there was not sufficient time to scrutinise it fully, we agreed to return to it at the next legislative opportunity.

The amendments from the Department relate to a range of issues, including the exchange of information between Access NI and the Disclosure and Barring Service in Great Britain; a proposal to introduce a mechanism to enable those whose convictions or diversionary disposals have not been filtered from Access NI checks to ask for a review of such decisions; and providing for the sharing of victim information for the purposes of offering victims access to services.

The Attorney General has the power, under section 14(1) of the Coroners Act (Northern Ireland) 1959, to direct an inquest where he considers it "advisable" to do so but has no powers to obtain papers or information that may be relevant to the exercise of that power. He has experienced some difficulty in recent years in securing access to documents that he has needed, and his proposed amendment to the 1959 Act would confer on him a power to obtain papers and provide a clear statutory basis for

disclosure. He has indicated that the principal focus of his concern is deaths that occur in hospital or where there is otherwise a suggestion that medical error may have occurred.

Mr Jim Wells's amendment is intended to restrict lawful abortions to National Health Service premises, except in cases of urgency when access to such premises is not possible and where no fee is paid. The amendment also provides an additional option to existing legislation for a period of up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine on conviction upon indictment.

1.00 pm

The Committee received 45 submissions, many of which comment on, and raise issues about, the various clauses in, and schedules to, the Bill or the proposed amendments that I have outlined. Several more submissions are due in this week. There have also been a number of petitions and responses from individuals and over 20,000 postcards received supporting Mr Wells's amendment.

Given the level of interest in the Bill and the amendments, members agreed at the meeting on 10 September to seek an extension to the Committee Stage until 27 March 2015. While the Committee supports the overall aims of the Bill, this extension will provide sufficient time to take oral evidence, which the Committee intends to start in November, carry out robust scrutiny of the detail contained in the clauses and schedules and compile and agree the Committee report as well as enabling the Committee to consider a range of other important justice issues that are not related to the Bill during this time, such as current budget pressures, further reforms to both criminal and civil legal aid and other Bills to be introduced by the Department of Justice. The Committee will report to the Assembly on the Bill as soon as possible within the proposed deadline of 27 March 2015.

I will speak very briefly not as Chair of the Committee. The Committee received an overwhelming response to the amendment that it agreed to consult on, which is the one in the name of Mr Jim Wells. Members will be familiar with the amendment from when Mr Elliott, Mr Maginness, Mr Allister, other members and I brought it forward and a majority in the House supported it. This is now a second opportunity to do so, because a number of people indicated that there was not enough time to scrutinise it. We received over 30,000 responses from the public wanting the amendment to be enacted. The Committee will now have an opportunity to carry out the scrutiny of it, and I trust that the Assembly will then be given the opportunity to consider it once again after we have carried out the scrutiny work. We will take another vote on it. I trust that those Members who opposed it last time, because they did not have enough time, will be able to use the process properly and scrutinise it. Then, we will get another opportunity to take this forward.

I believe that the responses on that particular amendment were singularly the greatest number that any Committee has ever received in the history of the Assembly, so we should not underestimate its importance to the public. Mr Ford, the Minister, indicated at the time of this legislation, over a year ago, that he would consult on that very issue. In over a year — indeed, almost 18 months later — David Ford, the Minister of Justice, has failed to act in any way to deal with what the majority of the Assembly voted for, so

this Committee has now decided that we will need to do the work that he should have been doing. I trust that when it comes to the Floor of the Assembly, Members will have had due time to give it proper consideration. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 27 March 2015, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Justice Bill (NIA 37/11-15).

Private Members' Business

Western Education and Library Board: Development Proposals

Mr Deputy Speaker: The next item on the Order Paper is a motion on development proposals from the Western Education and Library Board. The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. One amendment has been selected and is published on the Marshalled List. The proposer will have 10 minutes to propose the amendment and five minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other speakers will have five minutes.

Lord Morrow: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes development proposals 260, 261 and 262 by the Western Education and Library Board regarding the proposed closure of the Collegiate Grammar School and Portora Royal School; commends the staff and pupils of both schools for the excellent GSCE and A-level results achieved again this year; and requires the Minister of Education to reject the development proposals and seek consensus on the future of these schools with broad community support.

Members will no doubt have noted that the motion refers to development proposals 260, 261 and 262 from the Western Education and Library Board. Those proposals, if carried through, would not only close the Collegiate Grammar School but would have far-reaching implications for the future of post-primary education in the controlled voluntary sector in County Fermanagh as a whole. The establishment of a new co-educational, non-denominational, voluntary grammar school operating on a split site, incorporating Portora Royal School, is envisaged. The proposals are being pushed ahead, sadly, without consensus. Surely, this is something that the Minister wants to divert some of his attention to. I am firmly of the view that such controversial proposals should have, as a starting point, consensus and broad community support.

At this point, I would like to congratulate the Collegiate and the Portora Royal schools on their achievements in providing education in County Fermanagh that is of an excellent standard.

I will lay out the main areas of concern in relation to the process to date. First, the process itself lacks public accountability. That is surely something that the Minister will, I hope, attempt to address when he speaks later. Secondly, the rationale that seeks to underpin the process does not stand up to scrutiny. Thirdly, the proposals seek to close a highly successful, oversubscribed grammar school, which has a reputation that is second to none, and the removal of the Collegiate would result in an inequality of opportunity for the young people of County Fermanagh. Fourthly, the current Programme for Government states that building a united community, improving community relations and promoting shared education are its key proposals. It is my firm view that the process of the Western Education and Library Board's proposals falls far short of all those objectives.

I implore the Minister, before the proposals are adopted, to ensure that careful consideration is given to the expressed

will of the boards of governors, staff, parents and pupils and the strong opposition from the community as a whole. It appears that there is a determined attempt to set one school against another. That is a most unfortunate fallout from the whole episode.

In my opinion, the amendment to the motion is, at least, mischievous. An attempt to introduce Devenish College into the debate is, to say the least, unhelpful. To divide and conquer seems to be the motive.

The Western Education and Library Board approved the publication of the proposals in full awareness of the strength of opposition expressed in its own consultation process in March and April this year. One can only ask this question: why the determination to push ahead with proposals that are inherently unpopular and so much out of step with the whole community?

I want to bring to the attention of the Assembly some other issues. There are significant issues of accountability around the Fermanagh Protestant Board of Education (FPBE), which, under the proposals, would be the body that would act as trustee of the new school. A recent open letter in the local press asked a few pertinent questions and asked it to: make public the scheme that sets out such powers and responsibilities; indicate when the current members were elected and the length of time for which they will hold office, in the light of the statement in earlier correspondence in the press from the FPBE that it is made up of people elected through the representative processes of what are called the three traditional Churches, namely the Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church and Church of Ireland; outline the channels of communication between the elected representatives and the church communities from which they come; and indicate whether, at any level, those members consider themselves accountable to the members of their denomination throughout County Fermanagh. That was the content of the open letter, which was, I think, very significant.

What was the reply? Alas, there was no reply. And we have to beg this question: why would that be? Why could that body not stand up and address the questions of concern that were posed not once but twice? We still await a reply.

It is my opinion — I suspect that it is the opinion of many in the House — that the non-negotiable factors in the ongoing process against which any proposals are judged would have to ensure the quality of educational experience in its widest sense for all young people; the quality of curricular provision, which meets the needs of all the young people in the area; and the quality of outcome. I believe that those are the important factors that need to be addressed.

One of the most worrying aspects of these proposals is the fact that, if they were carried through, a highly successful school could be closed against the expressed will of its board of governors, staff, parents, pupils and a very significant section of the wider community. In my opinion, it is quite clear that area planning lacks public confidence. The need of young people should always be the motivating factor. Nothing else can be the issue; and that does not appear to be the case here. The outcome of any process must surely be threefold: the quality of educational experience; the quality of curricular provision; and the quality of outcomes.

It appears to many, particularly in County Fermanagh, that the Western Education and Library Board's proposals 260, 261 and 262 will not be achieved. Some have attempted — this is where we part company with those who support the amendment — to sow seeds of confusion and have introduced Devenish College into the whole debate. I feel that that is unfortunate, and I believe that it has been done deliberately to confuse. The Minister is already on record as saying that, irrespective of the outcome in relation to Portora and the Collegiate, Devenish goes ahead. According to the Minister, that decision has already been made. Today, I would like him to reiterate that and state, quite clearly, as he has done in the past, that Devenish is not part of this debate. It has been agreed that a new school will be provided. We would also like to hear from the Minister today the date for the commencement of the Devenish development. We have asked that question before and have tried to push the Minister on it to give some definitive dates for when that will commence. Today is an opportunity for the Minister to put that one completely to bed and give us a date for when the Devenish project will commence. I believe that, in doing so, the Minister can take a lot of the confusion and discord out of a debate that has been going on for so long.

I ask the Minister to take on board the fact that this is not finding support from across the community, in particular from those who will be affected most by it.

I look forward to hearing what others have to say about the motion. My party will not support the amendment.

Mr Hazzard: I beg to move the following amendment:

Leave out all after "Portora Royal School" and insert "and the creation of a new school; commends the staff and pupils of both schools for the excellent GCSE and A-level results achieved again this year; and calls on the Minister of Education to ensure that his decision on these development proposals ensures that all the young people served by the controlled sector in Enniskillen are given equality of access to high-quality education, including the provision of a new build for Devenish College."

Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I start by thanking the Business Office for accepting the amendment. Unlike the original motion, our amendment is inclusive of all the educational needs of the young people in Fermanagh, not merely a few. Indeed, it reflects the feelings of local people on the ground in Fermanagh who are somewhat disturbed that the interests of the few may marginalise those of the silent majority. That is exactly where the DUP is going wrong.

1.15 pm

The DUP needs to answer a few questions here today, starting off with — no less important — this: who did the DUP consult in bringing this motion forward today? Is this simply a hobby horse for Mrs Foster? We keep being reminded when we look at the media that the Collegiate is her old school, as if, for some reason, that nugget of information helps the educational interests of the young people in Fermanagh going forward in the years ahead. It simply does not. That is what the DUP should be doing: examining and championing what is in the educational interests of all the young people in Fermanagh in the years

ahead, not the narrow, institutional interests of a particular school or a particular board of governors.

Mrs Foster: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: I will indeed.

Mrs Foster: Will the Member acknowledge that the email from the email account of Mr Morton, which I assume he is referring to, also refers to the fact that various meetings took place between me, Mr Elliott of the Ulster Unionist Party and all the heads of the boards of governors of the Collegiate, Portora, Devenish and the then Lisnaskea High School, which, as we know, was closed very recently? Because no consensus was found at those meetings, it has been decided that they will go ahead regardless of the fact that there is no consensus. Is the Member saying that we should not continue to find consensus, or is he just saying that, because two schools have decided on a way forward, the other schools should just sit back and say nothing?

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Minister for her intervention. What I would say is —

Mrs Foster: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am sitting on the Back Bench for a reason: I am not the Minister in this debate.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the Member will take note of that.

Mr Hazzard: I have taken note of the point that has been raised.

Around consensus — this is what the DUP needs to take on board — when you talk about broad community support, it is about engaging with the broad community, not one particular school or one particular board of governors, and that is exactly where it has gone wrong on this.

I will come back to other correspondence, because no doubt the Member has obviously received the correspondence as well. The motion calls on the Minister to:

“seek consensus ... with broad community support”.

Yet from what we have heard today and, indeed, from the correspondence that we have received, it is the DUP that appears to be running away from this notion of broad community consensus.

I just want to read from a piece of correspondence that Mrs Foster referred to. It is another piece of correspondence that we received on behalf of the boards of governors of Portora and Devenish College. It reads:

“As the Chairs of the Boards of Governors of Portora Royal School and Devenish College respectively, we have been instructed by our Boards of Governors to make it clear that: the motion relating to Development Proposals 260, 261 and 262 (which Proposals have significant consequences for post-primary education in non-denominational schools in County Fermanagh) has not been discussed with either of our schools by the individuals tabling the motion”.

If you are looking for broad consensus and community support, you would think that you would go and talk to the very people who will be affected by a resolution. The DUP has failed to do that, but we should not be surprised that it has failed to do so.

It goes on to say:

“the Development Proposals in question have the unanimous support of both of our Boards of Governors”.

I am not going to stand here —

Mr Lynch: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he agree with me that it is important that the educational needs of Devenish College are taken into consideration? Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Hazzard: I thank the Member for his intervention. I agree 100%. This is what area planing is all about. We need to get it into our heads that, when a decision is taken in one particular school, it has an impact on all the schools in the area. Time and time again, the DUP fails to bring that point to the forefront of its mind, so I thank the Member for raising it.

As a Member for South Down, I am not going to stand here and dictate to the people of Fermanagh what is the best way forward for their young people, but one thing is for sure, and that is that, whatever decision is made, it must be made in the interests of all the children. We must cherish all our children, and not simply a few.

So where is the mention of Devenish College in all this? The DUP runs away from it. It thinks that it confuses the matter to raise it and to talk about other children in the education and library board area. Do the pupils at Devenish College not matter to the DUP?

Mrs Foster: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: Does it not care about them?

Mrs Foster: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: No. We have heard enough from the other side.

The DUP's vision — this is an important point — will do nothing for tackling educational inequality and, indeed, underachievement in the Enniskillen and Fermanagh area. Recently, the Education Committee heard about the differentials in achievement between Protestant boys and Protestant girls, and everything else. What the DUP wants to do today is run away from problems like that. It is not prepared to tackle the causes. The DUP wants to talk about educational underachievement among boys. I am glad that the Member for North Belfast is here, because the Shankill is one of the areas where this is most pertinent. The DUP runs away from reform of the common funding formula, but that is very same formula that has pumped millions into the Shankill, which we see the DUP welcome.

The DUP needs to decide whether it is going to stand up and show real leadership on an issue.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hazzard: No, I have heard enough from the other side.

Here is a chance to stand up for all the children in Fermanagh and put down plans that are in their best interests for years to come, and not to get behind what appears to be one particular Member's hobby horse and stand up for one particular school.

I want to turn now to the correspondence received from the principal, which was mentioned by Mrs Foster. I am sure that other Members want to speak about it, but I want

to speak about the issue of duplication and replication of resources. In 2012, 20 subjects were accessed by just eight pupils at AS level and 22 subjects were accessed by eight pupils at A2 level. We need to ask ourselves whether that is the best use of educational resources. Are the children who attend those classes getting the best they can from those classrooms?

I want to finish by addressing the notion that we would be losing the Collegiate; that, somehow, the Collegiate will disappear into the ether. This is absolutely not the case because the Collegiate would gain. The bright young minds at the Collegiate now would be challenged by more bright young minds, which can only be good for the educational interests of all the people in Fermanagh.

I ask all the parties to support the amendment.

Mr Rogers: The SDLP strongly believes that parental choice is the cornerstone of an effective education system and it cannot be overlooked. We are committed to the establishment of an education system that will provide an enriching and holistic education for all our young people.

In order to make well-informed decisions on the best educational route for our children, parents must have as diverse a range of schools as possible from which to choose, be they integrated, state, Irish-medium or faith-based schools. Yet, the present development proposals will result in the loss of two single-sex schools in the area. That is an option that a number of parents are passionate about and, evidently, are determined to retain.

A document produced by the Collegiate action group highlighted that the proposal:

“will reduce further the number of post-primary schools in the controlled/voluntary sector in Fermanagh from the original six to two.”

Parents would have less choice, which certainly needs to be addressed.

I can only begin to understand this situation if I switch it to a south Down scenario. I will treat all comments with respect but particularly those of Members from Fermanagh, and I look forward to hearing others. However, it is rather disconcerting that other schools that may be affected by these proposals were not consulted by the proposers of the motion beforehand. In fact, I would not have been surprised had the motion been withdrawn. I would have expected the proposers of the motion to have sought consensus from the community. It is certainly worth mentioning that the development proposals have the support of Portora and Devenish.

Irrespective of the motion or the amendment, we need to carefully consider the strategy that benefits all the pupils. Parental choice and the views of the local community should be at the forefront of the Minister's mind when making this decision. Failure to do so will have a negative impact on relationships between the Department of Education and the local community; that would benefit no one.

The Collegiate action group has plainly and repeatedly voiced its concerns about this amalgamation. The 7,000-strong petition that was delivered to the Assembly in June this year clearly demonstrates the depth of local feeling and the clear opposition that exists towards this development.

The Collegiate Grammar School, Portora Royal School and Devenish College have played a key role in the education of the community. Any attempt to diminish or distort this must be handled with extreme caution. Full consideration must be given to the potential detrimental effects across the wider community. I share the concerns of the principal of the Collegiate when she says that the words:

“seek consensus on the future of these schools with broad community support”

have been deleted in the Sinn Féin amendment. That consensus might be difficult, but we need to achieve it.

In providing strong education and future career options for all our young people, we must ensure that the rights and choices of parents and students are not overlooked or dismissed. It is important that, as we move forward, the good work of the Fermanagh learning community, which encourages shared education, is given its rightful place in any plans for the future. The importance of parental choice in this matter cannot be emphasised enough. I urge the Minister to give careful consideration to the genuine concerns that have been raised and to be guided by the experience of local opinion.

While full consensus has not yet been reached, I urge all parties to get back around the table and work with the Western Education and Library Board to ensure a resolution.

Mr Elliott: I welcome the opportunity to discuss and debate this issue. At the outset, I declare an interest, to some degree, as my daughter is a pupil at Devenish College, and I have a son who, I hope, will soon be attending one of the three schools in question.

Obviously, this issue causes a great deal of debate in the Fermanagh area. Indeed, some of that debate maybe goes slightly too far at times. It creates a huge wave of difficulty within not only communities but families. Yesterday, I was at two events and was lobbied very strongly on both sides of the argument. It is an extremely difficult issue, and I have no wish today to make it any worse for any of the groups involved. If I were on the board of governors of any one of those schools, I would want to try to do the best for that school. That is only right. I have no disrespect for any of the boards of governors who wish to take a particular decision and route.

The three development proposals that we are discussing — 260, 261 and 262 — recommend the discontinuance of the Collegiate Grammar School and the Portora Royal School and the establishment of a new single grammar school for Fermanagh. However, the proposal to establish a new single school does not necessarily mean a new build. Effectively, it could result in two schools on two sites with, supposedly, one management structure. I stress that there is no guarantee that a new single school building will be constructed.

We are well aware of the delays in the building of and, in fact, the commencement of the building of, Devenish College. I recall that, in late 2004-05, many of us were lobbying for the retention of Devenish. The old Kesh site, which was the former Duke of Westminster High School, was being closed. At that time, we heard promises of a new construction at Devenish on the Tempo Road in Enniskillen — in fact, the promise was that it would be

built by 2008. Now, some six years later, it has not even commenced.

Even though, in the past year and a half, the Minister has linked the outcome of these development proposals with a new build at Devenish, I have continually pressed him to separate the two aspects. The new build of Devenish should not be linked to the amalgamation of Collegiate and Portora. I had a meeting with the Minister less than two weeks ago. In fairness to him, he has said that the Department will build Devenish College, irrespective of the outcome of the development proposals. However, as I understand it, the number of pupils for whom Devenish will be built depends on the proposal for the merger of Portora and Collegiate, or not. If the Minister wants to confirm that or, if I have got that wrong, tell me something different, I am happy to listen to him. We must have equality of —

Mr Flanagan: I thank the Member for giving way. I will not speak for John O'Dowd, because he is more than capable of speaking for himself. The Member mentioned the number of pupils that will be looked at for a future build for Devenish College. Does he accept, as in the Minister's statement, that, if 70 first-years go into both schools, there will be a reduced catchment for Devenish, which means that the numbers will go down? Does the Member accept the fact that demographics in Fermanagh are changing and that, if we continue to allow the two grammar schools to cream off 140 pupils, it will result in a reduced intake to Devenish College?

Mr Elliott: It is not just a matter of me accepting it; it is a matter of fact that, if higher numbers go into the two grammar schools, there will be fewer pupils for other schools, be that Devenish or any other. That is a reality. If there is no merger between Collegiate and Portora, there will, of course, be a reduced number for the construction of Devenish.

Mrs Foster: Will the Member give way?

Mr Elliott: If it is quick.

Mrs Foster: Yes, it will be quick. In response to Mr Allister, the Minister said that an economic appraisal for the new school at Devenish was based on 800 pupils. That has already been set, so the discussion on the closure of two schools and the building of a new school is not connected with Devenish College at all.

1.30 pm

Mr Elliott: To be fair, it is for the Minister to answer about whether he will build it for the 800 or 850 or reduce it if there is no merger.

What I was going to say is that there must be equality of funding between the controlled sector and other sectors. I recently received figures for capital spend on schools in Fermanagh in the past seven years. There was £18.12 million spent on capital projects in the maintained sector and associated voluntary grammar, whereas only £4.5 million was spent in the controlled sector and associated voluntary grammar.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Elliott: More than four times as much was spent on capital projects in the maintained sector.

Finally, I want to wish everybody well with future negotiations and discussions, because we have been at it for over 10 years and have not made huge progress.

Mr Lunn: Mr Elliott has summed up quite well the problems around a proposal like this, particularly in Fermanagh. His last comment that we have been at this for 10 years indicates to me that the possibility of consensus on the issue is probably fairly slim. It really requires a decision to be eventually taken that is the best decision for the young children of Fermanagh and provides the best educational outcome for those children. What that would be is the question.

The motion has certainly produced a different debate from what we normally have around education in this place, because it does not mention religion or selection. We are talking about a brand new voluntary grammar versus the continuation of single-sex education on two sites in Enniskillen. That raises this question: what does the parent of a young girl in Enniskillen do if they would prefer that young girl to be educated on a co-educational basis? There is not that facility. It actually applies in reverse.

Mrs Foster: They go to Dungannon Royal.

Mr Lunn: Dungannon is a bit of a distance from Enniskillen.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Member will take his seat. I remind Members that making remarks from a sedentary position is not the practice of the Assembly. Continue.

Mr Lunn: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am sorry about that.

There is a big debate going on. I have never had so much correspondence on an issue since I joined the Committee. I must say that I have some sympathy for the Fermanagh Members who have to wrestle with this, because it is a difficult one for them.

On the question of whether girls do better if they are educated in a girls-only school, I see statistics that indicate that that may well be the case; I see other statistics that indicate that it is not the case. There is another question because of the size of these two schools: is big better, or is small better? The folk from the Collegiate have very eloquently described how they think their results are terrific because it is a relatively small grammar school restricted to a female intake. Frankly, that just does not stack up in the real world, nor does the argument that a small school is better than a big school. The bigger grammars across Northern Ireland fare very well in any statistics that you look at, as do co-educational schools.

We are talking about the two smallest grammar schools in Northern Ireland. They both have fewer than 500 pupils. If they remain separate, it seems unlikely that they will be able to deliver the full curriculum when the entitlement framework kicks in next year. That will be a legal requirement, so I really do not know what they will do. One Member mentioned the fact that Portora had over 20 classes with fewer than eight pupils. That is not a sustainable position. The normal solution at the present time, which is very much in vogue, is a shared education scenario. Fermanagh is leading the way in shared education, but it does not seem to apply to these schools because, as far as I am aware — I am happy to be corrected — there is no class-sharing element between

Portora and the Collegiate or between the Collegiate and Devenish.

Mrs Foster: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: Yes, certainly.

Mrs Foster: The Member is wrong about that. The Collegiate is a member of the Fermanagh Learning Community and avails itself of sharing right across the education sectors in County Fermanagh. That is true of the Collegiate and, as far as I am aware, of Portora, so they do access that. They are the smallest grammar schools in Northern Ireland because their numbers are capped. If they were allowed to develop further, they would be bigger schools.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Member for that clarification. She said "as far as I am aware", and my information is that there is no sharing between the Collegiate Grammar and Portora Royal, but that is for another day.

Mrs Foster: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lunn: Sorry, I am not giving way. That is the information that I have been given.

Effectively, the proposal is for a shared solution in the short-to-medium term, because the two schools can operate on split sites with a joint board. I suggest that, if they are to proceed with that, the joint board might do well to have an independent chairperson. For now, however, we are not content to support a motion that demands that the Minister refuse this development proposal. We think that it has to be a ministerial decision, and I hope that he makes the right decision. To us, the Sinn Féin amendment looks more sensible for the present. We support the Sinn Féin amendment and, if it does not pass, will oppose the main motion.

Mr Storey (The Chairperson of the Committee for Education): I will commence by saying that we should all be glad, as we meet in the House today, that we are not dealing with fatalities as a result of the bus accident this morning on the Omagh Road in Drumquin. Our thoughts are with everyone involved in that very serious situation. It is ironic that it comes the day before we hold an event in the Assembly on bus safety. Our thoughts are with everyone in that regard.

None of us should be under any illusion that, as the safety of children in regard to transport is an important issue, the safety of our children in regard to the decisions that are made for them is equally important. As you are aware, the Education Committee tends not to comment on individual development proposals. The Committee has taken a significant interest in the overarching area planning policy and the effectiveness or ineffectiveness, as some see it, of the current development proposal process. The Committee has taken the view that the development process is overly complex and is generally poorly explained by the education and library boards. The Committee has also noted apparent inconsistencies in linked proposals such as those identified in today's motion. In fact, in the last session of the Assembly, the Minister said that local area-based proposals of this kind should be subject to a single development proposal, but here we are yet again, back in the same place with the same situation facing us, where the closures and amalgamation from these proposals are subject to three development proposals. The Committee has also argued that the development proposal process

needs to better include and to be seen to properly consider the voices of pupils and, indeed, the views of parents.

I will spend a few moments in conclusion speaking as the DUP education spokesperson. I apologise for not being present at the commencement of the debate; I was doing an interview with 'Talkback' on Fleming Fulton School. When I came into the Chamber, we were again being subjected to the same hypocritical arguments from Sinn Féin about having a care for all the children in Fermanagh, as though some of us have never been to Devenish, to the Collegiate, to Portora or to visit all the component parts of our education system in Northern Ireland when that could not be further from the truth. With my colleagues, I have continued to ensure that we keep up to date with all the issues in relation to Fermanagh. The education spokesperson from Sinn Féin persistently refers to equality for all the children, when he had the privilege of having a grammar school education. Of course, he wants to deny that to everyone else.

Mr Hazzard: Will the Member give way?

Mr Storey: No, I will not. That is the height of hypocrisy. That is what it is: hypocrisy.

Let us get to the nub of the issue. Why are we 10 years on and Devenish has not even had a sod cut? Why are we in a position where promise after promise has not been delivered to the children in Fermanagh? For 10 years, we have had Sinn Féin Ministers — McGuinness, Ruane and now O'Dowd. Has one of them progressed the issue of Devenish? Has one of them delivered on the promises? No, they have not. If the failure lies anywhere, it lies with those who have responsibility for the Department of Education. Let me deal with the issue that was mentioned by —

Mr McNarry: Will the Member give way?

Mr Storey: Yes, Mr McNarry. *[Interruption.]*

Mr McNarry: I thank the Member for giving way. Would he agree with me that this debate and the area we are talking about resonates across Northern Ireland, no more so — I will be brief — than in my constituency, where this morning over 2,000 children caught a bus to go to the school that their parents wanted them to go to. That is not by choice, but because of its absence in their area. Therefore, the lesson from the debate is that we should take care in every constituency. Those in the Alliance Party who are wavering should take care. What is happening and has been happening in Fermanagh for the past 10 years will happen —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr McNarry: — and hit all over Northern Ireland.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I remind Members that interventions should be direct and relate directly to what is being said. The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Storey: I concur with the Member.

Let me put the House on a warning. Let us remember and be assured that the Minister — he is now in receipt of the transport report — will revisit the issue in relation to the distance travelled by children on the basis of parental choice. We await his comments on that report.

Let me deal with an issue that was raised by Mr Flanagan. It is not the first time that he has come to the House with

a different view on issues. He talked about resources, the intake and how it is important that those resources are used appropriately. He was not using those arguments to ensure that Brollagh stayed open. He was not using those issues when —

Mr Flanagan: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. For Mervyn's information — he said that he was not here, so maybe he will read Hansard — I never mentioned resources. I mentioned intake, but I never mentioned resources. But I can listen.

Mr Storey: I have heard of dancing on the head of a pin, and, of course, that is probably what the Member is trying to do. The reality is this: you cannot argue —

Mr Flanagan: The Member's time is gone.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Storey: — to keep Brollagh —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Flanagan: The Member's time is gone.

Mr Storey: Mr Deputy Speaker, is he the Speaker or are you the Speaker? *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: I remind the Member that he is challenging the Chair —

Mr Storey: He was.

Mr Deputy Speaker: — and that is very serious. Before I call the next Member, I remind Members not to make personal remarks about other Members.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. From the outset, I confess that I do not have a lot of local knowledge about these schools, but I can speak on the general principles.

I have noted that Mrs Foster has been very passionate about the issue, although I also noted that I had heard one of the least passionate speeches from Lord Morrow that he has ever given in the House. Maybe that tells us a little about how strongly he feels about it. I see that the Chair of the Committee is shaking his head. Why is he shaking his head? On his own admission, he was not even here.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Sheehan: In the interests of equality, I will not give way, because you would not give way.

As in all these education debates, there may be disagreement about certain issues.

1.45 pm

We need to bring one principle to bear that would be our guiding light in all of this. The thing that we should keep front and centre in everything that we say, particularly when these debates are publicised and may be listened to by students, not just in Collegiate but in Portora and Devenish, is what is best for the education of the children in all the schools concerned.

By common consensus here today, Tom Elliott said —

Lord Morrow: Will the Member give way?

Mr Sheehan: I will give way.

Lord Morrow: I think that the Member maybe missed the point that I tried to make in relation to this, and I see that he is, in some way, either trying to minimise it or remake it. The point was this: we are challenging or asking quite clearly today for one thing, which is for the outcomes to the benefit and well-being of the children and the pupils in County Fermanagh. Does he accept that that should be the overriding factor and that nothing else should dictate the outcome?

Mr Sheehan: Of course, I accept that, but, first, I have to make the point. For instance, when my old primary school closed, which was a school that I had attended, my brother had attended, and my father and all his brothers had attended, it felt like part of the family history had gone. I would have preferred that it had not closed and that it was always there and always part of the family. I can understand why past pupils, in particular, might get passionate about it and why it might cloud their objectivity when it comes to making decisions about this —

Mrs Foster: Will the Member give way?

Mr Sheehan: No, I am not giving way any more. I have already given way once.

I listened to Tom Elliott say that this has been going on for 10 years now. The debate about all of this has been going on for 10 years in Fermanagh. We all received the email from Rev John McDowell and Mr Alex Baird regarding the motion and the fact that they had not been consulted by the proposers of the motion. The development proposals in question had the unanimous support of both boards of governors in Portora and in Devenish College. It said:

"At least 26 consultation meetings were held between April 2007 and February 2013 involving combinations of principals and representatives of the Board of Governors of the Controlled and Voluntary post-primary schools in Fermanagh together with — variously — MLAs, officers of the Western Education and Library Board and officers from the Department of Education to discuss the future of the sectors. Full consensus could not be reached".

Trevor Lunn is right. We are past the point where we are going to get consensus around this issue. That is why we have a Minister, because, when consensus cannot be reached and when the Minister has all the evidence sitting in front of him, he then can make a decision. That is why he is there. I hope — I am quite sure, in fact — that the Minister will make a decision that is in the best interests of all the children in the education system in Fermanagh.

Mr Byrne: Like Mr Storey, I want to mention the bus accident outside Drumquin this morning and, hopefully, all the children will make a full recovery.

As a Tyrone man, I am hesitant about getting involved in a debate regarding schools in Fermanagh, but I feel that I have an obligation, as a former teacher, to address the issue. This is a hot education issue in Enniskillen, and there are competing views about the Western Board's development proposals for the reorganisation of secondary schools in the controlled voluntary grammar sector in Fermanagh. There would appear to be different views around the nature and the quality of the local area consultation that we conducted prior to the development proposals being finalised.

Last April, I met the principal of the Collegiate school, some governors and some parent representatives, and they certainly felt aggrieved about that. The Collegiate community certainly feels aggrieved that it is being shoehorned into a new co-educational college incorporating the Collegiate and Portora schools. Both of those schools have a very proud education history and legacy going back 100-plus years. The proposed co-educational voluntary grammar school on a split site has generated tensions between the respective school communities in Enniskillen. Area based planning on education is a difficult exercise at any time in any community; it is certainly so here.

The governors and parents of the Collegiate School feel that the issue of a new Devenish College is being used by the Department as a weapon in this debate. It is obvious that there is a lack of broad community consensus and support between all the existing school communities in the Enniskillen controlled sector on this matter. That is regrettable. I recognise Mr Elliott's pointing out that this debate has gone on for 10 years, but it might take another few years to get the outcome right.

The motion is a blunt instrument at this time, but the principal of the Collegiate is very sincere and dedicated to her school's community. The proposed amendment is regarded as complicating the issue because it invokes the question of the Devenish College. There needs to be more discussion in Enniskillen on the matter in order to gain broader community support for the final proposals, whatever they will be.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. As a member of the Education Committee, I support the proposed amendment. Some Members quite have deliberately attempted to suggest that the wording of the amendment was either mischievous or confusing. It is neither of those things. It simply requires that the development proposals ensure access to high-quality education for all our young people in our communities, as any development proposals should.

The motion rightly commends the excellent exam results this year. I think that we should acknowledge those results and congratulate all the pupils and schools for their hard work and successes. There is no mischievousness, lack of clarity or confusion in the fact that the proposed amendment rightly includes the provision for a new build at Devenish. That is clear. There is no confusion there. As has been pointed out, the board and the CCMS have statutory planning responsibilities, and it is important to reflect that developing sustainable educational provision must involve meeting the needs of all the population, not just one part of it.

As has rightly been pointed out, the WELB has published its development proposals. They would, as has been reflected on, mean the closure of Collegiate Grammar and Portora Schools by September 2015, and they introduce a notion of facilitating the creation of a single, co-educational, non-denominational voluntary school. It is important to note today that the correspondence that we have received indicates that Devenish and the governors of Portora support the amalgamation of the two smallest grammar schools to form that co-educational institution. The assertion that has been made that the Collegiate School is the most oversubscribed school is true of only one of the past five years, which was 2013.

I want to pick up on a comment that Mr Lunn made, suggesting that a fully mixed-gender educational provision would not provide better educational outcomes. I do not know where that has been evidenced anywhere. I know that Mr Lunn has relayed that information, but nothing that I have heard today backs up the claim that any evidence-based approach to this development proposal would produce an inequality. Nothing I have heard today from the Benches opposite backs up the idea that these development proposals would produce that inequality. I ask the DUP this: where are the facts? Its Members have commented that this would produce an inequality. Education must be centred on access for all our young people to high-quality education that is educationally sound and sustainable as well as economically viable. Therefore, decisions around educational changes and choices must continue to be centred on children and not institutions.

Mr Kinahan: I am pleased to get in before we get to questions for oral answer. I am also pleased to speak on the subject. I am not from Fermanagh and thus hesitate to be fully involved, but I am part of the Education Committee and think that it is right that we look at the principles.

When I first looked at the motion, I saw a very different one from what I have heard come from the DUP Benches. I am concerned that we are still getting mixed messages. That is because it looked, to me, to be a motion that was very much taking one side rather than trying to find a solution. As many here will know, I spend my life in the Chamber trying to promote consensus and ways forward.

All of us, of course, agree with commending both schools for their excellent GCSE and A-level results and that we should pour praise on the hard-working teachers and staff in all the schools, just as they should praise pupils who achieve the results and the families who helped them. Here we have two excellent schools pitted against each other, so it seems, and the community divided. However, even that picture is not accurate, as the motion focuses on just those schools and ignores so many other aspects of the picture in Enniskillen. It ignores the other schools, the other education establishments — their teachers, staff, communities, parents and right the way through, even to parents and pupils who were at the schools.

Mr Storey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kinahan: I am happy to give way.

Mr Storey: I know that the Member is trying to sit on the fence, but maybe he can come out and tell us his party's view on the Collegiate. Where does he stand on supporting the Collegiate? Without any ambiguity or doublespeak, just tell us this: where does the Member's party stand on the protection of educational provision for Collegiate pupils?

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Member very much for —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member will not have any extra time.

Mr Kinahan: Thank you. I am very grateful for that, and it will become clear, as he listens to what I say today.

At least the amendment mentions other schools, albeit just Devenish, yet all are important. The amendment too focuses only on the controlled sector. There is no mention of the maintained sector or integrated sector,

the latter of which there may be great effects for as well. We long to see the build at Devenish and to see it split away from today's motion. However, where is the shared education drive that everyone talks about? At times, I think that only our party is pushing it. Where is the inclusion of the excellent work that the Fermanagh Trust has done and is doing, showing that schools are and can work well together? That is what the public want to see. I acknowledge that all schools have been and are involved, but that is the leadership that we should be following.

When I looked at today's motion, I found that it looked as though it was trying to divide, when what is really needed is leadership to find a consensus on the way forward in order to try to give Collegiate and Portora what they want and to work with everyone there. I feel that there is an attempt to mislead the public, in that the motion states that the Assembly "requires the Minister". It seems to be trying to tell the public that the Minister has to take on board what is in the motion, when that is not the case and when we have seen most Ministers ignore no-day-named motions all the time.

Quite rightly, though, the motion highlights the abysmal development process, and therein are the failures that relate to Portora and Collegiate. Wherever it is used, this development process fails every community. Whether primary or post-primary, Belfast or Fermanagh, it creates division between schools and, especially, between communities, be they in Newtownbreda, Dundonald, Shankill or, today, Enniskillen.

Mr Elliott: Will the Member give way?

Mr Kinahan: I am happy to give way.

Mr Elliott: Does the Member accept the difficulties in the piecemeal approach that we have to the closure of schools?

Not long ago, we had the closures of Ballinamallard and Kesh, which were Duke of Westminster schools. Then, there was Lisnaskea, and now there is a proposal to close the Collegiate. There was no pre-planning for any of that.

2.00 pm

Mr Kinahan: I fully acknowledge that. Therein lie the problems that we have today. As we heard earlier in the debate, it is because we have not found a whole way forward for the area that you have the motion and the amendment today, which do not suit everybody. If we go back to the numbers that the whole process is based on —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Kinahan: Thank you very much.

I want to see a consensus solution found on the way forward that suits all the schools concerned and causes no division.

Mr Deputy Speaker: This debate will continue after Question Time, when the next Member to speak will be Mr Jim Allister. Members will take their ease while we change the top Table.

*(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker
[Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair)*

Oral Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Devolved Arrangements

1. **Mr Byrne** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, following the leader of the DUP's statement that the current devolved arrangements are not fit for purpose, what changes are proposed to the current arrangements. (AQO 6623/11-15)

8. **Mr McCarthy** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions they have had on institutional reform, given that the leader of the DUP recently stated that the present arrangements for devolved government are not fit for purpose. (AQO 6630/11-15)

Mr P Robinson (The First Minister): With your permission, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I will answer questions 1 and 8 together. The St Andrews Agreement provided for a number of changes to the institutions, which facilitated the restoration of devolution in May 2007. The St Andrews Agreement also provided that the devolved arrangements would be reviewed, and a Standing Committee has been established by the Assembly to carry that out. The deputy First Minister and I have had discussions on such matters on numerous occasions, including as recently as last week. It is hoped that agreement can be reached between the parties on such matters.

In my capacity as a party leader, I have made my position clear. I have outlined what I believe needs to be done to deliver more effective and efficient institutions. Ultimately, however, it will be for each of the political parties to put forward their own proposals as to the reform of the current structures. It is in everyone's interest to participate in the discussion and deliver the most effective and efficient form of government that we can achieve.

Mr Byrne: I thank the First Minister for his answer. Will he outline whether there is a lack of functionality in the structures, or is there a lack of a professional relationship between the two office holders in OFMDFM? Is there a problem in relation to those relationships in how decisions are made at the highest level of the Executive?

Mr P Robinson: I am pleased to say that relationships in OFMDFM have not descended to the levels of when his party leader and the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party held those positions. This is a matter dealing with the arrangements that govern the modus operandi of the Assembly and Executive. It needs to be borne out by the fact that this was something that was predicted and predictable; we recognised at St Andrews that the unusual arrangements that we were setting up could not be permanent and would need to be reviewed. Therefore, in the St Andrews Agreement and in the subsequent legislation, we made provision for that review.

I do not think that anyone in the Chamber — there are certainly very few outside — believes that things are going

so swimmingly in the Assembly and Executive that we are not in need of reform. To some extent, the argument that it is not fit for purpose is one that perhaps even transcends the Northern Ireland Assembly; I could probably make the same case for the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Government, the Westminster Parliament and Europe, all of whom are looking at ways to improve the way they operate. What kind of an Assembly would we be if we missed the opportunity to try to improve the way we do business and get a better outcome for the people we represent?

Mr McCarthy: Does the First Minister agree that among the things that make the present arrangements not fit for purpose, as he would say, is the misuse of petitions of concern by him and the DUP? That gives the public reason to be disillusioned with the Assembly in its entirety.

Mr P Robinson: Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, you allowed the Member to make those remarks even though they are a criticism of the Chair. If anybody is misusing the procedures of the House, it is the job of the Chair to call them to order. Clearly, the procedures of the House are being used. The Member may not like the way they are used, but that is an entirely different matter.

The use of petitions of concern is one of the many issues that I suspect parties in this House would like to consider further, and some would like to see a review. I am not so tied to any of the procedures in this House that I would stand up and say that they could not be improved. So, I am sure that the Member or his party, in any discussions and negotiations that take place, will raise that if it is one of the key issues for them.

Mr Nesbitt: In light of the First Minister's answers to date, reflecting on the 2011 DUP manifesto, which made the point that petitions of concern should not be used to block motions of no confidence, and considering how the DUP have deployed petitions of concern in this mandate, does he still believe in what he wrote in 2011?

Mr P Robinson: It ill becomes anybody from the Ulster Unionist Party to raise those issues. There are those in this Chamber, and it is regrettable, who put down party political motions of no confidence. Every week, we could be putting down a motion of no confidence in one party or another or their representatives in the Executive. Perhaps we need a bit more mature thinking in the Assembly so that we are not taking up the time of some Committees and taking up time in the Assembly and are getting down to the business that people out there really want us to do: getting more jobs and improving the lot of people who are vulnerable in our society rather than engaging in the party bickering that sometimes goes on in this Chamber.

Mr Campbell: The First Minister referred to his comments about the institutions not being fit for purpose. Many people indicated that that was an accurate summary, but he was criticised by a number of political parties, including Sinn Féin. Yet, over the weekend, the former Minister and current MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, Michelle Gildernew, said that the institutions were untenable. Does he see a distinction between the two comments?

Mr P Robinson: There clearly is a distinction between the two comments. If I am quoting the former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development correctly, she said the situation was:

"perilous — I would actually say untenable".

However, all of us know that we are faced with a set of circumstances that arise from issues relating to welfare reform. We are going to be facing costs that simply cannot be taken into account by our Budget. With a £10 billion Budget to carry out all the programmes and processes of government, we cannot contemplate a reduction of over £1 billion a year. It simply cannot be done. If people want to bury their head in the sand, be in denial about these matters and fool themselves that somehow things could be different if there was another Government at Westminster or that somehow they can put pressure on the coalition Government to change course, they are heading for a set of circumstances that will ensure that the most vulnerable people in our society are worst hit because the health service, the education system, the justice system and all the other elements of government that they need most will not be available to them without very considerable reductions in service.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat. Does the First Minister agree that there is a need for wide-ranging negotiations to include flags, parades and the past?

Mr P Robinson: I apologise for the length of the article, which ran into a couple of thousand words.

Those who took the time to read it will have seen that I argued the case that though issues like flags, parades and the past have caused difficulties to our present circumstances, none was capable of endangering the institutions and bringing them down. The matters of urgency are the way that we operate as an Assembly and Executive, and welfare reform.

While there certainly is a case that there are many issues that need to be discussed and where getting agreement is potentially advantageous, it is imperative that we deal with the matters capable of bringing down the Assembly and Executive. Do not fool yourselves about this issue: we simply cannot tolerate a set of circumstances in which £1 billion is to be taken off our Budget.

If anybody wants to say, "These other items are more important or as important", let them tell me where they will make the reductions of £1 billion. It simply cannot be done. This is not away down the road. In the next financial year, almost £200 million will be taken out of our already squeezed Budget as a result of welfare reform issues. We simply cannot dodge it. We must deal with it and deal with it immediately.

Mr Allister: The First Minister is on record as saying that things cannot go on as they are. Does there come a point, therefore, when, if meaningful change is not made, the First Minister will take that advice and cease to sustain the institutions? What are the red-line issues that would take him to that point?

Mr P Robinson: Nobody in the Chamber will be able to withstand the public outcry if we attempt to take £1 billion out of our Budget. The whole lot of us will be swept from office, and we would deserve to be swept from office if we tolerated such a set of circumstances. It is, as the former Minister of Agriculture said, simply not tenable.

Mr McCallister: Reflecting on the First Minister's words about this place not being fit for purpose, how does he perceive that he will achieve a proper Programme for Government and collective Cabinet responsibility when there is nothing to stop any party walking out of the all-

party talks process for perceived political gain? Will he now give a commitment to support my private Member's Bill to bring in a government in opposition?

Mr P Robinson: I did not know that the Member had published his Bill, so it would be very rash to support something that I have not even seen, though I am sure that it will be full of improvements. Having talked to him about the issue, I know that some of the issues he mentions are ones that I would readily support, although I have concerns about some that he has talked about.

The fact that he has in preparation a private Member's Bill to improve the way that the Assembly functions is an indicator that there is clearly a need for us to upgrade the Assembly and Executive's functions and arrangements. If we take that as a given, I have had a meeting with, I think, every party and those who are independents in the House. At those meetings, there was a realistic recognition on the part of everybody whom I spoke to that we needed to improve the way that we operate.

Unquestionably, people will come from different angles on what the priorities for change are, but, first, let us all at least accept the need for change. When we accept that, we can start a proper and helpful debate about what those changes can be, how they will impact on the delivery that we have for the public and how we can be sure that we do not end up with deadlock but can get decisions taken in the Assembly and Executive.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Question 9 has been withdrawn.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

2. **Mr Spratt** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they plan to make representations to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee in relation to the Committee's statutory responsibilities. (AQO 6624/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: The Assembly and Executive Review Committee has a statutory responsibility under section 29A of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to report before 1 May 2015 on the operation of Parts III and IV of that Act, which set out the arrangements for the devolved institutions.

2.15 pm

The Committee began its review in 2012, producing separate reports that year on the future size of the Assembly and the number of Departments. It has since produced reports on the d'Hondt arrangements, community designation, provisions for an opposition and, most recently, on petitions of concern. The Committee is currently undertaking further important work regarding the role of women in politics and in the Assembly.

The deputy First Minister and I met the Chair and the Deputy Chair of the Committee on 4 April 2012 at the start of its review. Where appropriate, we may make representations to the Committee as it conducts further work in relation to parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In the past, when there was an agreed position on matters under review by the Committee, representations were made, notably in relation to the devolution of policing and justice. In circumstances where further agreements are reached, we anticipate making

further representations to the Committee. We welcome the work of the Committee and the opportunity that its reports present for Assembly plenary debate on our structures of government.

Mr Spratt: In light of the announcement by the Prime Minister following the rejection of the Scottish independence referendum, does the First Minister think that the Assembly and Executive Review Committee could play a useful role in the discussion around devolution for Northern Ireland in the wider United Kingdom context?

Mr P Robinson: In the context of the 1998 Act, there is a requirement for the Assembly and Executive Review Committee to carry out a review before May 2015 on internal Northern Ireland matters. However, there is no exclusion placed on the Assembly or the Committee on looking at wider issues relating to Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom and the structures that would best suit Northern Ireland for our relationship with the rest of the United Kingdom. I think that it would be a very useful exercise for the Committee and one that all parties in the Chamber need to consider over the next number of weeks and months.

An important debate has begun in the United Kingdom; it is clear that there are going to be changes in the operation of our constitution as a part of this nation. As parties in the Assembly, we want to be sure that we get the best possible arrangements for Northern Ireland. Already in the economic pact that was signed by the deputy First Minister and me and by the Prime Minister, there is an agreement to look at all the fiscal levers that are at the disposal of the United Kingdom to see whether any of them could be devolved to Northern Ireland. It is much in that same vein that I think the pledge that was made to Scotland was set out. So, that already is an undertaking that we have from the United Kingdom Government and one that we are presently doing work on in the Department of Finance and Personnel on the financial levers. However, there are wider constitutional matters about our place at Westminster, including the role that our MPs would have at Westminster and whether the House of Lords could be a more representative Chamber in relation to the regions. There are a number of different issues that the Committee could and should look at, but it should not be it exclusively that does that. I think that, as political parties, we should be doing it too.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind the Minister of the two-minute rule.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Does the First Minister agree that any review of the Assembly structures must be rooted firmly in the terms of the Good Friday Agreement?

Mr P Robinson: The Belfast Agreement was not like the law of the Medes and Persians which changeth not and was a recognition that there was room for improvement, room for updating and room for upgrading. Indeed, if the Member was right, we would never have had a St Andrews Agreement and we would never have had a Hillsborough Castle Agreement. So, clearly, things do move on, and improvements are made along the way. Certainly, nothing should be done in a new agreement that destabilises political life in Northern Ireland and allows us to go back to the dark days of the past.

Mr Attwood: Can I point out the inconsistency of the First Minister when he says that only welfare could bring down the institutions? It was only a matter of months ago, First Minister, that you threatened these institutions around an issue from the past, so do not be inconsistent in this Chamber today. First Minister, do you believe that the Assembly and Executive Review Committee issues about the institutions, petitions of concern and the rest are part of the negotiations that you have called for, or is the truth of it that you just want a negotiation to break parties on welfare, get corporation tax and put all the other issues like parades and the past into the long grass?

Mr P Robinson: Once again, characteristically, the Member gets it wrong. I never threatened these institutions at all. I indicated that I could not remain in government if there was not a judge-led inquiry into the on-the-roads (OTR) issue. I am glad that there was a judge-led inquiry, that the inquiry made recommendations, that the Government accepted those recommendations and that, as a result of their accepting those recommendations, the validity of the letters has now changed, and the letters will no longer be able to be relied on by anybody whom the police want to deal with.

I have dealt with the Member's inaccuracy rather than my inconsistency, so let me now deal with what would be on the agenda for the modalities of the Assembly and the Executive. I am indicating that I want to improve the arrangements in the Assembly and for the Executive. It would be utter folly, in wanting to improve the modalities of the House, if I were to suggest that people should not be able to raise and seek agreement on issues that are important to them. Of course we will look at all the issues to see how best we can get a properly effective and efficiently running Assembly and Executive so that decisions can be taken and do not lie in deadlock. I would have thought that among those who would be cheering me to the rafters would be the party whose leader recognised a long time ago that the ugly scaffolding of the agreement needed to be removed.

Sexual Orientation Strategy

3. **Mr McCartney** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the need for a robust sexual orientation strategy. (AQO 6625/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: With your permission, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I will ask junior Minister Jonathan Bell to answer the question.

Mr Bell (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister): The current Programme for Government sets out our vision for a society in which equality, mutual trust and respect are core values. Achieving that vision requires tackling not just sectarianism and racism but other forms of intolerance. The Together: Building a United Community (T: BUC) strategy recognises the problems that lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people face due to prejudice and intolerance. The specific needs of LGB people were articulated clearly during the public consultation on the draft strategy for cohesion, sharing and integration, which included the commitment to publish the sexual orientation strategy. We remain committed to publishing a sexual orientation strategy, which will be informed by a full public consultation. The intention is that

the strategy and the associated action plans will address the issues that impact on the daily lives of LGB people.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as a fhreagra. I thank the Minister for that answer. I welcome the fact that he talks about equality and mutual respect being the core principles and that we have to do away with prejudice and intolerance. Does the Minister agree that that strategy is severely undermined, if not weakened, by the fact that there continues to be a nonsensical ban on gay men giving blood?

Mr Bell: That is a matter for the Department of Health.

Mr Eastwood: I thank the junior Minister for his answers thus far. When was this issue last raised at the Executive, and who raised it?

Mr Bell: If the Member does not know, he should know that I am not permitted to give out the content of Executive business.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the junior Minister for his responses. Will he inform the House whether the consultation responses contained any reference to current legislative protections for the LGB community?

Mr Bell: Yes. We had a wide range of responses, and in discussions that we have had with a range of groups, we have also looked at the existing legislation that seeks to tackle discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Any new strategy can raise awareness and give effect to current legislation. So, in drafting the strategy in OFMDFM, we will highlight that it can help give effect to existing legal protections to ensure that they are properly understood and enacted. It can highlight that the strategy can address issues that are outside the scope of existing legal protection. Everyone in the House has a commitment to supporting good relations and to addressing bullying in any form in which it comes.

Internet Safety Strategy

4. **Mrs Overend** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when work on drafting the cross-departmental Internet safety strategy will begin. (AQO 6626/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: With your permission, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I will ask junior Minister Jonathan Bell to answer the question.

Mr Bell: Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and OFMDFM officials have been working together to agree how best to take forward the development of an Internet safety strategy for Northern Ireland. Given its statutory duty to work together to safeguard children and young people and to promote their welfare, it was agreed that an approach should be made to the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland to seek its approval in principle to take forward the development of an interagency Internet safety strategy. In June 2014, agreement in principle was obtained from the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland. With the agreement of all Ministers, it is intended that the development of the strategy will be formally commissioned on behalf of the Executive.

Mrs Overend: I thank the junior Minister for his answer. The Department will not be surprised to hear that I am pressing it again on the Internet safety strategy,

considering that I have been on its back about it since autumn 2012. Surely the Ministers in OFMDFM and the Minister of Health can come to some sort of agreement sooner rather than later and allocate whatever amount of money needs to be given to the Safeguarding Board for the draft strategy and for it to get on with the job. Can the Minister indicate a time frame, and can he indicate how much money is needed to progress the strategy?

Mr Bell: The Member has been very encouraging in the work that she has done with OFMDFM and the charitable sector. While we look to develop that strategy in the Department of Health, it would be wrong for anybody to go out without an understanding of the work that is under way. I am talking about not just the work that we have done in schools such as St Ita's Primary School and Wellington College but the work that we have done on reaching key players in the European Union, because those major Internet players are the drivers that put the content on to the Internet. We have fully engaged with Facebook. We went to its European headquarters in Dublin to address what it could do and to support the ambassadors against bullying, particularly the young people from our schools in Northern Ireland who are taking a lead role as ambassadors against bullying on the Internet.

OFMDFM has also been part of a major conference with COFACE, the Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union, which is one of the major charities on the European scene seeking to protect children. A very simple point should go out to all our young people that they should treat their personal information in exactly the same way as they would treat their toothbrush: do not share it, and certainly do not share it over the Internet.

Mr Humphrey: On the theme of working across government, I ask the junior Minister what steps he and his Department have taken in working alongside the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety?

Mr Bell: In recognising the role that has been played by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in child protection, I should also pay tribute to the Member for the work that he has undertaken in north Belfast to keep children safe, particularly from cybercrime and cyberbullying, but we have taken advantage of our own central role in the Executive to help inform the discussions on how we can best protect children from abuse through the Internet. We commissioned research to gain a better understanding of Internet use by P7 pupils. We engaged with the United Kingdom Safer Internet Centre, the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland and many of the relevant stakeholder organisations.

2.30 pm

We undertook a review of activity on Internet safety across all the relevant Departments to identify the current actions, where gaps are, and any further actions that need to be taken to address the risks. In addition, we recognised the importance of ensuring that clear messages were provided to parents, children and practitioners. We have been supportive of the recent report from the Safeguarding Board on that issue.

Public awareness is critical to addressing the issue. As Ministers, we will be happy to play our part through the events that give us the platform to do so, such as Safer Internet Day, to ensure that the correct messages are

communicated and that children and young people stay safe. We have advised Minister Poots that the cross-departmental structure that we have developed for the Delivering Social Change framework provides the ideal opportunity to coordinate work on Internet safety across the Executive.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We will now move on to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Scottish Referendum: Fiscal Powers

1. **Mr G Kelly** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they agree that, given the result of the Scottish referendum, we should be arguing for the fullest possible transfer of fiscal powers to the Assembly. (AQT 1461/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: I am sure that the Member will join me in welcoming the outcome of the Scottish referendum and the strong desire to retain the Union with the rest of the United Kingdom. In welcoming that, I recognise that he wants to strengthen the Union by improving the structures in the United Kingdom. In that context, as I indicated earlier in Question Time, we already have a commitment from the United Kingdom Government in the economic pacts that were signed by the deputy First Minister and me with the Prime Minister, David Cameron, that we would consider all the fiscal levers to see what further powers should be devolved.

I do not accept the premise that simply transferring the economic levers into the hands of the Assembly will necessarily transform the social and economic policy of Northern Ireland. There is a limit to the impact that many of those taxes and other arrangements would have to enable the Executive to make real and meaningful change. There is no panacea to be found in that, but there would be a significant cost if we were to take over responsibility for some of those elements and had to operate them ourselves rather than having the economy of scale of the whole of the United Kingdom operating them.

Mr G Kelly: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chéad-Aire as a fhreagra. I thank the First Minister for his answer up to now. Let me not join him in welcoming the result of the referendum. However, there has been a referendum, and the issue at stake here — and I ask the First Minister again — is that there is certainly an impression that the DUP is not up for more power being brought to the Assembly. Does he not agree that, while Scotland is arguing for more powers, especially in the fiscal area with taxes and other matters, we should get as much power here as possible so that we can have an impact on the economy and the lives of people in the North as opposed to leaving it to the whim of people in London?

Mr P Robinson: The first things that we need to ask ourselves when we look at taking any additional power is whether we can operate it and do we have the cohesion in the Assembly and Executive to be able to take decisions on taxation matters. Secondly, if we had that power, would there be a financial incentive or advantage to us or would it simply be to tax more, which is the answer that some people will give? Thirdly, if we are going to have that power, would there be a cost to us in operating it? I suppose that there is a fourth question, which is this:

what social or economic change can we bring about by exercising that power?

Look at some of the taxes that are available. I think that there would be little difficulty in us operating such a scheme as stamp duty land tax. It is doable. I do not think that it would transform the economy in Northern Ireland, and there would be a small cost attached to it. However, it certainly is doable. If VAT was to be considered, there would be some major EU difficulties with Northern Ireland being given those powers. Even if it was being devolved around the United Kingdom, there would be very considerable costs, although, on the upside, it would, for instance, allow you to look at hotels, restaurants and other tourist-led functions and reduce VAT to increase that element of the economy. So there are levers that you could use if you had VAT control. However, I do not think that we would get it, because of Europe, and there would be a cost to us exercising that power. Landfill tax is, again, doable, but is not going to bring the transformative change that the Member is looking for. Corporation tax is, in my view, doable and valuable, and we should continue to seek it. Income tax, which is being offered to the Scots and is up for referendum in Wales, would be a very considerable difficulty and would have a significant cost, as indeed would some of the other elements, such as national insurance contributions. So it is no panacea. There are problems that need to be thoroughly investigated, and I am glad that the Department of Finance and Personnel is already preparing papers on each of those elements.

Scottish Referendum: Extension of Voting Rights

2. **Mr P Ramsey** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how they view the extension of voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds in light of the Scottish referendum and the clear evidence that there was much greater participation by all generations, not just in the debate but in the vote, which some put down to the extension of those voting rights. (AQT 1462/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: Clearly, if you allow more people to vote, the possibility of increased voting is inevitable. However, participation was so high, right across Scotland, that it indicated that the issues at stake in this election were of such importance to the people of Scotland, of every age group, that we had a massive poll. Unfortunately, when we get around to parliamentary, Assembly or European elections, there are a whole range of issues. The importance of any significant issue does not outweigh your constitutional status. People come out depending on how important they view an election to be. That is the same whether you are 16 and 17 or 60 and 70.

Mr P Ramsey: I thank the First Minister for his response. I think that he may have glossed over the particular point that I was making. Does the First Minister not believe that it is important to hear the views of our young people in particular, who feel marginalised and apathetic towards politics? Will he undertake a review, in conjunction with consulting with young people, of the role that young people should play in future elections?

Mr P Robinson: I am not sure that that is a transferred matter. Nonetheless, no matter what age is stipulated in legislation, a case can always be made for reducing it. If it was 16 and 17, people would come along and tell us that

15-year-olds are now more mature than they have ever been before and they are interested in politics, and we should reduce the voting age. And so it goes on, so that, along with your birth certificate, you will be registering for elections.

We need to recognise that there is an age when we can be certain that people understand the issues, are likely to come out in the appropriate numbers and have had sufficient experience of life to enable them to take key decisions. People are more capable of taking major decisions younger and younger. However, I am not sure that we have reached the stage where such a significant change should be made. Happily, that is a reserved matter for Westminster.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Question 3 has been withdrawn within the appropriate procedures and time frame.

Childcare Payments Bill

4. **Mr Sheehan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they can confirm that stakeholder engagement will formally address or consider all options to deal with any gaps identified in childcare provision following the introduction of a new childcare tax scheme, in the context of the proposed legislative consent motion on the Childcare Payments Bill. (AQT 1464/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: I will ask my colleague Jonathan Bell to answer that question.

Mr Bell: The Member raises a very important point about the replacement of the childcare scheme, which was repealed.

Therefore, if we were to continue with what was previously in existence, we would have to look at a legislative change. For all parents out there, we want to ensure that we have a simplified childcare tax scheme. The previous mechanism, for many parents to whom we have spoken, was cumbersome, difficult, complex and difficult to negotiate. I am sure that all Members' constituency offices, like mine, found it so. Therefore, we should look towards a simplified childcare scheme that looks towards the equivalent in tax and at how we could use that investment.

We want two wins: the first is to ensure that the benefit for those who need childcare increases, if at all possible; and the second is that it is used and taken up by a greater number of people. That will be our focus in the period to come.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. Will the Department invite both Employers For Childcare and the ICTU, among others, to engage on their concerns about the new provision?

Mr Bell: Since taking office, I have been in a number of meetings with Employers For Childcare and with a range of trade union bodies. It is important that we listen to all the views expressed to see what can be done. I am pleased to inform the House that we have pushed ahead, not only in this scheme but in our Bright Start strategy. We have looked at where we can base that strategy in schools and use the existing school estate so that more young people can access the care that is there. We can develop the social enterprises and communities where there is limited childcare. Remember that, with school-age childcare, you can be one of up to 19 competing for a place in

certain areas. We are looking at where we can use social enterprise and plough any profits that are made back into the community. We have looked at needs in rural areas, which was raised as an issue to us. I have specifically looked at a childminder scheme for the rural areas. Of most concern for lifting people out of poverty is the issue of deprivation. All of those issues have been tackled in OFMDFM's Bright Start scheme.

North-west Gateway Initiative

5. **Mr Eastwood** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the progress of the north-west gateway initiative. (AQT 1465/11-15)

Mr P Robinson: I will ask junior Minister Jonathan Bell to answer the question.

Mr Bell: A number of meetings have taken place, particularly in relation to the One Plan and the interdepartmental working group that exists there. That group provides strategic analysis and advice to the Executive, other Departments and the Londonderry Strategy Board on the most appropriate means through which the Executive's policies, programmes and projects can positively impact on the themes and programmes that are identified in that plan. The group is also monitoring progress and providing a forum for the discussion and resolution of cross-cutting issues that affect more than one Department. The interdepartmental group meets formally twice a year, and the next meeting is scheduled for October. Progress continues to be made on the implementation of the One Plan across each of the catalyst programmes to grow the economy and provide more local jobs.

Mr Eastwood: Given that one of the key catalytic projects within the One Plan was the expansion of Magee, will the Minister or First Minister give their commitment to seeing that happen by 2020?

2.45 pm

Mr Bell: The issue of the expansion of the University of Ulster at Magee is important. The Minister for Employment and Learning recognised that the One Plan foresaw the expansion of higher education in Londonderry as key to the city's regeneration. He is committed to the expansion of higher education throughout Northern Ireland.

The One Plan had an additional target of having 1,000 additional undergraduate places by 2015. The Minister for Employment and Learning has been able to increase the number of undergraduate places in the two universities by 1,210. The University of Ulster has received 652, and those have been deployed at Magee. Any expansion of undergraduate numbers beyond what has already been achieved would require additional recurring funding that, I understand, the Department for Employment and Learning currently does not have.

An economic appraisal for the expansion of Magee is being prepared by the Londonderry Strategy Board. The Employment and Learning Minister proposes, if the appraisal makes the case that expansion is in the best interests of Northern Ireland and the city, to submit a bid in the next comprehensive spending review.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Time is up. We must now move on to questions to the Minister of the Environment.

Environment

Planning: Enforcement

1. **Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of the Environment how long a planning enforcement case takes from the case being reported until a prosecution or forced removal of the reported dwelling or business. (AQO 6637/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Effective enforcement is an integral part of the planning process, and all alleged breaches of planning control are investigated.

My Department has a general discretion to take enforcement action when it regards it as expedient to do so. In determining the most appropriate course of action in response to alleged breaches of planning control, my Department will take into account the extent of the breach and its potential impact on the environment.

Planning enforcement can be a lengthy, protracted and complex process, with many issues and circumstances that may need to be considered. The Department's aim is to rectify the breach, and in many cases the breach is addressed without the need for formal enforcement action. For example, the applicant may submit a retrospective planning application to regularise the situation. In other cases, formal action is necessary. However, it may be held in abeyance until an application is determined or an enforcement notice is appealed, which can add many months on to the time taken to resolve a case. Other Departments and agencies can also have a bearing on the effective enforcement of planning control.

Given those various factors, it is therefore not possible to advise of a definitive timescale for dealing with enforcement investigations and any associated action taken. However, my Department has a business plan target to process to a conclusion 70% of cases within 39 weeks. The most recently published annual stats confirmed that, in 2013-14, 66% of enforcement cases were brought to a conclusion within that time period.

Mr Moutray: I thank the Minister for his response. What assurances can he give the House today in relation to businesses, some of which are in my constituency, that open up, never apply for planning permission and are allowed to trade, sometimes for years, before any enforcement action is taken?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank Mr Moutray for the question and the supplementary question.

As outlined in my initial answer, the Department takes any alleged breach of planning control very seriously. Of course, operating or establishing a business without planning permission or even a planning application is such a breach and is therefore taken seriously. Unfortunately, the complexity of some of the cases, as well as the fact that many out there are willing, ready and able to exploit that complexity for their own ends, means that they can take a long time to pursue and to bring to a satisfactory conclusion.

I am aware of some of the cases in Mr Moutray's constituency to which he, no doubt, refers. Currently there are over 2,800 planning enforcement cases, so I am loath to go into the details of any specific application on the

Chamber Floor. As I said, in an ideal world, people would apply for and comply with planning control, and, therefore, the Department and I take this very seriously. In advance of the transfer of the planning function to councils in particular, I am determined to make huge inroads into that frightening figure of 2,800 cases.

Ms Lo: The delay in processing cases is sometimes due to the lack of manpower in the Department. Is the Minister confident that he has enough enforcement officers, particularly with the forthcoming handover of planning powers to councils?

Mr Durkan: I thank Ms Lo for her question. I am certainly confident in the capacity of the officers I have. However, like any Minister, I would certainly welcome more resources, be they financial or human resources, to deal with not just enforcement but a range of issues that fall under the responsibility of my Department.

I mentioned to Mr Moutray the emphasis that I am putting on clearing the backlog of enforcement cases in advance of the transfer of the function to councils. At the point of transfer, councils will be responsible for investigating alleged breaches of planning control. The councils will also determine what action, if any, will be taken. The Department will, however, retain reserved powers to take enforcement action in exceptional circumstances.

It is very alarming — I referred to this in my initial answer — that there are so many people out there who tend to flout planning regulations and have the nous or know-how to play and frustrate the system. It is my aim to strengthen the system so that it is not as exploitable as it currently is.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask Members to speak up for the benefit, in particular, of those around the back of the room.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Following on from his answers, will the Minister assure us that the model he has to deal with enforcement is fit for purpose in transferring to local authorities? Would he consider an extra role for a building control officer in local authorities to assist in the enforcement of cases?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat as an cheist sin. I thank Mr Boylan for that question. As I said, I am content that my staff are capable. I would very much welcome additional resources, not just for enforcement but right across planning and other departmental functions. Once councils assume planning functions and take responsibility for enforcement, it will be very much a matter for them to deal with. The budget currently associated with that function will transfer in full to councils, as will the staff who currently carry out that function. However, should a council determine that it needs or would like additional resources for enforcement — if, for example, there is a plethora of live cases in a council area that require extra attention — it can by all means proceed to deal with that as it may and allocate resources accordingly.

Mr Agnew: Has the precedent set by the use of retrospective planning permission almost sent a signal to developers that they should act first and get permission later? If so, what will be done to correct that?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank Mr Agnew for his question. Like yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, I had difficulty hearing the start of it. I think I got the gist of it, which is that there

seems to be an attitude out there that it is easier to beg for forgiveness than to ask for permission. I know that Mr Agnew has a particular interest in minerals applications for retrospective approval. His point is a very important one, and I agree with him on it. People need to get things right and do them in the right order.

If someone wants to build something or carry out a business somewhere, they must apply for planning permission, if it is necessary. That should be reflected in the seriousness and severity with which their enforcement cases are dealt.

Shadow Councils: Branding

2. **Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of the Environment what branding guidance or advice he has given to the new shadow councils. (AQO 6638/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has not given the new councils any branding guidance or advice. There is no legislative requirement for it to do so, nor, I believe, would it be appropriate. The new councils require a strong corporate brand to enable their stakeholders to identify with them. This makes it very much a local matter that councils are best placed to undertake themselves.

My Department does, however, have powers to change the name of a council. Section 1 of the Local Government Act 2014 provides that the name of each council is the name of the local government district followed by the words “district council”. Section 1 also allows the Department to make regulations to provide for the name of a council to be other than that provided for by section 1 of the 2014 Act. I stress, however, that regulations of that nature would be made only at the request of a council and would permit the council to decide on a name that does not end in the words “district council”.

Section 51 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that the Department may, by order made on the application of a council, change the name of the district of a council. If a name change order is made under the powers conferred by that provision, the final two words of the council’s name must remain “district council”.

Regardless of which power is used to change the name of a council, section 2 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides for a council to be known as a borough council, if it is in possession of a borough charter, or as a city council, if there is a city within the local government district.

Does that clarify it? *[Laughter.]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: A supplementary, if you dare.

Mr I McCrea: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. That is as clear as mud. Nonetheless, I thank the Minister for his answer. The Minister will be aware that some councils attempt to use language as an opportunity to get one up on one side of the community by using the Irish language or, indeed, Ulster Scots. Can the Minister ensure that his Department keeps a close eye on councils that introduce languages other than English, to ensure that no minority community is treated unequally?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for that supplementary. I see where he is coming from: the importance of the need to safeguard the rights and wishes of a minority community, whatever that community may be, in the new council areas.

To that effect, I can assure the Member that section 41 of the Local Government Act 2014 provides the call-in mechanism that 15% of the members of a council may present a request for the reconsideration of a decision to the clerk of the council on the grounds that the decision was not arrived at after a proper consideration of the relevant facts and issues and/or on the grounds that it would disproportionately affect adversely any section of the inhabitants of the district. This provision will apply to the majority of council decisions, including any on branding.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I hear what the Minister says about branding, but will he look at this again from the point of view that this is consistent with the European Charter for the protection and promotion of languages?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Go raibh maith agat as an cheist. I thank the Member for that question. It is vital and, in my opinion, a fact, that rights should be afforded to all inhabitants of a community or new council district, be they a minority or a majority. That goes as far as the protection of the rights of indigenous language speakers.

3.00 pm

I believe that it is in a council's interest to brand itself in a way that best reflects the make-up of that council area. Councils should want everyone in a council area to identify with them as the corporate brand for that area. Therefore, in my opinion, it would be remiss of a council to proceed and ignore the wishes of any section of the community.

Mr Swann: Following the Ulster Unionist Party's addition to clause 125 of the Local Government Act, when will the Minister's Department bring forward regulations on domain names? Will these regulations also ensure that some councillors do not dedicate excessive time in council to such petty battles?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for the question. Perish the thought that any time in our councils would be wasted on petty battles. That should remain our domain.

Work is ongoing on the domain names subsequent to the successful amendment tabled by the Ulster Unionists during the local government reform debate. My officials are working extensively on this and on a range of other issues. They are doing so not in isolation but in partnership with local government.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr Fra McCann is not in his place, so I call Ms Michaela Boyle.

Planning: Policy/Area Plans

4. **Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the flexibility and discretion the new councils will have to interpret planning policy and influence the content of area plans. (AQO 6640/11-15)

Mr Durkan: From 1 April 2015, councils will have a statutory requirement to prepare local development plans for their respective districts. A council plan will be made up of two documents: a plan strategy, which is adopted first and which will set out the council's objectives and strategic policies for the development of its district; and a subsequent local policies plan, which will set out the council's local and site-specific policies and zonings.

In preparing their development plans, councils must take account of central government policies, such as the regional development strategy and the strategic planning policy statement (SPPS), and, indeed, of relevant European directives. All this will be tested at the independent examination of the plan.

However, one of the fundamental reasons for giving these powers to councils is to allow them to bring forward plans that interpret central government policies and strategies in a way that is appropriate for the unique aspects of each council area. This is important because each of our new councils faces different social, environmental and economic issues and each has different topographies, populations and settlement patterns to consider. I firmly believe that local councils will be best placed to take forward this work to shape their local areas for the future.

The power to prepare local development plans will operate in conjunction with the new council powers of community planning and regeneration and with existing council functions. Together, these powers provide district councils with a new and potent opportunity to develop agreed future visions for their areas and to prepare a coordinated and planned approach to delivering this vision.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his response. Minister, as part of the new area plans, will rural councils have the powers and opportunity to address the housing needs of non-farming rural dwellers?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat as an cheist sin. I thank Ms Boyle for that supplementary question. As I said in my original answer, in drawing up area plans, there are two things that a new council, working in conjunction with planners, must consider: regional planning policy and the regional development strategy. However, as I have outlined already today, it is my belief that the reform of local government is not just about doing things more cheaply. It is about doing things better. It is about empowering local councils to make decisions for, and that will impact on, their areas. If, for example, in a rural council area, there is a huge demand for rural housing that councillors feel is not adequately served by existing planning policy, they can, by all means, work with planners and within the confines of existing policy to find something that suits them better.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. For clarification: area plans are presumably still confined to the likes of towns and villages, with the constraints that that places on them in the context of policy. What checks and balances will be in place to ensure that, in everyone's interests, the key cornerstones of fairness, equity and equality are there for everyone in local societies?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat as an cheist sin. The new local development plan system provides a range of measures to ensure that local development plans are fair and meet the needs of the local community. The council's local development plans will be subject to section 75 obligations, and a council must comply with the statutory requirement to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity. The local development plan will, therefore, be subjected to an equality impact assessment by a council.

As I set out previously, councils, in preparing their local development plans, must take account of central

government policies such as the regional development strategy and the strategic planning policy statement. The SPPS highlights the Executive's Together: Building a United Community strategy, which is committed to addressing all barriers that prevent or interfere with the creation and maintenance of shared space and ensuring that all individuals can live, learn, work and play wherever they choose. The SPPS also emphasises that councils should utilise development planning, regeneration and development management powers to contribute to the creation of an environment that is accessible to all communities, is socially and religiously mixed, has a high standard of connectivity and supports shared use of the public realm. A local development plan will also be prepared in accordance with a council's statement of community involvement, which is designed to ensure that anyone with an interest in the council's plan is given ample opportunity to become involved in its preparation from the very earliest stage.

Planning: Sprucefield

5. **Mr Craig** asked the Minister of the Environment, given that area planning responsibilities will be part of the new councils' remit, whether Sprucefield will be the responsibility of the new Lisburn City and Castlereagh District Council. (AQO 6641/11-15)

Mr Durkan: From 1 April 2015, councils will be the planning authorities responsible for determining the vast majority of planning applications in their district. As Sprucefield is in the new Lisburn City and Castlereagh District Council, any applications in that location will be submitted to the new council unless it is classed as a regionally significant application, in which case it will be submitted directly to the Department. Regionally significant developments will form the top tier of development proposals that will have a critical contribution to make to the economic and social success of Northern Ireland as a whole or to a substantial part of the region. They are likely to be small in number and will raise strategic considerations, with impacts or benefits that extend well beyond the area of an individual district council. Retail development, even large-scale retail proposals, will not generally have a regional impact beyond individual council areas. Therefore, such proposals should properly be dealt with at council level, and, indeed, that is the approach that I recently consulted on for the subordinate legislation that will give effect to the transfer of planning to councils. However, it is important to remember that the Minister, whoever it may be, would retain a call-in power if any applications were to raise issues of regional significance.

Mr Craig: I note with interest that the Minister has definitely been taking lessons on how to give a political answer on what is or is not of regional significance.

I would like a straight answer about the John Lewis application and the restrictions that have been put on it. Will that be the responsibility of the new council, or will it be pulled back in, either by the Minister or held as part of a regional decision-making policy by the Department?

Mr Durkan: I thank Mr Craig for his second question, to which he would like a straight answer. I can give an extremely straight answer. He wants an answer about the John Lewis application: there is no application from John Lewis, there has been no application from John Lewis, and

my Department is unaware of any pending application from John Lewis.

Tamboran: Cleggan Quarry

6. **Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of the Environment why he rejected Tamboran's proposals for exploratory drilling under permitted development rights at Cleggan quarry, near Belcoo, County Fermanagh. (AQO 6642/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I have given very careful consideration to Tamboran's proposal to drill a core of rock from Cleggan quarry near Belcoo and whether that is permitted development under current legislation. I have concluded that it is an environmental impact assessment (EIA) development that requires full planning permission and that permitted development rights do not apply. In making that assessment, I have been mindful of my Department's responsibility to ensure that the environment is protected at all times and that full consideration is given to any likely significant environmental impacts of such a proposal. I have concerns that it is an existing quarry from which unauthorised extraction has taken place. I believe that there is insufficient information to establish what environmental impacts may have already arisen as a result of those unauthorised activities. Therefore, it is not possible to assess the environmental impact of the drilling cumulatively with other unknown environmental impacts of unregulated activity.

In arriving at the decision, I believe that I must proceed on the basis of a precautionary principle. That principle establishes that a risk exists if it cannot be excluded on the basis of objective information and that, in the case of doubt as to the absence of significant effects, a full environmental assessment should be carried out. I have therefore concluded that it is an EIA development requiring full planning permission and an accompanying environmental statement and that current permitted development rights do not apply.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. Mar atá ráite agam cheana féin, cuirim fáilte roimh an chinneadh a rinne sé i rith an tsamhraidh.

As I have said before, I welcome the decision that the Minister made during the summer. What action does his Department intend to take to explore and deal with previous unauthorised development at the site? That is causing concern in the area.

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat as an cheist eile sin. I thank Mr Flanagan for that other question. As I outlined in my answer to a supplementary question from Mr Agnew, I believe that the issue of unauthorised work, not just at that quarry but at any quarry or, indeed, any location across the North, should be taken very seriously. Therefore, I currently have officials looking at the prospect of an enforcement case at the site. It is vital that we understand what went on if we are to be in any way assured that what is proposed is safe.

Mr Wilson: Perhaps the Minister will outline how exactly, he believes, drilling on a site where there has been, as he described, unauthorised extraction — the removal of rock — is likely to lead to problems when a firm drills down through the remainder of the rock. Will he accept from me that his decision was not based on any planning reason at

all? At Raloo, Larne lough and Inver in east Antrim, similar drilling was allowed without planning permission being granted and was regarded as permitted development. Is this not an example of his prejudice, rather than a professional planning decision, and one that could, should and, hopefully, will be resolved in court?

3.15 pm

Mr Durkan: I am not sure which question Mr Wilson wants me to answer, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle, but I have a feeling that I might have to use some of that practice in giving political answers at this juncture.

The decision that I made was one that I have the authority to make as Environment Minister. I am responsible not just for planning but for ensuring the protection of our environment. Each application is judged on its merits and assessed in its own right. At no stage have I displayed any prejudice whatsoever, despite the Member's best attempts to get me to do so.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I am afraid that that ends the period for oral questions. We now move on to topical questions.

Councils: Transfer of Functions

1. Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of the Environment to address local concerns on whether the Departments will provide the necessary resources to facilitate the transfer of functions to the new councils. (AQT 1471/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I thank Ms McLaughlin for that question. She is certainly correct in identifying that there are local concerns around the budget that will transfer to local government in association with the functions that will transfer to local government. However, she would be wrong if she were to think that those concerns are only local. I have outlined on the Floor and in other forums my concern that some Departments — well, primarily DSD — have indicated that the transfer of community development will be accompanied by a 4% cut in that budget.

I have outlined time and again that functions that transfer should do so at a point that is rates-neutral, and that has been supported by parties in the Executive and the Assembly. The reform of local government should not cost more money to local government, and that is something that we should be trying to sell to councils and citizens across the North. I do not think that it would go down too well if they see it as trying to pass our cuts on to them, rather than passing our powers on to them.

I have written to the Minister of Finance and Personnel and the Minister for Social Development on this issue, outlining my concerns. I have raised the issue on more than one occasion in the Executive. Given that the Executive signed up to it, it is vital that we remain united on it. If local government reform is to work as well as, I am sure, we all want it to work, we need to ensure that any transfer of functions is rates-neutral at the point of transfer.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: I thank the Minister for that response, which specifically points out, quite rightly, that these are not just local concerns but are right across sectors. Is there an update on the progress of the timetable for the transfer of functions?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for her supplementary question. By and large, things are going according to plan — I have to touch wood when I say that. However, one issue of concern has been flagged up by local government and to local government and, more recently, to Executive members. It refers specifically to the inability thus far to have the DSD Regeneration and Housing Bill brought to the Floor of the Assembly. I know that the Minister for Social Development is extremely keen to see it here, and he wrote to Executive colleagues last week outlining the importance of it. That function is integral to the success of the reform of local government. I have heard most Members in the House talk about the great potential of community planning, but without the power that would be vested in it with the passage of that Bill it would be very much a toothless tiger.

It is vital that this gets to and through the Assembly.

Councils: Transfer of Planning Powers

2. Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of any potential efficiencies presented by transferring planning powers to local government. (AQT 1472/11-15)

Ms P Bradley: I am sorry, Minister, that my question is in the same vein as most of today's Question Time, which is to do with the transfer of planning powers to local councils.

Mr Durkan: I thank Miss Bradley for her question. Planning belongs in local government, and I know that everyone in this Chamber looks forward to the transfer of planning there, but there are some concerns. Those concerns, particularly around capacity, are shared by those in local government. I am glad to say that an ongoing capacity-building programme is being well participated in by councillors right across the new council areas. I think that it is vital that we build, not just the competence of councillors and staff in and transferring to councils, but their confidence to be able to deal with these often complex and almost always controversial planning decisions.

As regards making efficiencies, I hope that transferring planning powers to local government will allow decisions to be made more efficiently. However, I certainly do not see this as an opportunity for me to make cost efficiencies and save money for the Department. I spoke earlier about the cuts being transferred by another Department, but I assure the House that I will transfer the full budget associated with the planning function to local councils.

It is also worth saying that planning generates income, and, while we are starting to see again an increase in the number of applications, it is thought that more applications will come in with an upturn in the economy and councils will generate even more revenue associated with planning.

Ms P Bradley: I thank the Minister for his answer. A lot of us are interested in this because a lot of us had a local council background before we became MLAs. I have been speaking to councillors in my area who have been doing their training and have found it extremely worthwhile. Does the Minister agree that there needs to be a certain level of uniformity across all councils in order to avoid any inconsistencies or opportunities for individuals or developers to take advantage in some council areas?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I concur entirely. While it is important that the

councils have autonomy, it is vital that we have a degree of uniformity, as the Member put it. It is important to emphasise that the Department will retain an oversight role. I anticipate that, in the formative months and perhaps even years, there will be quite a lot of hand-holding with councils to walk them through planning and other functions until they are able to run with it themselves.

Donaghadee Second Commons

3. **Mr Weir** asked the Minister of the Environment what plans his Department has to intervene to prevent further destruction to the environment and natural habitat of the second commons in Donaghadee. (AQT 1473/11-15)

Mr Weir: The Minister will be relieved that I am not asking anything on planning or local government, although, as he shakes his head, I am tempted to do so.

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for not asking me anything else about local government. However, I kind of now wish that he had. He asked an extremely specific question. I outlined earlier that my role as Minister for the Environment and the Department's role as the Department of the Environment is all about protecting the environment. I assure the Member that, should he furnish me with further detail on the case in Donaghadee to which he refers, I will ensure that the Department takes swift and robust action.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Weir for a supplementary question, if you can.

Mr Weir: I thank the Minister for that response. One concern that is often raised by residents, not just in this case, but in the wider context of where action is being taken that could potentially damage the environment, is that, by the time the Department has been notified and is in a position to take action, developers, or whoever, feel as if they have a window of opportunity to cause whatever destruction they want before there is any intervention. What assurances can the Minister give that the NIEA or, indeed, any other organisation can act fairly much instantaneously to prevent destruction, so that those looking to create that destruction could be stopped without there being any particular delay in the situation?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his supplementary question. Not too long ago in this Chamber, as part of my root-and-branch review of NIEA, I outlined four new operating principles for the agency. One of those, and possibly the most important, was to make the agency more customer-focused and customer-friendly. When we talk about "customer" — I am not sure that I even like the word, but it is based on a customer service model — we are not talking merely about developers who need NIEA's assistance or consultation responses to get permits; we are also talking about members of a community — people living out there who feel that their environment is being damaged. They should know that they are able to contact the agency and that it will take their report seriously and act upon it.

Councils: Smooth Transition

4. **Mr Milne** asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the structures in place in local and central government to ensure a smooth transition from 26 to 11 councils. (AQT 1474/11-15)

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. We are back to local government again, which I am sure that you are glad to hear.

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank Mr Milne for the question. I think that you are going to have to stop getting Sean McPeake to do these questions and get someone else instead.

A lot of structures and subgroups and that are in place. Mr Boylan, I am sure, will be able to fill you in on the exact names and functions of all of them, but a lot of work is being done on the reform of local government. I am glad to say that all that work is being done in conjunction with local government. That is vital. It cannot be seen that we are imposing the reform on councils; they have to see the rationale behind it, the reasons for it and, indeed, the advantages of it. Most of that work is being done to good effect.

Now that we are just eight months or so away from "V" day or vesting day, there obviously seems to be a renewed sense of urgency. I believe that we can work well with that sense of urgency but have to work hard to ensure that it does not become a sense of panic.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhuíochas don Aire go dtí seo. I thank Minister for his answer. Do you see a role for the voluntary and community sectors in helping to design and manage these structural changes?

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat as an cheist. The voluntary and community sector certainly has an extremely important role to play and will have an extremely important role to play once the new councils are established and up and running. Sorry, I assume that they will: it will very much be a decision for the new councils. However, in my opinion, it would be foolish of them to disregard the undoubted expertise and experience that exist in that field, particularly when they are taking on new functions such as community development and urban regeneration. That is why I am determined that community planning fulfils its potential as such a powerful tool to effect real change in the communities in which we live. If it is to do so, it will need the, I suppose, participation of many sectors, not least the voluntary and community sector.

Councils: Enforcement Backlog

5. **Mr Craig** asked the Minister of the Environment to assure him that the appropriate number of staff will be transferred to the new councils to continue to deal with the backlog of enforcement cases, of which there are 350 in the Lagan Valley area, given that, although the Department is working hard to reduce the number, being honest about it, it will not be reduced to an acceptable level prior to the powers being handed over to the new councils. (AQT 1475/11-15)

Mr Craig: Minister, I am keeping on the line of the new councils that are coming in, but I am concentrating on a local issue.

3.30 pm

Mr Durkan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Member for his question. I am delighted to be able to give him the assurance that the appropriate staff will be transferred. When we are looking at the transfer of planning staff across the council areas,

we look at existing and historical applications in those areas and the volume of current live cases or those that have historically been processed in those areas. The same applies to enforcement. If you see one council area that deals with 10,000 applications and 350 enforcement cases a year, you will obviously allocate more resource to that council area than you will to a council area that deals with 5,000 applications and no enforcement cases because people there play by the rules.

Mr Maskey: On a point of order, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I apologise to you and the House for failing to be in the Chamber last week at the beginning of Question Time, when I missed my question.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. I will try to get over the shock and remorse that I, as Speaker, felt about you not being in your place. Thank you very much for your apology.

The House should take its ease while we change the top Table.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Private Members' Business

Western Education and Library Board: Development Proposals

Debate resumed on amendment to motion:

That this Assembly notes development proposals 260, 261 and 262 by the Western Education and Library Board regarding the proposed closure of the Collegiate Grammar School and Portora Royal School; commends the staff and pupils of both schools for the excellent GCSE and A-level results achieved again this year; and requires the Minister of Education to reject the development proposals and seek consensus on the future of these schools with broad community support. — [Lord Morrow.]

Which amendment was:

Leave out all after "Portora Royal School" and insert "and the creation of a new school; commends the staff and pupils of both schools for the excellent GCSE and A-level results achieved again this year; and calls on the Minister of Education to ensure that his decision on these development proposals ensures that all the young people served by the controlled sector in Enniskillen are given equality of access to high-quality education, including the provision of a new build for Devenish College." — [Mr Hazzard.]

Mr Allister: When we, as MLAs, are discussing the future or the proposed closure of schools, we are often faced with the difficulties that the school in question has. Perhaps it is underperforming or undersubscribed, and we have all those mountains to climb. However, this case is surely quite exceptional in that we have a proposal to, effectively, close one of the most popular, effective and successful schools in County Fermanagh, namely Collegiate Grammar School. The school is oversubscribed. Indeed, it has the physical capacity to take another 150 pupils, but, by ministerial directive, it is capped at 500 and denied that opportunity. Hence, it is highly oversubscribed. Its output is a school of great achievement and success. It has produced, and is still producing, wonderful results.

I should perhaps confess to a certain degree of bias: my wife is a former pupil of Collegiate Grammar School, and much the better for that. It is a school that anyone would be very proud to have in their constituency and which any MLA worth their salt would fight to keep. To find a proposal that suggests that that school, with all its remarkable history, the unique niche it fills in the education market and its success, should be picked on to be liquidated and merged is quite reckless and perverse. Therefore, I totally oppose that and support the motion.

Let us be very clear: the net outcome of what the board wishes to do will radically decrease the number of grammar school places in County Fermanagh. That probably is the prime motivation of the Minister and board, because, of course, theirs is a dogma of anti-selection.

There is something here very much worth preserving. I hear talk about Devenish. Devenish is the one reason why you should not close the Collegiate. Devenish speaks

of broken promises. How many schools were closed, including Lisnaskea recently, on the very promise and premise that there would be Devenish? So, no one should be saying, "Oh, we are jeopardising Devenish if we don't close the Collegiate". Devenish has become synonymous with a failure to deliver, and the Devenish promise has become synonymous with a broken promise on education in County Fermanagh.

Mr McNarry: I thank the Member for giving way. The questions to be asked are surely these: is this school receiving a fair hearing, has it received a fair hearing and is fair action being contemplated by the Department and the Minister? Will the House ever receive in this instance a fair hearing from this Sinn Féin Minister?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Allister: If it had been receiving a fair hearing, we would not be at this point. There would not have been a proposal to tear down that which is working and that which is good. With that precedent, one is fearful of the future and of the Minister's plans in that regard.

It is a very simple matter: as far as grammar school education in Fermanagh is concerned, there are two operating successful schools. Let that which is not broken continue. The Collegiate in particular has been excellent and has excelled in all that it has done. If this House cares anything for education, it will seek to preserve that.

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Chomhalta as an mholadh seo a thabhairt ar aghaidh, agus fáiltímh roimh an deis na moltaí seo a phlé mar a thagann siad chun tosaigh agus mar a dhéantar cinntí orthu.

I thank the Members who brought forward the motion and welcome the opportunity to explain once again how proposals are brought forward and decided upon.

The motion concerns Portora Royal School and Collegiate Grammar School and has two parts. First, it commends the staff and pupils of the schools on their excellent exam results this year. I congratulate all those involved across all our schools, especially the young people who are reaping the rewards of years of hard work. Secondly, it calls on me to reject the development proposals to amalgamate Portora Royal School and Collegiate Grammar School and create a co-educational, non-denominational voluntary grammar school in Enniskillen. I cannot comment at this point in the process. The consultation period has ended.

The boards and CCMS have statutory planning responsibilities. In consultation with the other sectors, they are responsible for developing and delivering sustainable education provision that meets the needs of the whole population in their local areas.

The area plans set out how that can best be achieved, using the best data available. The plans are not set in stone; they are living documents that will have to change as circumstances change and more up-to-date data becomes available. Proposals that flow from the plans are taken forward through the statutory development proposal process, and it is a statutory process.

In this case, the proposals were brought forward by the managing authorities, the Western Board and the Fermanagh Protestant Board of Education. Following publication, there is a two-month objection period,

during which anyone may forward their comments to the Department. Also, where possible, I meet interested parties to listen to their views.

This gives people in the community the opportunity to have their say on what is proposed before any decision is taken. It is worth noting that some of those who spoke most loudly in the Chamber today have not contacted my Department to make their views known before the decision is taken.

My involvement is as a decision-maker. Following the objection period, my officials collate information on the proposals and the views expressed to inform my decision. Officials are undertaking this work on the proposals to amalgamate Portora and Collegiate. Obviously, points raised by Members today will be reflected on as part of that work.

Ultimately, as decision-maker, I will have to consider the case put forward and take a decision in the best long-term interest of providing quality education for the area and all the pupils who live in that area. As a consequence of being a decision-maker, I will not vote on the proposal or the amendment today. However, until I have the full detail on the proposals, I owe it to all concerned to maintain an open mind. This means that I am not in a position to engage in debate on detailed issues around the specific proposals.

I will touch on the point in the amendment relating to Devenish. A number of Members referred to "broken promises", which, I think, was Mr Allister's term. I challenge him to produce the promise about Devenish that I have broken. I cannot speak for previous Administrations or go back as far as 2004; I can reflect only on the comments, decisions and proposals that I have put forward since I came into office.

I have committed to a new build at Devenish. I stand by that commitment. For the information of the House, the economic appraisal for a new build at Devenish went to the Department of Finance and Personnel on Friday. Economic appraisals usually take between four and six weeks for the Department of Finance to work through. Then the appraisal will be returned to my Department. I hope to be in a position within that time frame — I emphasise "hope" — to have made a decision on the development proposals that are before me today. If DFP approves the economic appraisal, Devenish will move forward, regardless of what decision I make on Portora and Collegiate.

Lord Morrow asked me when work at Devenish would commence: the site where Devenish is to be rebuilt is difficult. The topography is quite challenging for builders, and the site will require significant enabling works before construction can take place. I can inform the House today that I hope that those enabling works will commence in this financial year. It is a significant piece of work, removing a significant part of a drumlin on the site and, most likely, requiring the culverting of a river. I hope that full construction will start on the site by 2016. There is a commencement time for you.

I have emphasised this before: if people are serious about supporting Devenish, why do they come to the House and talk it down? That just bewilders me completely. How and ever, that is the time frame: commencement work starting this financial year and full construction work starting in the summer of 2016. This all depends on the economic

appraisal being passed and that time frame working through.

The proposals to amalgamate Portora and Collegiate have raised heated debate in Fermanagh and at times, indeed, in the House. I am under no illusion about the level of interest in the proposals nor the emotion and sensitivities around them. They have generated a substantial public response to the Department of around 700 letters, many strongly opposed and many strongly in support. I have met representatives of the Collegiate, Portora and Devenish College, and I have to acknowledge and put it on record that those meetings were held in a professional, courteous way. Each side was able to put across its points in that manner, and I found the meetings very useful.

I fully understand how much the proposals mean to people and will not take a decision until I have had time to consider the full facts and the range of opinions expressed. What I can say is that my focus will be on the needs of children and young people, not institutions. My vision for education here is that all our young people, regardless of their personal circumstances or whether they attend a grammar or non-selective school, have the opportunity to reach their full potential and are encouraged to do so. That means that we must have a network of schools, sustainable in the long term and capable of providing a quality education across a broad and balanced curriculum. They must be financially viable as well as educationally sound. We must make the best use of the public money entrusted to us. Schools must also be able to provide the environment to support pupils' personal development. This means providing opportunities for social interaction with their peers, team sports and all the other extra-curricular activities that can add fun and an extra sense of achievement to school life. These are key drivers for area planning.

None of this should surprise anyone here; I have said it numerous times before in and outside the Chamber. I know that there is often a strong emotional attachment to schools that, in many circumstances, have served generations of children. However, as Education Minister, I have a responsibility to consider the best educational interests of all children and young people affected by the proposals going into the future. Is é leas na ndaltaí a mheas a bhéas ag croílár mo chuid breitheanna. The best interests of pupils will be at the very heart of my considerations when I come to make my decision on the matter.

3.45 pm

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a ráitis. I thank the Minister for his response to the debate. This has been a useful debate, but, like every other debate that has taken place on the future of these schools, unfortunately it appears that we have not reached consensus. The debate on the future of these two schools has, unfortunately, dominated and divided discussion on the future of post-primary education in County Fermanagh, particularly in the controlled sector. Initially, I want to state that I will not support the motion; in my opinion, it is really flawed. It is ill thought-out, and it is certainly elitist, but that is no real surprise from the party of big house unionism.

This debate must include more than the protection of institutions that some people hold very dear. It is fine

that we hold institutions very dear, but, as political representatives, we have to look beyond that. We have to look at the needs of the young people; that has to be at the forefront of our thought. We have to think about the people who use these institutions, but what about the people who were not given the chance to get to these institutions? They were turned down from getting into them at the age of 11 and were deemed failures. There is no reference in the substantive motion to the institutions that do a very good job serving those people. For that reason, we have tabled an amendment. The Minister has set out some of the changes, but it includes a reference to a new build for Devenish College. That is one of the most important things required in the controlled sector in County Fermanagh.

The Members opposite talk about world-class schools, and there is no doubt that the education provided at Collegiate and Portora is excellent and that the people who go there really benefit from it. However, there remains this elitist approach that the people who go to those schools are better than the others, and that is not the case. All our children should be treated equally, regardless of which school they go to, and that is a policy that Sinn Féin will continue to hold as long as we have responsibility for the Ministry of Education. The Members opposite only want to talk about those who have been given preferential status and forget about those who went to Devenish College. When I say the Members opposite, I do not include Tom Elliott, who has spoken about Devenish College. However, the fact remains that the DUP now appears to be opposed to the redevelopment and the new build at Devenish College, which is madness.

Mr Storey: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Flanagan: I will happily give way, Mervyn.

Mr Storey: If the Member is going to use language in the House, then —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not a point of order.

Mr Storey: Further to that point of order —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Mr Flanagan.

Mr Flanagan: I am happy to give way to the Member.

The current situation demonstrates the need for proper area planning. We have heard an awful lot of criticism of John O'Dowd for promises that he apparently made and has not lived up to, but the promises that they are talking about date back to 2004, and it was not this Assembly or this Executive that made those promises. There has not been one bit of criticism from the Benches opposite of the Western Education and Library Board. All the criticism seems to be levelled at the Minister of Education, who, as the Members opposite rightly know, is not driving this forward. Your criticism should be levelled at the Western Education and Library Board. If you have a criticism of the process, bring it there.

The Minister set in train a process through which he wanted the managing authorities to work together and bring forward a joint area planning process. They have failed to do it. Look at the proposals in place, and what have you got? You have proposals to deal with the controlled sector in Fermanagh, and, separately, the CCMS has proposals to deal with the Catholic sector. They have never spoken to each other about how these things can all be brought together to meet the needs of the young

people of the county, which is what our priority should be. It should not be about protecting elite mentalities or institutions.

I put it on record that I have full faith in John O'Dowd's ability to make decisions based on the best interests of the children and young people of my county. I know that he will make decisions based on the evidence given to him on the needs of young people, not on protecting institutions. I have met representatives of the Collegiate campaign group. I think that they have put forward a very coherent argument, but it is up to the Minister to make the decision. As one Member said, this is a hot topic, but it has to be about more than just the Collegiate and Portora. At the moment, both schools get 70 pupils each in first year, but the Members opposite and Minister Allister — sorry, Mr Allister; thank God he is not a Minister — have spoken about removing that cap to allow more pupils in.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Flanagan: If they are serious about removing the cap, what does that mean for the other controlled schools in Fermanagh? If we are not talking about elitism here, how come there has been such a kick-up about Portora and the Collegiate? Where was the motion about saving Lisnaskea High School?

Mrs Foster: I will respond to the grammar-school boy's comments later, but I first want to say that the motion contains three proposals and nowhere in those proposals is Devenish mentioned, so the motion is about the Collegiate and Portora. It is about the closure of the Collegiate Grammar School, the closure of Portora Royal School and the creation of a new school. It is not about amalgamation. The word "amalgamation" has been used across the Chamber today, but it is not about that; it is about the closure of two grammar schools and the opening of a new co-ed grammar school.

Mr Sheehan: That is what happens in an amalgamation.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs Foster: That is not what happens in an amalgamation. I should be surprised at that comment, but I am not, given the level of debate here today. We have had some very personalised attacks, starting with Mr Hazzard's attack on me and running right throughout Sinn Féin's contribution here today. The attacks are not from the Minister, I have to say, but we have had quite personalised attacks from all the other contributors. You know what they say: when you do not have an argument, personalise the attack on the person making the argument on the other side. That is fair enough. That is the level of debate from Sinn Féin.

Through the motion, we want to lift the cloud of uncertainty over the Collegiate Grammar School and Portora Royal School. The Collegiate, in particular, feels it very keenly, because, as we have been reminded, Portora's board of governors has voted in favour of the closure of its school, but the board of the Collegiate Grammar School has vehemently opposed its closure, as have the pupils, the staff and, indeed, the wider public, as shown by the fact that I presented a petition here some time ago with over 7,000 names.

Despite that, both schools continued this year to provide outstanding success at GCSE and A level. Indeed, in the Collegiate, 85% of A-level entries were A* to C, and almost

one third of the girls had at least an A* or two As in their results. That is quite incredible, and I hope that the whole House will agree on the part of the motion that states that both schools have provided excellent education for the young people in the grammar school sector in County Fermanagh.

I also pay tribute to the number of past pupils who have raised their voice about the proposals. That might annoy Mr Hazzard, who seems to have a problem with me being a past pupil. Those past pupils were taught that their voice mattered at the Collegiate, and they continue to make their voice heard. I commend them for that.

We have heard quite a lot of false protestations from the Benches opposite about Devenish College. I have never heard them being such proponents of Devenish College before, but there you are. The experience of Devenish College has led the community to a position in which they do not have any confidence in speculative plans. The suck-it-and-see approach did not work for Devenish College. The Duke of Westminster High School was closed, and Lisnaskea High School was closed. And, Mr Flanagan, how dare you challenge me about Lisnaskea High School, when I stood up for it when nobody else was prepared to stand up for it. So, take that back.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Can all remarks be made through the Chair, please?

Mrs Foster: Through the Chair, in the same way as all remarks from the Sinn Féin Benches are made through the Chair.

There is no public accountability in this process. The community in Fermanagh is not in favour of it, and the petition showed that clearly. One of the schools is vehemently opposed to the process. Mr Flanagan is right in one respect: this is the fault of the Western Education and Library Board. It pushed through the procedure. As I said to the board in correspondence when it was making its decision, it should hang its head in shame over the closure of both schools.

The lack of consensus was, in a bizarre way, underlined by the email that came to us at 5.20 pm on a Friday from the email account of Mr Neil Morton, under the names of the Bishop of Clogher and Councillor Alex Baird, wherein they say that there have been a number of meetings to decide on the way forward that have not succeeded to date. Therefore, they say that their way should be adopted. Well, that is some consensus. It reminded me of a quotation from one Brian Clough, who used to be the manager of Nottingham Forest football team. When he was asked about how he dealt with disagreements, he said:

"We talk about it for 20 minutes, and then we decide I was right."

That is basically the procedure that has happened here. The Western Education and Library Board has singularly failed to find consensus on the matter. Therefore, it will go ahead anyway.

The email from Mr Morton's account makes much of the fact that Lord Morrow and I did not contact him or the board of governors of Devenish about our motion. Lord Morrow and I are fully aware of the views of the boards of governors of Portora Royal School and Devenish College. What they fail to recognise is that their view is patently

not the view of the community in County Fermanagh, as the wider public have affirmed in numerous public consultations over the past 10 years, and that has been very clear.

What is particularly sad about the process is that it has pitted schools against each other. The Sinn Féin amendment wants to do that again today. It wants to bring Devenish into the procedure, despite the fact that the development proposals are quite separate from Devenish College. For some inexplicable reason, the board of governors of Devenish College believes that its future is inextricably linked to the closure of the Collegiate and Portora Royal School. How sad that is. Instead of wanting to see all schools flourish in County Fermanagh, the board of governors decides that another school has to close for its school to exist. Of course, that is not what the Minister has said. He has confirmed in the House today — I thank him for it — that Devenish College will go ahead, that it will be a new school on the Tempo Road site and that the economic appraisal is with DFP. We welcome that, but why does Devenish seek to close the Collegiate and Portora and to reduce the numbers at grammar school in Fermanagh? Only Devenish can answer that. I cannot answer that for them.

4.00 pm

As for Portora, it is well known that the closure of the Collegiate has been a long-term aim. It was tried in the early 1990s. Mr Elliott referred to it going on for 10 years: it has not; it has been going on for in excess of 20 years. In the early 1990s, it was put forward that Portora Royal School and the Collegiate would amalgamate. Thankfully, it was rejected by the then Education Minister. Instead of focusing on a vision for the future, the board of governors of Portora has decided to retrace old ground and look to close the Collegiate Grammar School. Then again, it is not retracing old ground because this time it is closing the Collegiate and Portora Royal School, a school with over 400 years of history. Yes, we can say, "You are talking only about institutions. You are not talking about the children". Well, I know that the children who attend Portora and the Collegiate are inherently proud of the history of those institutions. It spurs them on into the future, and they should rightly be proud of that history.

Somebody said in relation to the closure of Portora that it was just the beginning of a new chapter. It is not the beginning of a new chapter; it is the end of the book for Portora Royal School. It will be the end of that school. It has been made perfectly clear, for example, that it will be up to the new board of governors to decide on the name and what way it will go forward with regard to academic selection and what have you. Do not be fooled in the House today into thinking that this is an amalgamation. It is not an amalgamation; it is the closure of two oversubscribed, well-performing schools.

Let me say this to the House: if it happens in this case, then the new board for Northern Ireland could decide that other controlled schools should be closed as well. This is not just about Fermanagh or Enniskillen today; there is a wider issue for controlled sector schools across Northern Ireland.

This debate has not been as well informed as we would have liked. Much has been said that has not been correct. Statements have been made that the Collegiate is not sharing —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member must draw her remarks to a close.

Mrs Foster: — and that is wrong. The Collegiate is sharing in a very meaningful way in the Fermanagh learning project, which I commend and want to see continuing. I hope that the Minister will recognise the fact that it shares in a meaningful way when he makes his decision.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mrs Foster: I am glad that I brought this to the House —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mrs Foster: — because we need to debate the matter. It affects us all as Members.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 43; Noes 47.

AYES

Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mrs O'Neill, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Hazzard and Mr Sheehan.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCallister, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

The following Member voted in both Lobbies and is therefore not counted in the result: Mr Agnew.

Question accordingly negated.

Main Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 47; Noes 32.

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen,

Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

NOES

Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr Brady, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Hazzard, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mrs O'Neill, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Hazzard and Mr Sheehan.

The following Members voted in both Lobbies and are therefore not counted in the result: Mr Agnew, Mr McCallister

Main Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes development proposals 260, 261 and 262 by the Western Education and Library Board regarding the proposed closure of the Collegiate Grammar School and Portora Royal School; commends the staff and pupils of both schools for the excellent GSCE and A-level results achieved again this year; and requires the Minister of Education to reject the development proposals and seek consensus on the future of these schools with broad community support.

Budget 2011-15: Replacement

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Nesbitt: I beg to move

That this Assembly recognises that the 2011-2015 Budget settlement is unravelling; expresses concern about the impact that the current funding crisis may have on the sick and the vulnerable across Northern Ireland and how this will be further compounded if penalties are passed down from Westminster; accepts that ongoing implementation of the current four-year Budget is now untenable and calls on the Executive to bring forward a new Budget, accompanied by a revised Programme for Government, which takes account of the new financial environment.

4.30 pm

It is my pleasure to move the motion. It is an Ulster Unionist policy, which we have had for some time, that elected Assemblies should determine and decide the Budget for their own mandate. Across the last mandate and the beginning of this, we took three big decisions that dictate how government works. I believe that we did them in reverse order. We began with a Budget, then formed an Executive and, finally, agreed the Programme for Government. I question why we did not start with the Programme for Government, and I make a call that, in the next mandate, we do just that: agree the Programme for Government before running d'Hondt, after which Ministers inevitably retreat into their various silos.

The current Budget was not decided by the current Assembly. The Ulster Unionist Party voted against that Budget on principle, but the Ulster Unionists also voted against it for the very practical reason that it did not add up. The key issue was health. Interestingly, a Member of the former mandate, who voted in favour of the Budget in 2011, now finds himself as Minister of Health arguing that the health budget that he voted for does not add up. This is a man who said on 9 March 2011:

"it is more than likely that the Health Service will thrive, in spite of what Minister McGimpsey has left behind".
— [Official Report, Bound Volume 63, p264, col 2].

The current Minister has been in post now for more than three years. Nobody thinks that it is thriving, not even the Minister's colleague the Finance Minister, who said in July that he found it "hugely disappointing" that the Health Department had had more than three years to ensure that it could live within its 2014-15 budget but had failed to do so. The fact is that the former Minister, Michael McGimpsey, identified £4.8 billion as the figure that the Health Service would need in this financial year, 2014-15. If the current Minister got all that he wanted, the budget would be £4.799 billion. So, three years out, Minister McGimpsey was accurate to within three decimal points. Yet, the First Minister dismissed him at the time. On 21 February 2011, Peter Robinson said:

"Frankly, I find it obscene that, instead of the Minister cheering that he has got the best deal in Northern Ireland, we have this kind of political posturing." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 62, p36, col 1].

We now know that it was not posturing; it was pinpoint accuracy. The health budget does not add up, and that is endorsed by Minister Poots.

The current Budget is so far detached from what was originally agreed in 2011 that we believe that it is now beyond recognition. It has so many holes that it is fatally flawed. For instance, the official Budget included an understanding that health would not receive additional money through monitoring rounds. However, over the last number of years, it has received some £300 million.

This is not just about health, nor is it about welfare reform, which is an increasingly convenient excuse for Ministers to seek cover. The 2·1% cut in June monitoring had nothing to do with welfare penalties; it was simply to paper over the cracks in a Budget that does not add up. For example, in education, the Education and Skills Authority (ESA) should be on course to save £40 million by the end of 2015.

Instead, although it never existed in law, it has cost the taxpayer over £18 million, and there was a swing of £58 million in the budget. We could have supported ESA if it was a drive to bring efficiencies to education rather than being a vehicle for the ideological control of the education of our children. In England, for every pound that goes into the education budget there, 81p gets into the school and the classroom. Here, it is less than 50p. So ESA is not coming forward, and the difference in the budget is £58 million.

The social investment fund plan was for £20 million a year for four years. As we stand, only £33 million has been announced, yet, as we all know, deprivation and dereliction remain at distressing levels in our constituencies.

Then there is the cost of local government reform, which the Ulster Unionists warned about frequently in 2011. It was ignored in the Budget, but an emergency £48 million package had to be agreed last year. That is £48 million that other Departments will have been expecting. We also do not believe that £48 million is enough. Once the true cost of rate convergence is calculated, we believe that it will be significantly more.

The construction of social housing is falling way behind what is required, and yet, last year, the Housing Minister handed back £8 million that he had underspent and that had been specifically planned for housebuilding. As disgraceful and abhorrent as that was, we need to ensure that next year's capital figure is increased to reflect what happened there.

The current Budget also includes £20 million per annum being realised from Belfast harbour in years 3 and 4. We are in year 4, and how much has been raised? Zero. That has left a hole in the Department for Regional Development's budget, which again has needed to be filled with money from elsewhere. Why have we not got money out of Belfast harbour? The reason is that we do not have the power to take the money. We might as well have committed to taking £20 million a year from the Sultan of Brunei.

The previous Budget settlement also hoped to retrieve funds from the £250 million-plus reserves that are being held by housing associations. We opposed that, but it does

not really matter now anyway because it has not happened either. I think that the case is made that the Budget is a long way from where it should be, and, as we have an extra year coming with no Budget — financial year 2015-16 — we believe that now is the time to address those issues.

We have also called for a review of the Programme for Government. On page 6, under "Our Commitments", the First Minister and deputy First Minister say:

"The primary focus of your Executive for the next four years will be to grow the economy and tackle disadvantage."

Ten years ago, the block grant stood at around £6 billion. Today, it is £10 billion. This is not a good place for our economy to be — dependent on HM Treasury for £10 billion per annum.

A certainty of the legacy of the Scottish independence vote is that we need to work harder to be good corporate citizens of the United Kingdom. Our big idea to grow the private sector and to generate more wealth was corporation tax. The milestone in the Programme for Government for 2012-13 was to:

"Press for a UK government decision".

In 2013-14, it was to:

"Work to ensure that required Westminster and Assembly legislation is in place".

In this financial year, it is to make an:

"announcement of rate of corporation tax for Northern Ireland".

We have failed to achieve any of those key goals for that primary objective in the Programme for Government.

The Education and Skills Authority has not come forward; that point has been made.

Another aim was to:

"Fulfil our commitments under the Child Poverty Act to reduce child poverty".

Londonderry and Belfast are ranked in the top five cities in the UK with the worst child poverty.

The Programme for Government also states that we will:

"Substantially complete the construction of the new Police, Prison and Fire Training College".

The earliest possible date for a college would be 2016 if — a big if — the plans go ahead.

Another key commitment is to:

"reform and modernise the delivery of Health and Social care".

Instead of achieving reform and modernisation, waiting lists have increased, and the Minister did a U-turn after attempting to close care homes. Ninety-year-olds were in tears at that prospect.

Another target of the Programme for Government was to:

"improve literacy and numeracy levels among all school leavers, with additional support targeted at underachieving pupils".

The percentage of school leavers who achieve two or more A levels has gone down from 55.6% in 2011-12 to 55.1%.

A further target of the Programme for Government was to:

“develop Maze/Long Kesh as a regeneration site of regional significance”.

That was another failure because of intransigence at the heart of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

And so it goes on and on. Rather than dwell on failures —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Nesbitt: — let us focus on doing better. Let us review the Programme for Government, decide what is achievable between now and the end of the mandate and work together to deliver it.

Mr Girvan: I oppose the motion tabled by Mr Mike Nesbitt and Minister Kennedy. As it stands, we are three and half years into our current Budget programme. It seems somewhat ironic that the Executive are being asked to draw up a new Budget to finish the Assembly term. I appreciate that we will have to focus on our 2015-16 Budget, which will require some focusing of minds to ensure that we bring it forward correctly.

Unfortunately, I think that there has been a little bit of political point-scoring going on, or an attempt at it. All the issues raised by Mr Nesbitt were negatives. There were absolutely no positives. I think that it is inevitable that we will have difficulties.

Our Minister of Health has made £500 million worth of savings in the three years that he has been in office. The previous Minister may have identified savings, but he did nothing to implement them. I appreciate that additional savings could be made. Nobody is saying that any Department with a budget of £4.7 billion is spending every penny correctly. I am not saying that it is all waste, but I am sure that there is still some waste.

We have to go on the basis and wording of the motion. Our 2011-2015 Budget is running into some difficulties, and we have to ensure that we have money set aside to deal with the penalties — the £87 million — that will come to Northern Ireland for the non-implementation of welfare reform. That money will be taken directly out of our Budget, and we will have to deal with that as a consequence. Each Department is also having to find 2.1% cuts and will have to continue to find them. Those cuts have been announced, and Ministers are acting responsibly to try to meet their budget requirements. That will leave us with about six months left of this financial year. If we went by the wording of the motion, by the time that the process was in place, we would already be into the next financial year. I do not think that that is a way of dealing with it.

As far as we are concerned, our party opposes the motion. We are asking people to focus their minds on our 2015-16 Budget and to ensure that we bring forward a Budget that is fit for purpose and that will deliver.

The Programme for Government mentions corporation tax, and the Executive have attempted to move the Government to devolve that. That would not be without cost, and I appreciate that it would be a graduated process

over time. However, we are sure that there will be an announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the autumn. We believe that that will be of some benefit to Northern Ireland, allowing us to use some of the tools in the box to grow our economy. That will enable us to ensure that we can bring in some private investment and allow businesses to move forward in an area that is targeting the economy as a primary driver for recovery. On the basis that there have been some cheap shots, I would say that there have been extensive negotiations with the Treasury on these matters. It is vital that we get fiscal control over some of those areas so that we can have a direct input on growing our economy. I oppose the motion.

4.45 pm

Mr McKay: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. On behalf of my party I oppose the motion, quite simply because it does not make any sense. The proposers are asking for a new Programme for Government and a new Budget for a four-year period at the end of the four-year period. I agree with the Member who spoke previously: it is a bit of a stunt.

However, I welcome the fact that the Ulster Unionist Party is highlighting some of the financial crises that we find ourselves in. That is laced with irony. I am sure that other Members will recall that, back in 2010, the Ulster Unionist Party backed the Tory Party in its election to Westminster, and it is the Tory Party that has introduced the cuts that the UUP is now complaining about. You cannot have it both ways.

We now see the outworking of the Tory policies in Government through welfare and cutting our Budget right down to the bone. There is much discussion about welfare. The other parties refer to welfare reform, but they never refer to the consequences of the welfare proposals coming from Westminster. They do not talk about the effect that it has had and will have on the disabled, working families, and on those who are struggling to get by. I would like to hear the other parties in the House refer to that, rather than the £87 million and welfare reform.

We have already seen the devastating impact that this has had on ordinary people in Britain. Food banks are on the rise, and benefits for people who really, really need them are being held up for appeal, with people who are entitled to them dying. That is the process; that is the system that is being put in place in Britain. Of course, Britain is trying to put an IT system in place that simply does not work. Therefore, it does not make sense for us to tie in to a system in Britain that is being highly criticised by many parties across the water.

We can all agree that benefits and welfare need to be simplified and improved. However, what has been undertaken in Britain is not working and is not workable. Therefore, it would not make sense for us to bolt ourselves on to a universal credit system that looks destined to fail in the not too distant future.

Of course, the British Government are threatening to take money from our Budget, and they are threatening to take money for us not implementing their proposals, which they cannot implement themselves. Therefore, the challenge that we as an Assembly and as an Executive should put to the British Government is this: how can they bring forward the proposal to take money from our Budget when they

are not doing it themselves? If we went with a united voice, and if we showed the same resolve that we have seen from the Scottish Administration, perhaps we would get more. Given the pressure that other Administrations have put on Westminster, it is quite clear that they have moved when they have been put under pressure, rather than simply nod the head to the Treasury every time they make a move.

Reference has also been made to the health budget and how it has been managed, or mismanaged, in the past. Of course, the elephant in the room is the mismanagement of the health system at present. There was an agreement between the Department of Finance and the Department of Health and, of course, there has not been much agreement between those two Departments or two Ministers in recent weeks. However, the fact is that there was agreement that the Department of Health would be given some flexibility over this Budget period, but it would not make any bids in the various monitoring rounds. Since then, the Department of Health has made 41 bids for money year in year, and over £140 million has been given to the Department of Health, even though that was not part of the original budgetary plan.

That huge pressure has not been referred to, but it needs to be taken account of as well.

Many proposals and projects that should have been put in place over the past four years would have led to economic growth and savings to offset some of the pressures that we have at the moment. The Education and Skills Authority (ESA) is the most obvious one. The agreement on the Maze/Long Kesh was reneged on. That would have led to a facility being put in place that local people could have used and tourists could have availed themselves of, but it was flushed down the toilet for political purposes.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr McCallister: Will the Member give way?

Mr McKay: Yes.

Mr McCallister: On the subject of reneging on agreements, some would say that Sinn Féin reneged on its agreement on welfare.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McKay: The Member should provide some evidence on that if he has it. I suspect that he does not, although I thank him for the extra minute.

The final thing that I want to refer to is corporation tax. That has been a priority for the Executive in recent years, and now we have mixed messages coming from the party opposite on whether it wants corporation tax or not. Yesterday, Sammy Wilson said that it would be madness to take on any more fiscal powers, and then we turn on the radio this morning to hear Arlene Foster say that we are working hard to get corporation tax transferred to the Executive. Which one is it? You cannot have the party to my right coming out with mixed messages when we are on the cusp of achieving the devolution of a significant power that will significantly help our economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr McKay: Which one is it?

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Judith Cochrane.

Mrs Cochrane: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker: My apologies, that was my mistake. I call Alex Attwood. Alex Attwood's name is on the list that has been provided to me, and it is next on my list.

Mr Attwood: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The first point about this debate is that, whether or not it is late in the mandate, there is a need for an annual budgetary process in this Chamber to enable it to interrogate the Budget on a rolling year-to-year basis. Whether the motion is passed and whether the Minister begins to reshape how we do our budgetary processes, we urge him and DFP to adopt the model used in every other jurisdiction.

If you turned on 'Morning Ireland' this morning — the premier RTÉ Radio 1 news show — you would have heard the headline story about fiscal bodies and the forthcoming budgetary decisions that the Irish Government have to take. The same headlines are in the Irish press. Over the next number of weeks, it will be the same in respect of the British Government. Because they have an annual budgetary process, it concentrates minds and political effort in shaping that process to get the right outcomes on behalf of the citizens whom they represent. We are denied that here in Northern Ireland. If an annual budgetary process is the standard model in other jurisdictions on these islands, that is the model that we should adopt.

If we are honest with ourselves, we have to concede that, while we all sit on Committees of the House, insufficient time is spent on each Committee interrogating the budget of each Department. That is why the SDLP believes that, on the model of the Public Accounts Committee, we should have a dedicated budget Committee to interrogate on a week-to-week and month-to-month basis all the issues that Mr Nesbitt outlined in his speech, such as the fact that some budget commitments and policy priorities have not matured and other commitments have emerged that have created budgetary pressures for the Executive and Departments. In addition to having an annual budgetary process on the Floor of the House, we should have a dedicated budget Committee of the House to interrogate each Department's budget on the way forward.

Even though this comes late in the mandate, if it is a valid proposal, let us expand the forthcoming Budget of 2015-16 to incorporate the residue of this mandate to show good authority and to give to our people the hope that has been denied to them and is in sharper relief following the Scottish referendum. If one thing demonstrates the authority of the Scottish Government, it is that they are seen to know the difference between being in government and being in power. They have intervened on behalf of their citizens and earned the respect of the population. Whatever the outcome of the referendum, there are lessons that we need to learn and conclude from the authority of the Scottish Government. Over the next period, it will become clear that people have a confidence in the Scottish Government that is lacking when it comes to this Chamber and our Government.

Consequently, we need to show more general authority, and one of the ways of showing that general authority is to learn from the Scottish Government, have an annual Budget process and a budget Committee. When it comes

to the issue of welfare — in the event that that is ever resolved satisfactorily, which seems a distant hope at the moment — one of the Scottish Government's interventions has been to create a dedicated Welfare Committee to interrogate and monitor the impact of welfare reform on its citizens. That led that Committee, in the early part of this year, to describe the bedroom tax as iniquitous, which, in part, informed the Scottish Government in essentially doing away with the bedroom tax in Scotland. Every tenant, existing and future, who is penalised £1 for the bedroom tax receives a benefit from the Scottish Government. If that approach is good enough —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Attwood: — for the Scottish Government, it should be good enough for the Northern Ireland Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I now call Judith Cochrane.

Mrs Cochrane: Thank you again, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate.

While the motion raises an important issue, namely the viability of our current Budget, the call to bring forward a new Budget at this stage is not really feasible. As others have said, we are in the final year of a four-year Budget, and that four-year approach was adopted to try to give certainty over a number of years to allow effective planning and stability. Departments, along with their arm's-length bodies, need certainty ahead of financial years in order to act responsibly and to allow them to deploy their allocated resources as efficiently and effectively as possible. The notion, therefore, of rewriting the 2014-15 Budget is unwise. Even the timescales for that process would mean that no decisions would be taken until near the end of the year.

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. Perhaps, will she then explain why, as part of the June monitoring discussions that concluded at the end of July, her party around the Executive table voted no.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mrs Cochrane: Yes, I will cover that in one moment.

As I said, rewriting the Budget now would produce a roughly similar outcome and provide only a three-month window during which to implement any necessary cuts. That could massively increase the risk of individual Departments and the system as a whole breaching expenditure limits, which would carry massive consequences from the Treasury.

We have already seen, through the approach to the monitoring round, the problems associated with making significant adjustments to the Budget in-year. Indeed, Alliance Ministers opposed those changes at the Executive. Minister Kennedy had the opportunity to clearly voice his dissatisfaction with that process but decided to abstain. Alliance Ministers opposed it because, although they accept that using monitoring rounds to make adjustments to baselines in-year is perhaps the only viable way to deal with emerging issues, we argue that these changes need to be made with proper strategic consideration of the impact of any cuts when protecting other Departments. Instead, in the June monitoring round, we saw the protection of Education without any justification being offered, when this is an area where there are huge inefficiencies in existing expenditure, with a segregated

education system and numerous empty school places. For instance, if Education had borne some of the same cuts, the 4.4% Budget reduction would have generated about £70 million. Taking on even the 2.1% cut would have produced about £30 million.

By stating that we were not happy with the approach taken at the last monitoring round, I am not saying that Alliance is averse to considering additional resources for priority areas, such as health and social services. However, before we do that, major questions need to be asked about how the Health Department has ended up in this crisis. It is clear that there were structural problems in health and social services at the outset of the Budget period. That has, no doubt, made it more difficult to deal with the required funding reductions. However, the Health Minister was given full flexibility to move money internally in his Department's budget. That should have allowed him to make better progress on reform.

5.00 pm

The apparent crisis in health, coupled with the other budgetary problems, is further compounded by a lack of progress on welfare reform. The penalties have already been referred to: £87 million in this financial year. It is time that the nationalist parties faced reality. The current welfare system does not work. That is why we have so many people coming into our constituency offices seeking our assistance. Northern Ireland simply cannot afford to run its own welfare system. There is plenty of electioneering going on, but unfortunately all that is doing is costing us millions of pounds in penalties. We have already secured some flexibility around the bedroom tax. We now need to reluctantly accept the main model but, at the same time, devise a set of Northern Ireland proposals to help our most vulnerable, who may be adversely affected. Surely we owe it to the people of Northern Ireland to show some competence. Instead of paying penalties, which helps no one and affects everyone, we should make a proper assessment of what the reforms will mean to individual households and then take a strategic decision to allocate some of our block grant to address that with Northern Ireland-specific solutions.

I am sure that, overall, the public would like to see Northern Ireland showing some maturity and making a realistic and informed assessment of the financial pressures on all public services in Northern Ireland and using that to develop a strategic Budget for 2015-16, which could perhaps —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw her — sorry, the Member has an extra minute.

Mrs Cochrane: Perhaps we could prioritise public protection through health, policing and justice and invest in the future by focusing on skills and the economy. However, whatever priorities might emerge, there is no doubt that the Executive need to step up to the mark and tackle the cost of division and the difficult issues of reform, including those in health and education. They also need to find other ways to raise revenue. We cannot continue as we are.

Mr Wilson: This is one of the most bizarre motions that has ever come before the Assembly. I am not even sure that the proposer understands what his motion says. He spoke at length about the difficulties of the 2011-15 Budget. His motion says that it is untenable and calls for

the Executive to bring forward a new Budget. Then, with a leap — no one could see the link — he talked about next year's Budget. The first thing we need to know from the proposer of the motion is whether we are talking about the Budget that terminates in April next year, or are we talking about the Budget for 2015-16?

The Member then talked about how we got into this situation. Without the least shamefacedness, he said, "We got into this because we didn't deliver on ESA". Who opposed ESA, along with us? The Ulster Unionist Party. He also said, "We got into this because we didn't get £40 million from the Harbour Commissioners". Who was responsible for bringing the legislation forward to get that £40 million? The co-signatory of the motion. He did not do a thing about it, but now he is complaining that "We got into this because we didn't proceed on Long Kesh".

Mr Kennedy: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. He well knows the background to the issue of the money for Belfast harbour. That was an Executive decision to take out money — £20 million per year in terms of Belfast harbour — and there were voodoo economics behind it. There was no provision, rationale or legal basis for doing so. The Member is being disingenuous in the House with the information that he has provided.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Wilson: The Member is not being disingenuous. The facts of the matter are that any legislative change that needed to be made to get the money from the Harbour Commissioners should have originated from the Minister for Regional Development, the co-signatory of the motion, but that did not happen. I could go through the whole list of how we got here. The fingerprints of the complainer are all over the reasons why we have got to the position we have got to.

Leaving aside what the motion is about, how would we ever implement what we are talking about? When I read it, I was not too sure whether Mr Nesbitt was being Captain Mainwaring and just blundering or was Corporal Jones in a flap. The one thing we can be absolutely sure of is that there are no remedies in this.

There are three questions I would like the proposer of the motion to answer when he is summing up. First, if we are going to have a new Budget, with all the consultation that is required and the legislative decisions that would have to be made, how on earth does he intend it to be delivered within the remaining six months of this year? Does he simply want to dispense with all the niceties of consultation and drafting of legislation? Secondly, even if we got a new Budget, what room would there be for change in the remaining months of this year? Is he honestly saying that Departments would have the ability to make adjustments? Even if we started this new Budget tomorrow, having left aside the consultation and the legislation, how would Departments make the adjustments that he requires in the last six months of the financial year with their programmes all in place? Thirdly, we had plenty of complaints about what money should be spent on and what money had not been spent on. If we are going to have a serious debate on this, maybe he will tell us how he would move the money around. Let us say we could get past the legislative requirements and make the adjustments in Departments, how would the Ulster Unionist Party move the money around the system? I do not know whether he is Captain

Mainwaring, Corporal Jones or Private Walker — just an absolute political spiv. Spivery is what we are getting.

Mr Weir: Will the Member give way?

Mr Wilson: I will give way.

Mr Weir: Is a more appropriate analogy Private Pike? Is the Member being a stupid boy?

Mr Deputy Speaker: I ask Members to have due courtesy and respect for all Members.

Mr Wilson: I was going to come to that in my last line, but you have stolen it.

I hope that those listening to the debate will not be Private Pikes, will not be stupid boys and will not fall for this point-scoring motion, which does not offer any solution. It does not show any way forward. It does not even recognise the niceties of the procedures that we have to go through legally in the Assembly to deliver a new Budget. If we are going to deal with the issues and difficulties in the longer term — the Finance Minister has started the consultation process on the Budget for next year — some financial reality is required in the Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Wilson: We should not take on new commitments without budgeting for them, and we should not give money back to Westminster unnecessarily, as Sinn Féin and the SDLP require us to do through the non-implementation of welfare reform.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle.

Monitoring rounds and Budgets usually pass without controversy. However, this year we face tough choices due to increased budgetary pressures. That is not due to Sinn Féin's decision to protect social welfare provision for the most vulnerable in our society and the working poor. We are faced with tough choices because of the sustained and persistent cuts to our Budget imposed by the British Government. Those cuts have reduced the allocation of funding to the Executive, and it is in that context of reduced finances that the Executive have chosen to defend core services.

This debate on our economy, our budgets and our choices is laced with misinformation, the sole purpose of which is to build fear among our communities. Remember that, when Sinn Féin first sought flexibility to protect our welfare budgets, Members opposite and others cried, "No, no, no. Can't, can't, can't". We now know all too well that it was a case of "Won't" rather than a case of "Can't".

We also have a Finance Minister who will not even ask for the necessary economic levers to protect welfare provision and grow the local economy.

The focus in DFP is solely on administrating the Budget, as opposed to standing up for the needs of businesses and rights of workers. When we needed entrepreneurs in finance, we got bookkeepers. The narrow fiscal and economic powers available to the North of Ireland limit the extent to which we can address budgetary challenges, provide public services and tackle unemployment. Without powers for the North over tax, benefits and employment,

we can never fully deliver employment and social welfare or grow the local economy towards its full potential.

It seems, at times, that the economic dysfunction of the North is a badge of honour for some parties opposite, as if growing the private sector, investing in public services, increasing employment and balancing the books would endanger the Union. For the record, Sinn Féin believes that all citizens are entitled to public services and employment. We believe, North and South, that growing the economy requires the political power of progressive policies and investment.

Sinn Féin wants to balance the books in the North and across the island through economic growth and employment, not by cutting services and taking money from the poor or by quoting overinflated estimates, which the British Treasury does not endorse, of the fiscal deficit. It is disappointing that we now have a Minister who is unwilling to argue for welfare provision but is quite happy to stand over his Department's estimate of VAT, which is based on a survey for which they had to cobble together three years of responses even to get information from 600 households.

These estimates tell us nothing about the local economy, but still DFP churns them out. So when opposite sides of the House start shouting that we are broke to the tune of £10 billion, remember that none of these people pays attention to the information published by the British Treasury, which tells us a different story. Let us remember that we pay our taxes here. Sinn Féin opposes the motion.

Mr Weir: I suppose that, like others, when I first read the motion, particularly the detail of it, I was somewhat befuddled. Indeed, it seems quite clear that that is a sentiment shared by its proposer, as he clearly seemed to contradict himself.

At times, I do not find myself, as was shown on the radio even this morning, very much in agreement with Daithí McKay. I do agree with him on at least one point, which is that one of the financial constraints that we operate under is the wider position taken by the Government centrally at Westminster. Therefore, I find the motion astonishing, given the fact that the Conservative Party, which is the main part of this Government, was in alliance with the Ulster Unionist Party at the last general election, with this as its manifesto pledge.

We all remember the days of the Ulster Conservatives and Unionists - New Force (UCUNF). Indeed, the proposer of the motion should be particularly familiar with this because the UCUNF candidate in Strangford was one Michael Nesbitt. Yet, mysteriously, that appears to have been forgotten about. That side of it beggars belief.

There is also, as mentioned and dealt with by Sammy Wilson, a range of things that, supposedly, the Executive have failed to agree. They failed to agree on the Maze and on ESA — I have to say, the Ulster Unionists took the same position. We are left, supposedly, with a Budget that is broken. Like Frank Maguire in the 1979 vote of no confidence, the honourable Minister, on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, was there to make sure that he abstained in person. That seems to me an unlikely source of abiding anger at the Budget: you feel so strongly that you have to abstain.

Valid criticisms can be made of government in Northern Ireland. Those from the proposer of the motion — as well as those from the honourable Member for West Belfast across the Chamber, whose consistently expressed love of the SNP makes me wonder whether he wants to be the honourable Member for Dundee West — could hold a little bit more weight, and the motion an awful lot more water, if it were not for the fact that both their parties are members of that Government and may not be walking away from that Government. Today, both were highly critical of government.

If this is such a horrendous situation, I can look forward in the summing up of the debate to an announcement from either party —

Mr Attwood: Will the Member give way?

Mr Weir: I will give way in a moment. I look forward to an announcement, particularly from the Ulster Unionist Party, which tabled the motion, that it is so disgusted with this Government that they will today resign from government. I give way to the Member for Dundee West.

5.15 pm

Mr Attwood: It may come as news to the Member, but in 2011, I argued that we should go into opposition.

Mr McCallister: Hear, hear.

Mr Attwood: Thank you. Unfortunately, my argument did not prevail. Is there not a contradiction in the last point that you made, where you criticised us for being in government when we did not like some of government? Your First Minister, your leader of the DUP, has said that the institutions are not fit for purpose. Why have you not walked out of government when you yourself have declared the institutions unfit for purpose?

Mr Weir: With respect, we are trying to get in there to fix that, whereas the Member seems to be simply —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute. I ask him to be courteous and respectful to all Members in his comments.

Mr Weir: Absolutely. I shall show every Member of this House the very courtesy and respect that they all deserve, perhaps even a greater level of courtesy than that.

Whatever criticisms there are of government, the central thrust in this motion is that the four-year Budget is untenable and that we need a new Budget as part of that cycle. The reality, as has been indicated, is that, even if everybody in this House agreed on what needed to be done, we could not produce a Budget. Yet, the Member proposing this throws an additional obstacle in the way of that because he told us that the Budget should have been the third item in the process. We should have formed a government, agreed a Programme for Government and then agreed a Budget. So, if the Member is being logically consistent, before this new Budget is even produced for 2011-15 — we are in the last six months of that period — he would have us agree a fresh Programme for Government at the same time. How exactly will we do that and then institute a new Budget for a four-year period, which is a few months away from running out? If, however, he has not read the motion correctly and is simply referring to a new Budget for 2015-16, there is not a Budget for 2015-16, so a new Budget will have to be agreed there

anyway. Either it is asking the impossible or it is asking for something that will simply have to happen anyway.

I indicated that I agreed at least on that earlier point with Mr McKay, who, unfortunately, seems to be away from his position. I think that where the position of Sinn Féin and, to some extent, the SDLP, is slightly ridiculous is that, yes, we can highlight some of the problems that have been there by way of welfare changes, and we can highlight the restrictions that are there because of the Budget that is given from the block grant, but the solutions to that are not simply closing our eyes or gritting our teeth against the Government in the hope that some great windfall will come our way with the Government saying that they will sign over whatever needs to happen. We do need to face up to the realities that the failure to deal with welfare, for instance, will increase the costs. It will have impacts, particularly on health, on the Budget, and we need a little bit of reality. That is the particular reality that we need to face in the October monitoring round and as we move ahead into next year's Budget. As for the idea that was floated earlier today —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Weir: — of simply moving into a united Ireland, getting rid of the £10 billion subvention and, indeed, pretending that that is not there, that is fantasy economics. The motion's wording, unfortunately, is effectively a stunt, and I urge Members to oppose the motion.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I, too, rise to oppose the motion. The word "subvention" means gift. What gifts do our taxpayers and vulnerable people receive from the Tories? Are the people who rely on food banks to feed their children receiving gifts from the Tories? Are the people who are lying on hospital trolleys receiving gifts from the Tories? Are the 25,000 people who will emigrate this year receiving gifts from the Tories? Are the cancer patients whose sickness benefits will be reduced to just one year receiving gifts from the Tories? After having paid contributions for many, many years, they will be restricted to one year on their contributions. I think not. DFP poorly estimates that in 2011-12, we generated at least £14.1 billion in revenue locally. We know that this is an underestimate because it contains key gaps. The DFP fiscal balance report is not fit for purpose. In last year's report, the revenue estimate for 2010-11 was altered by £0.8 billion in comparison with the report produced the year before. This is laughable. How many more billions can DFP miraculously lose and find overnight? Yet, the other side of the House will continue to shout about how broke they believe us to be on the basis of a report that is not worth the paper that it is written on. It is time to move beyond shouting about the size of the fiscal deficit and focus on building economic growth.

At least 15 major reports on the state of the Northern economy since the 1957 Isles and Cuthbert report have reached broadly similar conclusions about the underperforming economy of the North. A consistent message has emerged from all those reviews and strategies, which is that we, the people of the North, should be empowered to make decisions about our own economic future, yet macroeconomic power continues to rest in London. British economic policy never has and

never will build a strong economy in the North. Decisions affecting local trade, employment and investment in the North are made in Westminster for the benefit of the 97% that constitutes the British economy, not for the 3% here in the North.

The British economy is currently 2% lower than its pre-recession performance, whilst the Northern economy is 14% lower, yet we do not have access to the necessary tools to change that, but change is long overdue. The North is the only devolved region that has not had a comprehensive and independent review of fiscal policy. Why have successive DUP Finance Ministers not been pressing the case like their counterparts in Scotland and Wales? Without greater economic powers, we are incapable of developing an indigenous fiscal regime reflecting the uniqueness of the economy.

It is not an issue of the constitutional position of the North. The mechanism to resolve that is a border poll, as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement. As a republican, I believe in and will continue to pursue Irish unity. This is an issue of how we build economic growth and deliver jobs. If we are to realise economic potential, safeguard public services and create growth in jobs, we need the powers. In the coming term of the Assembly, we must collectively place the economic needs of the people front and centre. Let us demand the maximum powers to grow the economy that reflect the uniqueness of our economy. The economy is about choices, and we must be empowered to take them. Let us choose to protect the vulnerable, not exploit them.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. In June, during the Budget debate, the SDLP outlined countless creative and relatively low-cost ways in which the Assembly and the Executive could use a Budget to boost our economy. Sadly, the DUP and Sinn Féin did not listen and simply refused to demonstrate fiscal responsibility. Despite having a Budget with major subsidence problems, the DUP and Sinn Féin continue to paper over the cracks. They refuse to admit that the problem is their collective mismanagement and their refusal to agree on anything but blaming each other.

The current Budget was a poor one to begin with. We did not vote for it in 2011, and we have consistently outlined our opposition to it since in key thematic areas. We voted against the Budget because of significant concerns relating to the funding for the health service, education, aspects of job creation and housing. Those are all areas that have come under greater pressure in the years since the Budget was passed. The A&E crisis earlier this year is an example of the impact of a weak Budget and financial mismanagement.

To make matters worse, the DUP and Sinn Féin are now using the Budget as a political football, putting jobs and the future of the health service at risk as a result. That irresponsible behaviour is possible as we have a budgetary system under which key policy priorities such as Transforming Your Care and key road infrastructure improvements are funded via the monitoring rounds. Worryingly, I have heard rumours that that type of behaviour will continue and may result in failure to agree an October monitoring round. That would throw into further doubt and jeopardy the funding for those major projects that do not feature in the 2011 Budget. It is therefore essential that we have a new Budget and, to ensure that

key policy decisions and emerging projects are adequately funded, that it must be an annual process.

I am aware, however, that, in a time of austerity, developing a new Budget is easier said than done, which is why the Budget must be based on a robust new Programme for Government. That is why the SDLP has consistently proposed a comprehensive process that provides a transparent breakdown of the allocation of resources and expenditure. Ministers, Members and the public would be much better served by a clear and transparent process that clearly demarcates spending according to the degree to which it supports essential front line services. The development of a new Budget under financial pressure is challenging, so I again call for a review to assess the case for the devolution of fiscal powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly and recommend further powers that would improve the financial accountability of the Executive. Sadly, the DUP has consistently opposed that idea. However, given that Peter Robinson has called for new talks on our structures of government, and given the events in Scotland, and Westminster's response, over the past number of days, perhaps the Minister can provide clarity on whether his party supports the principle of a new annual Budget, if talks come about.

Talks must also involve discussion of welfare reform. The SDLP has been very clear on welfare reform: the Executive must further negotiate with the London Treasury regarding the heightened profile of objective need in the North, and we must permanently rule out the imposition of the iniquitous bedroom tax.

Mr I McCrea: Will the Member give way?

Mr McGlone: Yes.

Mr I McCrea: Will the Member explain his colleague Alex Attwood's comments on welfare reform during a previous Budget debate that the penalties were worth paying? Can he explain how that fits in with the wider discussion on welfare reform when the SDLP supports the payment of the penalties?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McGlone: I thank the Member for highlighting that issue. It was at this point that I was going to draw to the attention of the Assembly the fact that I and some other Members attended the launch of the NICVA report, which highlighted that further advancement of welfare reform in the shape and manner that it is in at the moment would lose the Northern Ireland economy £750 million per annum. That is big stuff. That is why, progressively, as this Executive hopefully work together to come to terms with this — and I am hearing this not just from recipients of welfare payments and benefit payments, many of whom I represent at tribunals, but from small post office owners, small shop owners and people in the retail sector for whom this is becoming a major issue as they see how the ravages of welfare reform could affect them.

Scotland permanently wrote off the bedroom tax in a deal with the Treasury. Indeed, the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) estimates that bedroom tax would affect 32,000 tenants here, which is 40% of the numbers affected in Scotland. I see no reason that we cannot also come to a deal with the Treasury that costs us significantly less than the £35 million paid by Scotland. Interestingly enough, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has brought out a report

today that states that the poorest households spend on average a quarter of their income on housing costs. Imagine what that would be if the bedroom tax, in its worst form, were introduced to the North. After all, we can all agree to afford corporation tax, and I am confident that we can afford it because the SDLP has been responsible and consistently outlined ideas —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr McGlone: — to grow the economy and to raise funds.

It is absolutely essential that the lead parties in the Executive begin to demonstrate —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr McGlone: — a responsible attitude in dealing with the current fiscal crisis. Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle.

Mr Kennedy: I welcome the debate, which is sponsored by the Ulster Unionist Party and led by my party leader, Mike Nesbitt. I also welcome the attendance of Minister Hamilton. He will have heard what I have to say before, as matters have been raised in correspondence and at the Executive, but, still and all, it is important that they are said in the context of this debate.

It is clear that, whether you are inside or outside the Executive, we need a new Budget and that moving forward to a better planned and better balanced Budget is essential. Our current financial crisis cannot be swatted away as a little local difficulty. It is a crisis, and it is largely down to poor financial planning at the centre of government here in Northern Ireland. The absence of agreement around welfare reform may have compounded the problem, but it is not the sole cause. I believe that the issues are now of such magnitude that trying to resolve problems in one area through monitoring rounds simply serves to create problems and issues elsewhere. Those issues matter because they impact on the daily lives of the people whom we serve. For me, health matters. It is one of the chief reasons why I did not vote against the June monitoring proposals, unlike the Alliance Party, because I accept the argument.

This party, the Ulster Unionist Party, has accepted the argument and has consistently made the argument that health should have more money, both in the last Budget and in this one.

5.30 pm

Mr McCallister: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. I accept Mr Kennedy's assertion that health matters. It matters to everyone, because it affects every home in the land. What will he as Minister be prepared to give up to move the thinking away from the economy being this Government's lead priority to the agenda of protecting the vulnerable? Is he as Regional Development Minister prepared to give up a significant part of his budget to do that? Will he bid in the October monitoring round?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Kennedy: I thank the Member for his contribution. Let me say that that is the wider problem that needs to be addressed. It needs to be addressed urgently, not only by the Assembly but indeed by the Executive. Difficult

and hard choices have to be arrived at and cannot be ignored. What we as a party did not argue for is that, in the final six months of a four-year term, the Executive would take a large knife and slice one third of the spend areas with all these cuts. With the exemptions for Health and Education, right or wrong, the cuts in other Departments have been three times as large as they otherwise might have been, yet all of that could have been managed much more easily over a longer period. We did not argue for triple-level in-year cuts to be squeezed into an eight-month period. No one, surely, would argue that such an approach is sensible, but for far too long in local politics — it is mirrored in the Assembly and in this debate, for those listening closely — the loudest voice has won the day, not the soundest argument.

That said, we are where we are. Let me indicate that I will continue to contribute to the discussion and participate constructively in the decision-making process going forward. We need to address the services we value most, those we wish to protect most and where we are prepared collectively to make reductions. That requires looking across the board at all Departments and all departmental priorities. June monitoring, as we have already heard, was resolved on the last day of July. That says much in itself. The Executive placed huge pressure on services across a number of Departments, mine included, with 2.1% cuts and notice of 2.3% cuts in October. Just as it would be foolish for the Executive to demand further resource cuts to DRD that would cause winter services to be reduced or stopped, it would be incredibly foolish to create a large central contingency pot for next year's Budget that asks Departments that are currently stretched on the resource side to be stretched even further.

It is time, therefore, for our local Administration to show maturity. The public will not be impressed with the Punch and Judy shows, which we have even experienced in this debate today. Indeed, I sometimes wondered if we were listening to Sammy Wilson or Sergeant Wilson from 'Dad's Army' earlier, because pretending that everything is OK is not the answer here. It is nothing short of embarrassing for regional government in Northern Ireland following the very welcome no vote in Scotland. The Scots are seeking greater responsibility, and the Welsh are pitching for more powers. Yet, the message from our part of the world is a different take on "No thanks".

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member must draw his remarks to a close.

Mr Kennedy: Ours is, "No thanks, we cannot be trusted with greater responsibility". The message does not reflect well on the Executive, the Assembly or our political class. In short, we need a new Budget and a new approach.

Mr McQuillan: I rise in opposition to the motion. Members will be well aware that we are nearing the end of the budgetary period. The current Budget was presented to the House in 2010 and runs until the end of the next calendar year. Therefore, I pose this question: why set and agree another Budget when a new Budget for the period of 2015 and beyond is effectively in the making? It therefore seems a nonsense that we are discussing the very outcome that the motion is calling for, which is a new Budget, when we have a major decision to make regarding the October monitoring round and a new Budget for the specified budgetary period in any case.

The motion states that the current Budget is not fit for purpose. It is also important to point out that the current Budget, in its final year, has been placed under enormous stress due to the willingness of Sinn Féin and the SDLP to send money back to Westminster for penalties imposed due to the failure to agree welfare reform legislation. Those reforms would bring us into line with the rest of the UK. The grandstanding of Sinn Féin and the SDLP on the issue is somewhat ironic, given that they are content to impose cuts on other Departments due to their failure to accept the reforms for what they are and ease the financial pressure on other key services, such as health and social care — something that affects everyone, especially the vulnerable — roads, unemployment schemes to help people on welfare get back into work and, to top it off, the efforts of the Executive as reflected in the 2011-15 Budget and the Programme for Government to get our economy moving. You cannot have your cake and eat it. The resources that we once had are simply not available, due to the international economic downturn.

Furthermore, we now have a situation where, after last Thursday, Sinn Féin is calling for more powers to be devolved from Westminster to this House. How can we see more powers devolved to the Assembly when it is clear that Sinn Féin is unwilling to take responsibility for the powers that it currently refuses to acknowledge exist? While I am concerned about the changes that welfare reforms will bring — my party has made that clear — we have seen the Minister for Social Development, Nelson McCausland, make efforts to reduce the burden on the vulnerable with mechanisms brought in to protect them, two of which are the retention of benefits being paid fortnightly rather than monthly and the retention of the mechanism to pay housing benefit to landlords directly, hence protecting the vulnerable and the disadvantaged.

I am keen to see the current impasse orchestrated by Sinn Féin in its failure to offer leadership or to govern resolved. The impasse can be resolved when Sinn Féin and the SDLP decide whether or not to self-impose an £87 million cut to the Budget. It is therefore not a failure of the Budget or the process but a problem that lies solely at the door of Sinn Féin and the SDLP.

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): I oppose the motion. Before I respond to some of the points that have been raised and the substantive argument that has been made today, I think it is worth echoing what others have said. The motion before us, on a strict reading of the text, is absolutely one of the daftest motions that I have seen since I came to the Assembly in 2007. I say that as somebody who, a number of years ago, brought a motion to the House about grass cutting. That it bears the names of the leader of the Ulster Unionist Party and a Minister of the Northern Ireland Executive, who ought to know better, is, frankly, embarrassing. When I first read the motion, I was not sure whether it was some sort of cunning plan, the purpose of which I could not quite detect because of how cunning it was. However, having listened to the proposer of the motion and to Mr Kennedy, I think that it is more about a total lack of understanding of the Budget process that we have to go through.

Aside from the impracticalities — I will come to the impracticalities of doing what is asked for in the motion in a moment or two — quite why we would want to rewrite a four-year Budget when three of those years have passed I

am not quite sure. In fact, three years and six months are we into that Budget period, with only six months left. How or, indeed, why would we want to redo a Budget and/or a Programme for Government when three of the four years have passed? It is hard to comprehend how the whole 2011-15 Budget has unravelled, when three of the four years have actually passed into history.

I absolutely accept that this year's Budget is in an extremely challenging position. The motion uses the word "unravelling" for the period. Members may use that word or "unviable", "untenable", "challenging" or whatever adjective they wish to find. However, is the answer to the problems that we find ourselves in a whole new Budget process? The answer is a categoric no, and there are two reasons why, both of which are practical considerations.

The first consideration is time. As many Members have said, if you read the motion before us, strictly interpret it and put it into practice, you will see that what is being asked for is a whole new Budget process for just six months of the financial year. We are nearly halfway through the financial year. Think of the practical considerations: political negotiations to agree a draft Budget; then a 12-week public consultation — we are required in legislation to have a public consultation on our Budgets in this place; and then the final Budget agreement, which would require political negotiation. By the end of all that, it would be a new Budget for fewer than three months of the financial year. This question has to be asked: what is the point or purpose of a Budget for fewer than three months?

The second practical consideration — always an important one when dealing with Budgets — is about money. Where would new or extra money that could make a difference in a Budget come from? You cannot increase rates in-year; there is no opportunity to levy something like water charges in-year; and there is no more money coming from London this year. Therefore, the only source of resources that would be at the Executive's disposal would be from the existing budgets allocated already to Departments. That is exactly what the monitoring round process is all about. That is what it does: it takes money that cannot be used from budgets and dispenses it around other budgets and other Departments that can use it. We have two monitoring rounds still planned for the remainder of this year, in October and January. That is a more sensible way of dealing with the issues that we have before us. It may not be perfect; it may not be ideal; but it is a process that, if you look at the record you see, has worked in the past.

In this supposedly unravelling 2011-15 Budget, in the last three full years, on the current expenditure budget side of things, we have redistributed nearly £400 million worth of resources. That is a sizeable amount of money that has moved around the system. On the capital side, about £320 million has been moved around, from one budget to another. If you include the earlier parts of the June monitoring of this year, nearly £850 million in current and capital has been moved around budgets in-year. That suggests to me that the process, whilst maybe not perfect or ideal, is more than capable of moving money around from where it is not needed to where it is, so that it can be spent and so that we do not lose any money — as we have not done over this period — through handing it back to Treasury because we have not been able to spend it.

Mr Byrne: I thank the Minister for giving way. Does he accept that the monitoring round process is pertinent only to Northern Ireland? It does not happen anywhere else in the UK. Is it good to fund mainstream projects, such as roads maintenance, through a monitoring round process?

Mr Hamilton: I am not sure whether the Member is arguing that we should do everything in exactly the same way as the rest of the UK. That would be a novel approach by a Member from his party, the SDLP. I think the fact that we have the monitoring round process is a good thing. As I have pointed out, we have been able to distribute close to £1 billion already over this Budget period, a Budget period that, supposedly, is not working. We have ensured that that money could be spent on projects where it was needed and be taken away from areas where it was not. Importantly, it has ensured that we have not had to send a single pound back to Westminster because we have not been able to spend it.

Mr McKinney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Hamilton: No.

The motion also talks about a new Programme for Government. Whilst I do not have direct ministerial responsibility for the whole of the Programme for Government, the Executive, which, as has been pointed out, includes Mr Kennedy, are undertaking a mid-term review to roll forward existing Programme for Government targets and introduce appropriate new ones. I would certainly have expected a Minister in the Assembly to know that, as well, of course, as the Chair of the OFMDFM Committee, namely Mr Nesbitt.

It would be easy to be completely dismissive of the motion because of its wording. It is a motion that shows little or no understanding of our Budget process or appreciation of ongoing Executive work, but I have sympathy for the motion's sentiments, even if the wording is extremely poor. Our Budget is under pressure. The sick and vulnerable will suffer, and public services will be adversely affected. I have heard many Ministers talk about how public services will be affected, both by in-year reductions and by the prospect of reductions next year. However, it is important that everyone is clear about why "We are where we are", to borrow Mr Kennedy's phrase. Why are we in such a challenging position, where we have already had to make 2.1% reductions in the June monitoring round and face the prospect of at least 2.3% reductions to budgets in October as well? The starting point is that, over the period, we have, in effect, had flat cash on the resource side because of the block grant Budget allocation made to us by London. In 2010, our resource budget was approximately £9.886 billion. In 2014-15, the year we are now in, that is up to £10.170 billion. That is a difference of £284 million. That is a lot of cash; £284 million is a lot of money. However, when you consider inflation and all the other pressures on budgets, that is in effect flat cash over the period.

5.45 pm

As Mr McKay, who is not with us, pointed out, that Budget and spending plan were endorsed by Mr Nesbitt, Mr Kennedy and their party when they ran on the Conservative manifesto back in 2010. The building block and foundation of the problems of where we are lie in the fact that we have effectively had flat cash in our resource budget ever since 2010. If anybody in the House is more

responsible for that than anyone else, it is the Members from the Ulster Unionist Party, many of whom are sitting looking at me here and actually ran on that manifesto — Mr Nesbitt, Mr Kennedy and others — for Parliament back in 2010. The spending plans that we have are not my spending plans; they are their spending plans.

The second reason that why we are where we are is Executive commitments. Those commitments have been entered into over the past number of years and have been supported on all sides of the House. They include — this relates to the June monitoring round — a restoration of £7.7 million to DETI's budget to encourage job creation, £4.3 million for the historical institutional abuse inquiry and £12.8 million for local government reform. A total of £30.4 million had to be spent this year in-year to meet those Executive commitments, none of which, I understand, is opposed by anybody on this side of the House. In effect, what happened is that the cheques were written before and had to be cashed this year.

The third reason that we are where we are is that there are growing departmental pressures. In June, for example, we had the Regional Development Minister come forward with pressures in respect of concessionary fares, £5 million of which was met. OFMDFM, DCAL and others had Together: Building a United Community pressures of over £3.5 million. In total, there were about £17 million worth of departmental pressures that I thought that it was right to recommend that we meet. The early stages of the October monitoring round are revealing that there are further pressures. For example, in June, £20 million was allocated indicatively to Health, but the Minister has outlined a need for a minimum of £60 million to cover and live within his means this year.

Before I move on to other pressures — there are other pressures — it is worth picking up on some of Mr Nesbitt's comments about the health budget. First, he said that Health should not have bid in the in-year monitoring process. He is right: the agreement made was that Health should not have bid. However, in previous years, thank goodness we had Health to absorb some of the money that was given up by other Departments, including his party colleague Mr Kennedy's Department. If we had not had Health to absorb that £273.5 million of resource and reduced pressures across the board over the 2011-15 Budget period, there is a risk that money may have been lost to London over that Budget period.

Before we get to a position where Michael McGimpsey is held up as some sort of saintly sage, it is important to look at what he actually said back in 2010 and 2011. He was described as having "pinpoint accuracy" by Mr Nesbitt. Let us look at how pinpoint accurate he was. Back in 2010, he said:

"There will be job losses ... I think 4,000"

in the health service. Since 2011, the number of nurses in the health service is up 5.7%, the number of medical and dental consultants is up 15%, and the number of allied health professionals is up 12.7%. So, that was not such sagely, saintly advice from Mr McGimpsey back in 2010. Mr McGimpsey also said that hospital waiting lists would rise. However, from May 2011, the number spending longer than 12 hours in EDs has gone down by 73%. I will give one example: arthritis sufferers, who had to wait nine months in 2011 for expensive specialist anti-TNF drugs,

now wait less than three months. Of course, in 2011, Mr McGimpsey also said:

"From April 1 in business terms the health service goes into Chapter 11".

Now I have never been sure why, if the NHS were bankrupt, it would file for bankruptcy in US courts. Of course, it has not gone bankrupt, and the current Minister, Mr Poots, has already found close to half a billion pounds' worth of savings and has committed to finding a further £170 million before the year is out.

As I said, other pressures are developing across all Departments: Justice, Regional Development, Education, Enterprise, and Agriculture. Many of those are legal and contractual. I have never heard anybody in the House say that all those pressures are anything other than a priority. It goes back to the point that Mr McCallister made: if Members of the House say that something is a priority, that means that something else must, by necessity, not be a priority. Ministers or Members who stand up and say that their Minister's Department should be treated more beneficially must understand that that comes at a cost in the situation in which we find ourselves, and the money has to be found from somewhere else.

Of course, the biggest problem that we face — it is really beginning to bite — is welfare reform. The June monitoring paper dealt with £13 million that was removed from our 2014-15 baseline. It also went on to state that further reductions in October to reflect the position on welfare at that time would be made. That would amount to reductions of at least 2.3%, if indeed, health and education are exempted. The problem is about to get much, much worse.

In a letter to me on 31 March, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said that next year's penalties would be £114 million. We are also in a position now where, because of the closing down of the welfare system across the water, we may have to develop our own IT system. A recent letter from the Deputy Prime Minister pointed out that the cost of that could be around a total of £1 billion a year. That is £1 billion of current and capital expenditure that, in the circumstances we find ourselves in, we cannot afford.

How then will we deal with the challenges that are before us? Instead of playing political stunts in this place, there is serious work for me and my colleagues to do. In the first instance, in the in-year position, urgent action is needed. The October monitoring is not due for four weeks, but we cannot wait for four weeks to take tough decisions; Departments need to be best informed about the reductions that we want them to make and so they can plan to make them in as sensible a way as possible.

We also have a Budget for 2015-16. Perhaps this issue has been conflated in the mind of the proposer of the motion. It should not be seen as any less pressing or important because a new financial year is six months away. There are considerable pressures ahead of us in terms of the 2015-16 Budget, and I want the Executive to deal with that as quickly as possible.

In conclusion, our budgetary position is, indeed, challenging. What was always going to be very difficult is complicated and exacerbated by the issue of welfare reform.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Minister must draw his remarks to a close.

Mr Hamilton: Instead of looking back at three or four years of a Budget and foolishly trying to redo a whole Budget for just a few months, let us exhibit a maturity hitherto not shown on all sides of the House, adjust the in-year position and agree a draft Budget for next year as quickly as possible.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister for his contribution. As we have heard in the debate, we clearly have major problems with the Budget. Those have been highlighted by party leaders, Ministers, MLAs inside and outside the House and in the Chamber today. There has not been an MLA who has contributed to the debate who has not acknowledged the problems and difficulties being faced by the current Budget.

Indeed, to paraphrase the First Minister, who spoke in the Chamber earlier today, the problems we face were predicted and were predictable. The Ulster Unionists warned in 2011 that the current four-year Budget would not work and that is why we voted against it. Back in 2011, the Ulster Unionist Party stated that the health budget needed more money, but Michael McGimpsey was shouted down by the DUP amid claims that it would be obscene to give more money to health.

For the past three and a half years, we have witnessed monitoring rounds being used to paper over cracks. The most recent June round, which lasted until July, showed that that process is no longer possible. Northern Ireland simply cannot afford to let the forthcoming October monitoring round become bogged down by ongoing disputes between the DUP and Sinn Féin.

In addition to the Budget, the Programme for Government targets have been missed, altered or in some cases completely forgotten about. Therefore, we need not just a revised Budget but a revised set of targets. As Mike Nesbitt mentioned when he moved the motion, the issue around ESA did not save £40 million; it wasted £18 million. The social investment fund had £20 million per four-year period but only £33 million has been spent to date. DSD's social protection fund cost £20 million for the first year only. The cost of local government reform was £48 million. I heard Members from a number of parties in the House now estimating that local government reform will not bring the cost savings that were first predicted. A £20 million annual contribution was to be made by Belfast harbour. I am not getting into the middle of the argument between the former First Minister and the current Minister for Regional Development, but that money was in the Budget and is not forthcoming.

No decision has yet been taken on the £250 million reserves held by the housing associations or the extended age discrimination legislation for the provision of goods, facilities and services. To those, we can add the failure of Transforming Your Care to modernise the delivery of health and social care, the failure to fulfil our commitments under the Child Poverty Act 2010, the failure to substantially complete the construction of the new police, prison and fire training college, the failure to improve literacy and numeracy levels and the failure to develop the Maze as a regeneration site of regional significance.

Continually moving money from one Department to another to fill gaps is no way to run a government. Missing target after target is not delivering for the people of Northern Ireland. The Executive need to have the difficult

discussions on what exactly their priorities are and fund them in that order. That was our 2011 election manifesto pledge: to establish the PFG; to establish the Budget; and, then, to divide the ministries by d'Hondt.

I will go back to some of Members' comments. Mr Paul Girvan acknowledged that we need a new Budget for 2015-16. It does not say in our motion that that is not what we are talking about. It has been clearly discussed here today. That is exactly what we need to be talking about now. We need to start. *[Interruption.]* As well as —

Mr Hamilton: It says this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Swann: It does not say this year. The Finance Minister said that he had read the motion in detail. I have been in the Chamber many, many times when the same party has debated motions and, once the motion has been moved and is on the Floor, Members from that party do not refer to it again. So they are being pedantic in this case.

The savings of £700 million achieved when Michael McGimpsey was Minister are almost forgotten now, or maybe some people wish that they were forgotten and brushed under the carpet. Mr Girvan also agreed that this Budget is running into difficulties. We all acknowledge that. Everybody is saying that. We keep saying that, and we have put in the motion that that has been acknowledged.

Daihtí McKay referred to Tory cuts, and he keeps pointing the finger at us. In fact, they are the current Westminster coalition Government cuts and were not in the 2010 manifesto. Some Members keep referring to the 2010 manifesto. Maybe, if other Members looked back to their manifestos and to the commitments that they made, not just to the House but to the people in Northern Ireland, they might not be so quick to point the finger at people who do not keep manifesto pledges, because there are other Members and other parties in the House who readily forget manifestos.

One thing I can say, probably not with much pride, is that the motion has at least brought the coalition back together. It has brought the DUP and Sinn Féin together in condemning us. That is one bonus that they will be able to look back on as well.

Judith Cochrane referred to the certainty of the four-year Budget and said that we could not tinker with it at this stage. Unfortunately, Mrs Cochrane is not here to hear this, but her Minister sat in front of the Employment and Learning Committee and said how bad it was that he faced cuts in the June monitoring round, will face cuts in the October monitoring round and does not know what is in front of him. If that is the certainty that Mrs Cochrane sees in this four-year Budget process — that her Minister cannot see any opportunity to allow him to set out his programme for the last six months — there needs to be a conversation. He has told us that he has already put his arm's-length bodies, further education colleges and higher education colleges on warning that he may face a double-digit cut in the last four months. That is not the certainty of a four-year Budget.

Alex Attwood put forward the case for a year-on-year Budget. I think that that has been championed many times in here by Leslie Cree, and it has been supported by the current and previous Finance Ministers as being the better way to do finance in the House. Sammy Wilson, or, as my party colleague Danny Kennedy referred to

him earlier, Sergeant Wilson, mentioned every character in 'Dad's Army'. One quote that Sergeant Wilson was always famous for was Captain Mainwaring's, "We've been rumbled." That is what the debate has brought out: you have been rumbled. The Budget needs that piece of work.

The Programme for Government needs to be looked at as well.

Mr McCallister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Swann: Briefly.

Mr McCallister: I do not disagree with the Member's arguments or with Mr Nesbitt's opening remarks. The biggest hole in their argument is that they are part of the mess.

Mr Swann: I thank the Member for his contribution. Part of the mess or part of the solution — I think that we want to be part of the solution. We will stay on this side of the Chamber, in this party, trying to be part of the solution. We will not run away from anything, and we will not jump parties so as not to be blamed for anything.

6.00 pm

Peter Weir, for some strange reason, again referred to the 2010 UCUNF manifesto. He then had a go at Mr Attwood about being an SNP member for somewhere in Scotland. I refer to some of Arlene's comments earlier today as well: when you do not have an argument, you personalise the attack. Peter, I think that it is unfortunate that you used your time to do that.

The Minister has accepted that we have challenges, cuts and changes in front of us. He questioned the Minister for Regional Development's commitment in the Executive and to the current Budget. It is not that long ago that he was doing the same to his own Health Minister. The in-year cuts that we have faced in the last six months could rise to two-digit percentage cuts. I think that the Minister for Employment and Learning is talking about between 10% and 11%.

The Minister referred to monitoring rounds as being the way to solve problems. You described monitoring rounds as managing the moneys that cannot be used. However, if there are cuts being brought in to a monitoring round that are actually cuts to in-year budgets, they are more than moving around money that cannot be used — they are actually moving moneys that could be used. The tough decisions are there. The 2010 spending plans —

Mr Hamilton: What is your answer?

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Swann: I would have given way to the Minister and answered some of his questions, but we are nearly at the end.

He spoke of the monitoring rounds to date. Approximately £1 billion has been redistributed.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Swann: Maybe the issue is that those budgets were not right in the first place. Maybe that is why the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP voted against them at that stage. In conclusion —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Swann: — to paraphrase the First Minister from this afternoon's Question Time —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Swann: — let us not waste time with the party bickering that goes on in this Chamber, and let us bring about a solution to this problem.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. The Member's time is up.

Assembly Business

Standing Order 10(3)

Mr Deputy Speaker: The business on the Order Paper has not been disposed of by 6.00 pm. In accordance with Standing Order 10(3), I will allow business to continue until 7.00 pm or until it is completed.

Private Members' Business

Budget 2011-15: Replacement

Question put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 19; Noes 70.

AYES

Mr Attwood, Mr Byrne, Mr Copeland, Mrs Dobson, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Mr Gardiner, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McGlone, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Mr A Maginness, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Nesbitt and Mrs Overend.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms P Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr McCallister, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Ms McCorley, Mr I McCrea, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McKay, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

The following Member voted in both Lobbies and is therefore not counted in the result: Mr Allister.

Question accordingly negatived.

Adjourned at 6.17 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 23 September 2014

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr D McIlveen: On a point of order, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. In his winding-up speech during yesterday's debate on the Budget, the Ulster Unionist Member for North Antrim referred to a member of our Executive, quite flippantly, as "Arlene". I wonder whether you would review the Hansard report in light of what was said, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, and make a ruling. I think that the Member is Chief Whip of his party and should realise what is parliamentary when referring to fellow Members in this Assembly.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Members should be aware that it is a long-standing convention of this House that we address Members by their proper names and use proper titles. I encourage Members to maintain that fine tradition.

Mr Attwood: On a point of order, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. Further to the point of order that I raised yesterday, may I inquire as to whether you have come to a judgement on that matter?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order, as you know. I am considering the matter and will respond. I take the point that was made yesterday that it should be dealt with urgently.

Mr Attwood: Further to that point of order: 24 hours have passed.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I can read the clock as well. I told you that I am processing the matter. I hope that you are not challenging how the Chair addresses these matters.

Mr Attwood: Further to that point of order: not on this occasion.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Not on any occasion, may I remind you.

Private Members' Business

Persecution of Christians in Iraq and Syria

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Wells: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes with great concern the widespread persecution and genocide of the Christian minority community in Iraq and Syria; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to take immediate action within the international community to provide emergency aid and protection for this religious group.

When I tabled the motion, I had no idea how timely it was to become.

Overnight, announcements have been made that a coalition of forces — Arab states and the United States — has initiated bombing campaigns in Syria to attack the citadels of ISIS. That is quite a dramatic development, and many of us believe that it has not come soon enough.

For centuries, Iraq and Syria have been heartlands of Christianity. Indeed, many of us believe that the stories recounted in much of scripture were in areas that are now present day Syria and Iraq. Many believe, for instance, that the Garden of Eden was in Mesopotamia, which, of course, is the area between the Tigris and Euphrates, and we all know of the Damascus road experience of Paul, his conversion, which led to a strong and vibrant Christian community in that country.

Until recently, both countries had a strong Christian minority. The irony is that under brutal dictators, such as the Saddam Hussein and the Assad regimes, Christianity was largely untouched by militant Islam. Right up until 2011, the Barnabas aid report stated that Syria was one of the freest places to be a Christian in the Middle East, and Syria had a Christian population of 1.5 million. Equally, in Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, Christians largely prospered. Indeed, many of us will remember that the Foreign Affairs Minister of the Saddam Hussein regime was a Christian. Things, unfortunately, have changed, and changed dramatically.

As my colleague Jim Shannon, the Member for Strangford in another place, said:

"the global war on Christians remains the greatest story never told of the early 21st century."

That is because what has been going on in those two countries has been extremely worrying.

Speaking personally, I initially tabled the motion in response to concerns expressed by a constituent from Newcastle, and I decided to do a bit of research. I have to say that I found looking at what is going on to the Christian and, indeed, other minorities in those two countries to be the most depressing time that I have ever had in the Assembly. I read things about what is happening to this persecuted minority that, frankly, I cannot repeat in the Assembly because they are so distressing. The result of that is that Syria has gone from a situation where there were 1.5 million Christians a matter of a few years ago to a situation where it is down to, perhaps, fewer than 300,000. A similar situation has happened in Iraq. Census returns in Iraq in 1987 indicated that there were 1.4 million Christians in Iraq, and now that population is down to an estimated 400,000, of which 284,000 are from the Roman Catholic faith.

By any indication, that is an extremely worrying and dramatic change. Indeed, what makes this very sad is that a large number of those Christians who left Iraq in fear of their life went to Syria, where, unfortunately, they have encountered very brutal death, terror and persecution. In Syria, it is reckoned that at least 450,000 to 600,000 people have fled and that 600 people have been martyred for their faith. Two senior Christian bishops — in a UK situation, I understand that they would be the equivalent of the Bishop of Liverpool and the Bishop of Manchester — have been kidnapped. Unfortunately, we do not know what has happened to them and fear the worst.

In Baghdad, for instance, in 1995, there was a Roman Catholic cathedral that had 1,500 families registered. Unfortunately, by 2014, that was down to 120. So, there has been a mass movement of people; there has been persecution; and there have been deaths. Why that has happened, of course, is that these strong, brutal regimes have managed to keep under control militant Islam. It is very much like the Yugoslavia situation with Tito. Tito managed to keep under brutal control the various ethnic minorities within what was then Yugoslavia. Once he died, there was an explosion of ethnic tension, and we all know the issues of places such as Srebrenica, where there was mass genocide. Unfortunately, the same situation is being repeated before our eyes. Within the term of this Assembly, there has been a massive loss of the Christian population in those two countries.

If that was bleak, the arrival of ISIS on the scene has made matters even worse. ISIS identifies the Christian community as having the same religious faith as what it sees as the Western oppressors. That oppression and victimisation of Christians has moved on to a terrible and even more sinister level. For instance, there are some towns now in Iraq from which the entire Christian population has fled. ISIS has made it very clear that it wishes to form an Islamic state — a caliphate — that will encompass large parts of Iraq and Syria. Unfortunately, that caliphate already covers an area the size of England, Scotland and Wales. There seems to be no room whatsoever in that state for anyone who does not follow the Muslim faith. Therefore, there is a real risk that, within our lifetimes, the entire Christian population of both countries will be driven from Syria and Iraq. People may say that that is an exaggeration. When one considers that there used to be a vibrant Jewish community in both

countries, and that now it is estimated that there are fewer than 50 Jews living in Syria and Iraq combined, that gives you an indication of what can happen when things go terribly wrong.

The militants are engaged in tactics and persecution that I simply cannot repeat in the House. They are brutal in the extreme. Indeed, they are so brutal that even al-Qaeda is embarrassed by their savagery. When we get to the situation where one of the most brutal terrorist organisations in the world is embarrassed by how Christians are being treated, something is certainly going dramatically wrong.

People ask, "What should we do?". We should not do what we did in Cambodia in 1975 to 79, where the West sat on the sidelines and an estimated 1.3 million to 3 million people were murdered in the most brutal way by the Pol Pot regime. More latterly, in Rwanda, in 1994, the West, including us, stood to the side and allowed 800,000 Tutsis to be hacked to death. The lesson has been shown that, if we simply stand on the sidelines, it will inevitably lead to a situation where there will be more death and persecution.

I welcome the fact that the Department for International Development (DFID), the aid agency for Her Majesty's Government, has given £500 million of aid to Syria. Of course, many Christians will benefit from that. However, we have to remember that, in Syria, 130,000 people have already died. That is how serious the situation is. We need to do more. What happened last night is the step that is required. I know that there are huge difficulties in this House and the House of Commons about direct military intervention in the Middle East. We all have seen what has happened in Afghanistan, Lebanon and, of course, more recently in Iraq. It is a terribly difficult situation, but we have shown in Libya that we do not have to have feet on the ground in those countries to bring about regime change and an improvement in human rights. Now is the time for Britain to join the coalition of the Arab states that oppose the brutality. This has implications way beyond the shores of Syria and Iraq. The reality is that this militant organisation has made it clear that, once it establishes its Islamic state in Syria and Iraq, it is going to take its Islamic war much further and inflict more brutal attacks on the West. Therefore, we have a selfish interest as well as a humanitarian interest in doing something about this awful situation.

We cannot stand by and watch the eradication of the Christian community from the Middle East, which is what is happening. The irony is that there is only one Middle East state where the number of Christians has multiplied phenomenally in the last 60 years: Israel. The Arab Muslim population and the Christian population have prospered in Israel. That is the only state where people are allowed to practise their religious values without fear. Indeed, article 18 of the European Convention on Human Rights states that everyone should have the right not only to practise religious observance but to change their religion. That is denied in many Arab states. I hope that the House will join me in supporting those minorities that are suffering so much in the Middle East.

10.45 am

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Príomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Cuirim fáilte roimh an dÍospóireacht seo inniu, agus tá mé iontach sásta

tacaíocht Shinn Féin a thabhairt don rún. We welcome the motion, support it and understand very well its sentiment.

From the outset, it must be said that no one should be persecuted because of their religious beliefs. This debate is about the persecution of Christian communities in Syria and Iraq. Jim Wells laid out in very tragic detail the extent and nature of that persecution. The international community, and this is part of the tone of the motion, has a responsibility to do all in its power, and we include ourselves in that, to bring that type of persecution to an end. The irony, and Jim Wells touched on this, is that, as we speak, yet another chapter of military intervention is beginning. Many commentators are saying that, rather than resolving the issues in the Middle East and further afield, that will only serve to compound them.

It is very important that we state that everyone should have the right to live their lives and be free to choose who, how and when they worship. To ensure that that message is as clear and strong as it can and should be, we need to see that as a universal principle. Everyone has the right to worship free from persecution. The motion will send a very clear signal from here that we, in our own place, will not allow any persecution of anyone because of their particular religious beliefs.

It is important that we send a clear message that sometimes Governments, based on narrow self-interest, intervene and try to use the rationale that they are doing so to resolve a particular set of issues. In many ways, such action makes the space for other people to use it as an excuse for persecution. The situation in Syria and Iraq was predicted by many people because of the folly of military intervention. However, it is important that we send out a very clear message that those who are responsible for the persecution of the Christians in Syria and Iraq and many others who have other religious beliefs in the Middle East and elsewhere are the people who carry out that persecution.

In ensuring that we bring an end to that type of persecution, we also have to send a very clear message that narrow self-interest, military intervention and the making up of excuses for invading other countries only opens up Pandora's box. Jim Wells said that this particular community, particularly in Iraq, was not being persecuted. The consequence of military action is that it is. So, people need to have very clear views on why they are taking particular actions.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Member for giving way. In the past, our nation or the United States have intervened in countries acting on information that transpired to be incorrect and whatever. Given the situation that Mr Wells has set out, which we all know exists, how does Sinn Féin feel it should be dealt with?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McCartney: I am trying very hard to not politicise this debate, because the focus should be on the persecution of the Christians involved, but it is wrong to say that the information was incorrect. The inquiry was very clear that the information was made-up to ensure that there would be military intervention. So, whatever we do and whatever actions we take, we have to think through the consequences.

In that region, many actions are taken by Governments that have very narrow self-interests and do not think about the consequences. That is why I am saying very clearly that the persecution of these people is wrong and that the people who are responsible for that persecution are the people who are carrying it out. However, the rest of us cannot sit back and say that that did not come about as a consequence of wars that perhaps we supported and should not have.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask Members to check that their phones are not on. There is a considerable amount of interference and feedback.

Mr Rogers: The current persecution faced by the Christian minorities in the Middle East and Africa represents the worst case of Christian oppression in living memory. I thank the Members opposite for tabling this motion. We had hoped in our amendment to widen it a little because persecution goes well beyond Iraq and Syria. In fact, I asked the deputy First Minister about this very issue during the first Question Time of this session.

The violence that is being brought upon Christian minorities requires not simply that this Assembly calls on the Governments in London, Dublin and Brussels to step up to their defence but that we, with those Governments, stand united not only in condemning these monstrous actions but uniting in urging the United Nations to defend those being persecuted.

I stand here today horrified by the inertia shown by the international community to combat these terrible crimes against minorities. The United Nations itself has been built from the tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 18 states that everyone has the right to freedom of conscience and religion, the right to change religion and to manifest their religion in practice, worship and observance.

The SDLP believes that it is a moral duty to speak out against those unspeakable acts of barbarism, mutilation and savagery. We need only to hear the testimony of Canon Andrew White, of St George's Anglican church in Baghdad, to know the horrors faced by those there. Canon White pleads with the world to take seriously the needs of those suffering and to recognise them. He recalls how men, women and children were massacred and slaughtered and minorities forced to convert or die.

His calls have been echoed by Pope Francis, who has called on the international community to recognise the plight of Christians, that religion cannot be used to justify violence and, in the cases of such unjust aggression, it is licit to stop the unjust aggressor. I, along with my colleague here, had the pleasure of meeting Cardinal Bechara Rai, Maronite Patriarch of Lebanon, who believes that his country is under threat as well.

Let it be known that the aggressors are unjust and monstrous in their actions and must be stopped. Groups such as ISIS and Boko Haram have twisted the religion of Islam to fit their world view of religious hatred and intolerance; they use malevolent interpretations of Islam to justify the kidnap, mutilation or genocide of their enemies. The brutality of such groups has been well recognised. We just had the anniversary of the slaughter of 61 people in Nairobi's Westgate shopping centre; we have also had the recent horrific beheadings of journalists and the kidnap of Nigerian schoolchildren. My thoughts and prayers are

also with the family of the aid worker Alan Henning, who is under threat at this time.

I urge the Assembly to call on the international community to end this campaign of violence and hate. Only through the combined voices of the Irish and British Governments, along with the EU, will our calls be heard. It is time that the UN acts on its self-proclaimed "responsibility to protect" to stop these aggressors.

The situation in the Middle East and Africa has proven that states have failed in their responsibility to protect their populations from genocide and crimes against humanity. The conditions are right for the international community to assist those states in fulfilling their primary responsibilities to their communities. If extremist and militant groups will not respond to peaceful measures, it is crucial that the international community respond through direct, coercive measures such as economic sanctions and, if all else fails, through military action.

I therefore ask that the United Nations, as leader of the international community, fulfils four key roles necessary for the protection of Christian minorities internationally. The first is to provide safe havens and protection for displaced civilian populations and to deliver robust humanitarian aid to fulfil their immediate needs —

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way and I appreciate the thrust of his speech so far. Economic sanctions can be used to apply pressure on governments. How does the SDLP believe that economic sanctions against ISIS or Boko Haram would have an effect? These are people who absolutely despise democracy and have no role in the international community.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Rogers: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. We have to look at how particular terrorist organisations get the funds to finance their campaigns. Maybe that is where the economic sanctions have to be imposed as well.

My second point on the United Nations is for the international community to bring justice to all those responsible on all sides. My third point is for the United Nations to use its powers to impose sanctions and embargoes to stop the flow of weapons, money and resources to those promoting and perpetrating acts of terror. Finally, it is for the international community, in coordination with local authorities, to work together to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to combat the aggression of fundamentalist groups globally.

In closing, I ask the Assembly to deliver a united message of condemnation towards the continued persecution and genocide of Christian minorities internationally. It is the moral responsibility of the Assembly to do all in its power to have London, Dublin and Brussels use their influence in the international community and the United Nations to see that justice is served.

Mr Beggs: I thank Mr Wells for tabling this important motion, which I support. The persecution of the Christian minority and, indeed, other religious minorities in the area controlled by the so-called Islamic State has shocked the world by its brutality. In the 1990s, there were estimated to be more than 1.2 million Christians in Iraq, but now, of a population of some 35 million people, it has been estimated that fewer than 400,000 Christians remain.

As was said, religious leaders and bishops have been kidnapped. Businesses and churches have also been bombed and attacked, even on Christmas Day. A Christian Minister of the Environment and public representatives have also been singled out and targeted by the militants in recent attacks. Initially inspired by al-Qaeda, Sunni fundamentalists ISIS have also attacked Shia mosques, funerals, religious shrines and neighbourhoods. It has been said that even al-Qaeda has recognised the brutality and futility of what has been happening and has backed away from some of the actions.

On 24 July 2013, 14 Shia truck drivers were singled out and murdered at Sulaiman Bek. This incident has similarities to the Kingsmills massacre. In that case, Protestant workmen were singled out and murdered by the IRA. It is not that long ago that we faced similar sectarian murders in Northern Ireland. We must all ensure that we protect our peace and ensure that the next generation here and elsewhere in the world is tolerant and protective of the rights of others.

In June this year, hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of Mosul, including the remaining Christian community, fled ISIS. During August in Iraq, which, as others said, is one of the oldest centres of Christianity, 100,000 Christians are reported to have abandoned their villages in the Nineveh plains following ISIS attacks. All this is clearly and grossly against a very basic human right. Article 18 is, as others said, the right of freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Rather than civil and religious freedom for all, those with alternative beliefs to ISIS are advised to leave, convert to Islam or die. During 2011, the Syrian Opposition expressed their opposition to the ruling Baath Party and against the leadership of President Assad. Riots escalated out of control, particularly when the regime used its army against its own people. A large section of the country was no longer controlled by the Government. IS, supported by international jihadists and discontented Iraqi Sunni extremists, then turned on other opposition groups to impose its fundamentalist view of Islam. The Yazidi community has been forced to flee its villages, and it is not that long ago that we saw images of those people making their arduous journey through parching sun over mountains. Women were sold as slaves. Even last night, we saw that hundreds of thousands of Kurds from northern Syria were forced to flee to Turkey following yet another attack.

No one could fail to be moved by the story that I heard of a mother who gave birth yesterday being forced to flee her home into a world of uncertainty, without even shelter to protect her young child.

11.00 am

As previously stated, ISIS is one of the chief architects of the oppression and genocide. In recent times, it has targeted Western aid workers and journalists through gross, barbaric murders, as well as others whom we may not have heard about. What is religious or godly about the actions that it is carrying out? My thoughts and prayers are with Alan Henning and his family. He selflessly sought to provide aid to the vulnerable, was targeted and now lives under threat of execution. We must all work together, and I am pleased that a wider community has assembled, including Sunni Arab countries, to prevent the spread of this fundamentalist regime.

Mrs Cochrane: I, too, welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion. In recent months, I have watched in horror and disbelief the reality of religious persecution in each of those nations as it has been brought abruptly into focus by the international media. In June, the Sunni militant group ISIS attacked Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, resulting in almost the entirety of its Christian population fleeing, mainly to the relatively safe Kurdish region, where they have since found themselves in extreme hardship and in need of vital aid.

The militants' ultimate aim in both Iraq and Syria is to create an ultra-Islamic state. That means that Christians are becoming more vulnerable in all spheres of life, with many reported to have been abducted, physically harmed or killed, and many churches damaged or destroyed. However, it is not just Christians who are affected. There was a mass exodus of up to half a million people from Mosul as ISIS have been attacking all, including moderate Muslims and those from other religious minorities in northern Iraq who do not subscribe to its particularly radical interpretation of Islam. The real enemy is not Islam itself but its fundamentalism.

In the light of the worsening situation, I believe that it is imperative for the Westminster Government to take urgent and appropriate action to provide aid and protection to those persecuted people. As an Administration deeply immersed in Iraq and Syria, the UK Government cannot afford to ignore such an affront to civil liberties. Together with their international allies, they must do all that they can to protect those suffering from persecution in an already desperate situation. Further to that, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office should seek to engage with religious groups and national Governments to identify such atrocities and address their impact. I encourage all those who have not already done so to join my colleague Chris Lyttle and me in signing the current e-petition that calls for the Foreign Office to take decisive and immediate action to support those facing persecution in Iraq.

The focus of the motion is on the persecution of Christians in Syria and Iraq, but, as others have already said, it would be wrong to assume that Christians are unique in facing religious persecution or that they are the only group deserving of aid and protection. My party colleague Naomi Long MP secured a similar debate at Westminster on the persecution of Christians, but she has also hosted a debate on the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran. She has rightly stated, as have others, that the defence of freedom of religious belief, as defined by article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is important not only for Christians but for everyone.

We should also not lose sight of the fact that persecution is a real and persistent issue in many other countries. In a watch list from Open Doors detailing countries where persecution of Christians is most severe, Somalia and North Korea also feature prominently alongside Syria and Iraq. In Somalia, pressure is increasing on the tiny Christian community in that Muslim-majority country. Islamic leaders and Government officials publicly reinforce the idea that there is no room for Christians and that there is a strong drive to purge Christianity from Somalia. Meanwhile, for the twelfth consecutive year, North Korea is where Christian persecution is most extreme. The godlike worship of the leader, Kim Jong-un, and his predecessors leaves no room for any other religion, and Christians face

unimaginable pressure. Anyone discovered in clandestine religious activity may be subject to arrest, arbitrary detention, disappearance, torture or even public execution.

The barbarism of the recent beheadings shown on YouTube has rightly shocked people, but how many of us are aware that, in the period between the first and second beheading, Saudi Arabia beheaded over 130 people? It still bans churches, yet we still send trade missions to the Gulf states and are often more silent than we ought to be when it comes to their abuse of human rights and suppression of religious freedom. I am not saying that we should not send trade missions, but we need to be consistent in our calls for freedom of, and freedom from, religion at home and abroad if it is to be meaningful. The right to have a faith and to practise that faith in private and in community with others is not a western construct but a basic and fundamental human right. Regardless of whether it is in Northern Ireland or northern Iraq, it is a right that should apply universally. On those grounds, I give my full support to the motion.

Mr Storey: I rise as one of the Members who proposed the motion, and I am glad to be associated with it. This is the centenary of what became known as the Great War — the war that was meant to end all wars. One hundred years on, we all know too well that war has not been eradicated and the world is not at peace. The world is a very unhappy and unsettled place. Indeed, all around us, there are many wars, and, as the scriptures refer to, rumours of wars, which is something that we should all pay serious attention to.

In a sense, it has always been that way, but, somehow, over the summer months, there was growing worldwide unease. Indeed, at times, it was palpable. Some have said that the world today is at greater risk than at any time since the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. It seems to me that some threats of war and some areas of growing tension got more media attention and coverage than others.

We were right to focus on the implications of the air crash in the Ukraine and the impact on the deteriorating relationship between the West and Russia. We were right to focus on the worrying situation in Gaza during the days and weeks of the Israeli bombardment of the Hamas terrorist infrastructure. However, as the world monitored those events and other crises, another even more serious and alarming one was unfolding in Iraq and Syria. Few realised the scale of all that was going on until it was too late. As the world sat back, militant Sunni Islamic fighters ISIL marched into Iraq's second city Mosul. ISIL was relatively few in numbers, but the Iraqi army fled leaving people to their fate. Meanwhile, the world just turned a blind eye.

It is a tragic reality that, all too often, mass persecution and ethnic cleansing of entire people, which can often amount to genocide, can almost be totally ignored by world Governments and the world media until it is too late.

Mr Newton: Will the Member give way?

Mr Storey: Yes.

Mr Newton: Will the Member agree that it is the absolute height of hypocrisy for nations to be complaining about ISIS, yet, at the same time, they are willingly purchasing oil from ISIS, which is sustaining its murder and genocide campaign?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Storey: I agree with the Member. I think that all steps need to be taken to ensure that whatever the actions of those who are involved in the persecution are brought to an end. That is an element that needs to be given serious consideration. There are those in this House, and it has been referred to already, who would like to rewrite history when it comes to dealing with persecution and ethnic cleansing. Let us remember and let us never forget that part and parcel of the terrorist campaign that we were subjected to in this country was part of ethnic cleansing of people because of their faith. Let us not forget Darkley. Let us not forget Kingsmill.

It is important for us to remember the developments that have occurred in Iraq have largely followed on from the war in Syria. Last year, David Cameron and the then Foreign Secretary William Hague were champing at the bit for the UK to support US-led strikes against President Assad of Syria and on the side of the rebels. I am no fan of Assad, but surely we would have been foolish to commit ourselves to military intervention on the side of the rebels. I am glad that, on that occasion, wiser counsel prevailed. At that time, some, including my party's MPs at Westminster, argued, quite rightly, that those who were opposed to Assad were as bad as him, if not worse, and that turned out to be the case. Those who fought Assad in Syria developed into Islamic State, and the current title that is given to this band of murderers is Islamic State. They need to be vilified and isolated in every possible way.

I want to commend and agree with some of the comments made by Judith Cochrane, particularly her reference to the organisation known as Open Doors, which is a Christian organisation that highlights the many places across the world where, today, people are persecuted because of their Christian faith. I may not agree with the theology of all those who fall under the banner of the Christian Church. However, those who pay attention and give allegiance to the Christian faith are being persecuted as we speak in the House today. I encourage members to go on to the Open Doors website and look at the 50 countries where, today, people are being persecuted because of their faith — not because of any other issue, but because of their allegiance to the Christian faith. We have a duty as Christians in Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and other parts of the world to raise our voice because let us remember, Members, that, if this were happening in reverse, if it were being done by Christians, there would be a hue and cry about it. Therefore, I support the motion before the House. I trust that the motion will send a message out that what is going on cannot be ignored and must be addressed.

Mr Poots: When we look back on what has happened over the past number of years in Iraq and Syria, it should cause all of us great concern. Mr Storey has just mentioned the fact that the American Government, at one stage, were keen to go in and back those who were fighting against President Assad. I am thankful that the UK Parliament ensured that the UK did not get involved in that when it appeared that the Government intended to engage in that activity. Even at that point, it was very evident that the people who were fighting against President Assad had the potential to develop an even more militant and vicious regime than the one that existed. We have witnessed that over time; for example, in Egypt, where the Americans

backed the removal of the then President Mubarak. There was then a much more Islamic state in Egypt that was much less tolerant of individuals and wanted to introduce laws that went against freedom and human rights.

In the first instance, we need to seek to better understand the Middle East. The imposition of Western democracy-style politics in the Middle East and in countries that are largely Islamic has not worked in the past, nor is it likely to work that easily as we look to the future. They have a different concept of life. They look more to leadership. The system of democracy is somewhat alien to them. However, as we look at what has been going on in Iraq and Syria in particular, we see that the level of persecution against a range of people is wholly and totally unacceptable. All decent people should be able to stand up and make that case. We see very ancient peoples, such as the Assyrians and the Yazidis, being driven out. We see the old city of Nineveh — those of us who went to Sunday school all learned about Jonah and his work there. Of course, the scriptures say:

"my word ... shall not return unto me void".

Those who bowed the knee to Jehovah after Jonah took the word of God to those people are still bowing the knee to Jehovah/God, but they are being driven out and persecuted. The persecution that is taking place is absolute anathema to any decent person. The behaviour that is going on includes the ritual beheading of people and the rape of women.

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. For terrorists such as ISIS, one of the key income streams is from holding hostages to ransom. Does he agree that it is very important that the international community gets an agreed position on hostages and ransoms? Some nations are paying ransoms and therefore threatening the citizens of other nations that do not.

11.15 am

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Poots: That is certainly a very valuable point. I note that another French person has been taken hostage in Algeria just in the last 24 hours. It is clear that countries that pay ransoms have more people taken hostage. I know the hardship and burden that that is. Through mission organisations, I know of people who have been taken hostage. Their policy was not to pay. That is a very hard policy, particularly when it is your loved one who has been taken hostage. However, if you ever go down that route, hostages will be taken over and over again, and ransoms will be demanded over and over again. It is not a sustainable policy. It would be much better if France and some other countries that pay ransoms ceased to do that.

Before Mr Humphrey's intervention, I was talking about how women are treated. Teenage girls are being taken. They are raped and made the slaves of men with multiple wives. It is appalling what is happening.

We can stand and look on at all this. We in the Assembly can wring our hands and complain. However, the truth is that the only means of stopping ISIS is force. I welcome the efforts of others to stop ISIS. I welcome the air strikes that took place and stopped the massacre of thousands of people at that point in time. I welcome the efforts that

are going on to get Sunni-led countries in particular to make a military intervention and put boots on the ground to stop these people gaining an even greater foothold in that region. If we stand and look on, we are guilty of doing the same thing as those who stood and looked on in the 1930s, when Hitler had his way and millions of people were slaughtered and subsequently in Russia, with Joseph Stalin, where 20 million people were slaughtered. As decent people, we cannot afford to look on.

Mr A Maginness: I thank Mr Wells and his colleagues for bringing the motion to the House. It is very timely. It highlights the very fact that the international community, for quite a long time, has ignored the specific and discrete persecution of Christians throughout the world. That is a very important thing to note. Indeed, it is worth quoting the former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, who, when talking about the persecution of Christians, said:

“this is a human tragedy that is going almost unremarked ... it is the religious equivalent of ethnic cleansing. We are seeing Christians in Syria in great danger; we are seeing the burning of Coptic churches in Egypt. There is a large Coptic population in Egypt, and for some years now it has been living in fear. Two years ago the last church in Afghanistan was destroyed, certainly closed. There are no churches left in Afghanistan. Between 500,000 and 1 million Christians have left Iraq.”

He has highlighted the fact that the world has been silent on the persecution of Christians. Yes, other minorities are being persecuted for religious and other reasons and we should show solidarity with them, but there is a specific problem in relation to the persecution of Christians. Some people have said that the persecution of Christians now is at a height greater than at the time of the early Christian Church. That is something for us to reflect on.

I refer to the remarks of the dean of St Columb's Cathedral in Derry, Dr William Morton. He quoted the Gospel of St Matthew. Quoting the words of Jesus, he said:

“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’. This is the Gospel imperative of our Lord. We can’t ignore it. If we do, we do so at our peril. That account in St Matthew goes on to relate how, in the final judgement, there will be the distinction made between those who responded when the need arose, and those who did not.”

What Mr Wells and his colleagues have done is raise that voice and respond. We may not be the most powerful parliamentary voice in the world, but I think that we are a significant voice, and we add significant force to the plight of Christians throughout the world.

It is important that we remind the world and, in particular, the United Nations that there is a duty imposed on world organisations and world Governments to comply with article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private,

to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

That is the basis on which the world should intervene to protect the religious rights of people not just in the Middle East but in Africa and elsewhere in the world and, as Mrs Cochrane said, in North Korea in particular, where Christianity has been persecuted to a most extreme extent.

Mr Rogers: Thanks to the Member for giving way. Does he agree that religious freedom cannot be guaranteed by legislation alone and that we as legislators throughout the world need to promote attitudes of respect and cooperation in the service of the common good?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr A Maginness: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. I thank the Member for his intervention. It is important that we do not simply use words alone here. The United Nations, other countries and, indeed, the European Union must use a menu, as it were, of actions to deal with the protection of Christian communities. They are ancient communities that go back to the time of the apostles. It is important to remember that they are not colonists or people who have been imported; they have lived there for two millennia.

It is important that the United Nations implements its own doctrine, which includes the responsibility to protect, to provide safe havens, to provide protection for displaced civilian populations in order for them to maintain their culture and their historic heritage, to bring to justice those who are responsible on all sides for the violations that have been so properly identified here today and to have those violations dealt with by the International Criminal Court or, indeed, a specially mandated regional court. It is important that actions be taken and that we do not rely on words alone. Action should be taken. Leading people throughout the world have now come to the conclusion that actions must be taken, and people must be protected. If we do not do that, we — all of us — are failing. I hope that Members in the House will recognise that.

Mr Allister: I support the motion, and I welcome the fact that we are having the discussion.

It is pretty clear that any right-thinking person is absolutely horrified by what has been unfolding before our eyes in the Middle East. It is particularly disturbing to think that, in areas that, as Mr Wells pointed out, historically have significant Christian heritage, the blood-curdling, barbarous scourge of radical Islamism is liquidating in the most horrendous fashion imaginable any vestige of Christianity that they can find and doing so in the most cruel and unspeakable manner. It is right that we in a part of the world that takes for granted the freedoms and religious liberties that we have should raise our voice in defence of those who face such horrendous consequences just for daring to hold a religious belief and who, if they come even from a branch of society that is classified as being in any way associated with Christianity or any other unacceptable minority outlook in the Islamic State regimes, are, with unimaginable cruelty, put to death. It is right that we should be loud in speaking out against that.

Mr Wells: Will the Member give way?

Mr Allister: Yes.

Mr Wells: Does the Member accept that 80% of all those in the world who are persecuted for religious motivation are Christians, that we need to do more than simply make our voice heard and that we cannot stand by as we did in Rwanda and Cambodia and let this happen? The action that was taken last night has to be right. We have to take military action to prevent the loss of tens of thousands more lives, Christian and non-Christian.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Allister: Yes, I tend to agree with the Member. Although the history of interventions in the Middle East has been rather chequered and not always successful and, indeed, on occasions has unleashed even greater monsters, it is abundantly clear that the civilised world cannot stand by and allow the barbarism that is unfolding and building in Iraq and Syria to go unchecked. Therefore, I support the actions that have been taken and trust that they, in a sustained fashion, will be successful.

These are not people whom you can talk to. These are not folk who, as a consequence of dialogue, will see the error of their ways. These are people who know, pursue and want only the path of blood, and they have to be dealt with in a robust fashion.

The Member made a point that unfolds into a wider issue. We heard from Mrs Cochrane, for example, about the very deep-seated persecution and lack of liberty in Saudi Arabia, where they have a specific commission called the Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which prohibits the practice of any religion other than Islam, and where the conversion of a Muslim to another religion is a crime punishable by death. You cannot possess any religious items, such as a Bible, and you cannot worship in public. Those are all manifestations, in themselves, of the intolerant imposition of Islam to the extinction of all else.

There is a question to be asked of the Western world because we all trade very readily and liberally with these states. Indeed, Invest NI, for which the House has some responsibility, has a trading office in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. How does that sit with our protestations this morning that we are appalled at the intolerance throughout the Middle East and the suppression of Christianity? That is a point that the House might also want to ponder.

11.30 am

Mr D McIlveen: I thank the Business Office for making the time available for this very important debate this morning. I am conscious that there are many pressing issues closer to home, and I am sure that the temptation is often to set issues like this to the side. In politics, we learn very quickly to try not to get frustrated by things that we hear, but there is one thing that at times frustrates me slightly as an elected representative: the view that we should concentrate only on those issues that are within our borders. I believe strongly that we have a responsibility as a Christian nation to speak out against intolerance, persecution and the murder of our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world, which is happening daily, even as we are having this debate. I appreciate the opportunity for us to debate this very important issue.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

Throughout the debate, I was thinking of the words of the apostle Paul:

"faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Paul goes on to recall a list of people who are referred to in Christian circles as the champions of faith: people who have, because of their faith, done immense things or had to make immense sacrifices. That is what I think is so poignant about what we are talking about today, because I think that the apostle Paul was trying to say that it is relatively easy to take a stand on the things that we can see, but it is not as easy to take a stand on the things that we cannot see with our physical eye. That is why I believe that these people who are suffering great persecution throughout the world are to be held in such high regard. They are standing up for what they believe, their faith and the principles that they hold on to very, very dearly.

The point has been made on many occasions that this is not entirely unexpected. Indeed, I can recall, almost 20 years ago, speaking to a man who was heading up the New Tribes Mission, an organisation that does what it says on the tin: it goes to places that have had absolutely no experience of Christianity and seeks to teach people about the doctrines of Christianity. I remember him saying, 20 years ago, that the biggest threat to the Christian Church was radical Islam. That was not particularly prevalent at that stage, but, as that man and the team that he was representing were going into various areas, they could see clearly the dangers that radical Islam was going to create for the Christian Church. As was pointed out several times this morning, that has been the case. I can think of an example that was brought to me. A young man who lived with his wife just outside Mosul in Iraq was sent a letter from Islamic State telling him that, if he did not leave with his wife, he would be beheaded. He ignored the advice, or the threat, that he was given by that barbaric group. Subsequently, he was shot at on repeated occasions. He then found out that his wife was pregnant, so, for the safety of his wife and unborn child, they eventually fled to Jordan, where he is now living as a refugee. I suspect that the baby has entered this world by now, although it will have been relatively recently. The child has been born into a world with no home, no money and no quality of life. The young man — the father of the child — summed it up by saying at the end of an email that he sent to his family that he just wanted to get out of that hell. That is the suffering that is being inflicted on Christians throughout the region daily and weekly.

There is a misconception that this is confined to countries that are deemed to be very strict, very closed, and very religious. Last week, I, along with a colleague from the Assembly, had the opportunity to go to Tunis for three days, where I had a number of meetings with various representatives. Tunisia is regarded as one of the most liberal states in the Middle East and north Africa. Although it is 95% Islamic, there are all sects of Islam there, and it is regarded as probably the most secular country in the region. However, even though it is the most secular country in the region, it has been the greatest net exporter of recruits to Islamic State, with 2,000 young people from there estimated to have joined Islamic State in just the past year.

So, this is not a problem confined to the states that we would deem to be very radical and very religious but a problem throughout the region. Mr Wells made the point that we have seen reductions in the number of Christians year on year. He also mentioned the fact that the Arab spring had an unintended consequence, and I accept that. I would certainly not have been in the queue to stand up for Assad, Mubarak or any of the leaders who were toppled by their people. However, it is very clear that those leaders had managed somehow to keep a fairly tight grip on the ethnic tensions that were bubbling just beneath the surface. Since those people were toppled and sent packing, we have seen this boiling-over of ethnic tensions, which is culminating now in the persecution of innocent Christians.

Of course, as Mrs Cochrane said, it is not just Christians who have been persecuted. I have met people who were involved in the Morsi Government — the Government that were toppled in Egypt more recently — who were able to show me where they had had nails rammed through their fingers to make them convert or to hold them to account for a political viewpoint that is not in keeping with the Muslim Brotherhood in control over there. The brutality that exists in those groups is really quite pertinent and shocking, as Mr Wells mentioned.

Unfortunately, I do not have time to go through all the points that were made, as time is moving on. However, Mr Maginness mentioned us being a small voice. He is absolutely right: Northern Ireland is a small voice. However, Northern Ireland is somewhere that many other countries are looking to to see what they can learn from our experience. It is not that long ago that the outside world was looking at Northern Ireland and saying, “I cannot understand why people are being murdered on the streets just because they put on a police or army uniform”, or, on the other side of that, “I cannot understand why people are being murdered just because they are Catholic”. People were looking at Northern Ireland, and they could not understand what was going on and why this was happening. Therefore, I think that we punch above our weight when it comes to the influence that we can have in these situations. I think that we in the Assembly have a responsibility to speak out and make that point clear.

All in all, this was a positive and constructive debate. I request that, through the Speaker’s Office, a letter be sent to the Foreign Office in the United Kingdom to make it aware of this debate and to urge it to take whatever steps it can. It was predominantly a positive debate. Unfortunately, our prophet of doom in the corner decided to drop in one quip about the activities of Invest NI and where it operates. We have to be very careful that we do not tar all Arab states with the same brush. Of course, many sects exist in all these countries, but I would certainly not encourage any trade with any country that is condoning or justifying terrorism. I will leave it at that.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes with great concern the widespread persecution and genocide of the Christian minority community in Iraq and Syria; and calls upon Her Majesty’s Government to take immediate action within the international community to provide emergency aid and protection for this religious group.

Welfare Cuts

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. One amendment has been selected and is published on the Marshalled List. The proposer will have 10 minutes to propose the amendment and five minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members will have five minutes.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I beg to move

That this Assembly notes with deep concern the disastrous impact of welfare cuts in Britain, particularly on the most vulnerable in society, including families on low income, those with disabilities and those who are unemployed; asserts that a modern, caring society should place the protection of its most vulnerable citizens at the very top of its agenda and calls on the Executive to oppose this Tory cuts agenda.

I propose the motion to the House and ask Members to reject the amendment tabled by the DUP. At the outset, let me say that our battle on this matter is not with the DUP or, indeed, any other party in this House but with the Tory millionaires in Westminster. I believe that the Sinn Féin motion is quite simple and self-explanatory but fundamental in how the Assembly will define itself. Are we determined to defend our community against this ongoing and punitive austerity drive, and will we stand together united and resolute in our rejection of the cuts proposed by the Tories, who represent not one of our constituents?

The motion seeks to highlight the disastrous consequences already being experienced by people in Britain, where these cuts have been imposed and heavily criticised. We share the same concerns highlighted in Britain by all the main Churches, the trade unions, various charities and a number of MPs and NGOs. In this day and age, in a so-called modern and caring society, the need for food banks should be a badge of shame for any Government. The number of people made homeless or driven further into poverty, not to mention despair, should make any party unfit for government, and that is why Sinn Féin will not support the welfare cuts imposed by the Tories and, regrettably, now advocated by Members of this House.

Opponents of my party have suggested that we are opposing this cuts agenda here in the Six Counties because of our opposition to the very same agenda in Dublin. It should be said, of course, that the same mean-spirited and uncaring attitude to the less well-off has been a hallmark of many of the policies in Leinster House, no less so than in Westminster, but I remind those opponents or so-called commentators that Sinn Féin made that opposition a manifesto commitment, North and South, simply because we are an all-Ireland party and precisely because it is the right thing to do.

We have been asked, or, more accurately, badgered, to support the Westminster-proposed Welfare Reform Bill, but, put quite simply, this is not reform but a pretext for cuts and, if those cuts are imposed, even more families will be driven into poverty. Let us remind ourselves that the Programme for Government commits us to reduce

the levels of poverty and social disadvantage, while we also have legal obligations to reduce child poverty levels. Imposing these cuts flies completely in the face of those requirements, and my colleague Mickey Brady will outline some of the other more direct impacts that the cuts will have on many of the people who we collectively represent.

I have asked those who argue for the immediate implementation of welfare cuts why on earth they would want to impose these cuts when the British Government are struggling to impose them throughout Britain given the failure of their IT system.

We have been advised that up to £425 million that has been ploughed into that system may be written off. So, I have asked this question: why on earth would we want to impose this policy and these cuts when the system is failing in Britain? Never mind the fact that the absolutely complex nature of the legislation is mind-boggling to some people — despite the fact that we were told that the benefits system was to be simplified — or the evidence from those who highlight the very negative impact of the cuts or that the coalition Government are split on key aspects of the welfare legislation, not least the bedroom tax. Again I put this question: given all that, why on earth would we want to impose those welfare cuts on people here?

11.45 am

The only response, of course —

Mr Campbell: Will the Member give way?

Mr Maskey: I am not giving way, thank you. Members will have the opportunity to speak.

The only response that I have heard thus far to my question is that we have no other choice, that there will be no more concessions from London or that we have secured the best deal of the devolved Administrations, as they are referred to, through Nelson McCausland's little lucky bag of mitigation measures. Most people I know have easily recognised the opportunity that is presented to us, even now, as an Administration, with the promises that were made to Scotland in the days that led up to the referendum vote, but that discussion is for another day.

I also want to make it very clear that having personally and politically argued for all the measures referred to by Minister McCausland and other DUP spokespeople with many of my party colleagues — including Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, who did so directly with David Cameron — I, of course, welcome those measures, but they are not anywhere near close enough to what is required. Those measures are essentially administrative, and, important as they are, they do not address the issues of concern to many people out there, particularly women in our community, who believe that the purse-to-wallet policy is a very regressive measure.

While welcome, the measures will not address the fact that, according to representatives of the Social Security Agency in their day one briefing to the Committee for Social Development, the cuts from the Welfare Reform Bill will amount to somewhere in the region of £450 million. They told Committee members that and have made that publicly clear. That money will be taken directly from local people's pockets as a result of those cuts. Of course, NICVA and many others have been able to demonstrate, through a variety of reports, that that amount will rise to

around £750 million annually if you take into account the fact that benefits will be frozen over the next number of years and will not rise with the cost of living and so on.

We in Sinn Féin argue that we have a choice. We stand beside and support the calls that have been made by our local trade unions, our church leaders, our charities, the NGOs and the wide range of community representatives who work with hard-pressed families and communities daily. I remind Members that all those groups attended the Assembly and gave evidence directly to the Social Development Committee when we took evidence on the Bill last year. I simply cannot understand why any political party that purports to represent those same communities can advocate imposing those cuts.

The DUP amendment essentially acknowledges and accepts that there are very negative aspects of the proposed —

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mr Maskey: You will have the opportunity to speak. Thank you.

The DUP amendment essentially acknowledges and accepts that there are very negative aspects of the proposed welfare reform agenda that is coming from Westminster. It then simply hypes the package of mitigating measures and calls on us to implement the Welfare Reform Bill. Bizarrely, in my reading of it, the amendment really says that we should implement the cuts, which the DUP knows will badly affect many in this community, in order not to badly affect many in this community. It just does not make sense.

One thing should be made clear to the House by all the parties. Cuts are being imposed on services across all the Departments exclusively due to the real reductions in the block grant over a period of years. Imposing welfare cuts, fines or clawbacks of £87 million or £100-plus million will be another burden and, in our view, a burden too far for those communities. So, in essence, we have to address two key problems: a serious deficit in the Budget as a result of British Tory cuts to the block grant; and a further double whammy on the people we represent due to the benefit cuts. Those are two essential issues that people here continually try to confuse either themselves with or certainly the public with, and they have to be addressed.

My party has made it very clear that we are not in favour of these cuts proposed by the Tories in London, and we are at one on this with many voices across our communities. It is our job to protect our communities against these cuts, and we believe that we can. We believe that it is essential that we politically unite in the House against the cuts and for the people we represent.

If Minister McCausland believes that the Westminster proposals are now acceptable, he should introduce the legislation in the House and allow all the representatives to declare their hand, tell the people where they stand and democratically decide the fate of the Bill. Sinn Féin believes — I say this to all Members of the House — that it can make a difference if we stand together united in common purpose in a mature, rational but resolute challenge to the British Government's welfare cuts agenda.

I recommend the motion and reject the amendment.

Mr Wilson: I beg to move the following amendment:

Leave out all after "notes" and insert

"the negative impact of elements of the current welfare reform agenda in Great Britain; welcomes the proposed package developed by the Minister for Social Development in conjunction with the First Minister and deputy First Minister in the summer of 2013, which will mitigate the most negative elements of welfare reform; and calls for the implementation of this revised and improved welfare reform package for Northern Ireland to avoid the unsustainable cost of opting out of welfare reform, which will impact on public services, the most vulnerable in society, including families on low income, people with disabilities, people who are unemployed and the thousands of public servants who will face unemployment."

I have listened to the tired arguments of Sinn Féin repeated once again in the House. Let us go to the conclusion, first of all, of the speech that Mr Maskey made. It is quite clear that Sinn Féin has no policy other than to hurt the vulnerable and the people who need public services in Northern Ireland. The idea that, if we stand together and show common resistance to these Tory cuts, somehow or other the problem of the £87 million that is being cut out of public services this year, the £114 million that will be cut next year, rising to £1 billion in 2020, will go away. It will not; not with all the resistance in the world. What is he going to do? What is Sinn Féin going to do? Go down to DFP and lock the doors and say, "When you come for your money, we are going to stop you getting it"? That is not how it works. The money will come out of our Budget by somebody sitting at a keyboard in the Treasury and changing the amount of money that is available to the Executive for spending in Northern Ireland.

This nonsense that we are going to be the champions and resist is just palpable nonsense, and he knows that it is palpable nonsense. We will face the consequences of a policy of not adopting the welfare reform changes, which will cost us money in the Executive, and that will hit the poor. No departmental budget will escape the kind of reductions that will be required.

We already see the problems that £87 million is causing this year. As that escalates to £1 billion in five years, as we have to purchase a computer system and pay the difference between what the rates would be here and what the rates would be in the rest of the United Kingdom, we will have to face those economic consequences. The people who require public services will face them. This is not a motion defending the poor. This is a motion to hide Sinn Féin's embarrassment at having to do something in Northern Ireland that it is condemning the Government for doing in the Irish Republic.

Mr Campbell: I thank the Member for giving way. When he is on the issue of Sinn Féin's embarrassment, would he agree that it must be slightly embarrassing that, last week in Limavady Borough Council, where Sinn Féin is the largest political party, a motion was passed that:

"calls on the Executive to agree to the welfare reform proposals as negotiated by the Executive which will help to mitigate the effects of the Westminster Government's proposals."

That was agreed by a nationalist-controlled council with no opposition from any councillor, and Sinn Féin is the largest party on the council.

Mr Wilson: Maybe what we are seeing there is that people on the ground, who recognise the disastrous impact of the policy followed by Sinn Féin — directed by its dictators in Dublin — are now turning against party policy and asking for a return to common sense.

Let us be clear what this is about: it is about saving Sinn Féin's blushes in the Republic, and the poor people who need public services in Northern Ireland are going to pay.

The second point that I want to make is this: the amendment that we have put down shows that, already, significant changes have been made. They have been dismissed as administrative changes, but they are not. The retention of the social fund, the escape from the changes in housing benefit, the help for people who would have lost money had housing benefit been removed from the rates, and help for people who have to get doctors' reports and go through assessments for their disability payments: all those are not administrative changes but real changes that cost the Executive money. The Executive have poured money into trying to mitigate the impacts of welfare reform. Of course, many of the other changes will ensure that people do not fall into debt, as they have in the rest of the United Kingdom, because payments will go directly to landlords, will be split, or made on a more regular basis etc. Those are important changes, and the Minister is to be congratulated for having obtained those particular points.

My third point is this: we must introduce the welfare reform changes and face the bill that we must face, or the very top priority that Sinn Féin now wants for the agenda of the Executive — namely the protection of vulnerable citizens — will suffer. I have to say, however, that the priority for Sinn Féin seems to change every week. In some weeks, its priority is the health service; in others, it is its cultural agenda. The Education Minister can even, somehow or other, find money to transport youngsters across Belfast, against the legislation, but in defence of an Irish-medium school. Sinn Féin has a different agenda every week; this week, it appears that its agenda is the protection of the poor.

What is the best way of protecting poor people? It is to give them an opportunity to get into employment.

Mr McCartney: It is to stop the Welfare Reform Bill.

Mr Wilson: That is the best way —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please. In case Members have forgotten, our standards of debate include courtesy, good temper and moderation. That involves allowing Members to be heard, and not to be shouting from a sedentary position.

Mr Wilson: I do not mind a bit of barracking from the other side, Mr Deputy Speaker. If there is a bit of barracking, it usually means that the point has hit home for them. The Members opposite know that, if they want to protect the poor, the one thing that you cannot afford to do is to have reductions in the budgets for the promotion of jobs, the training of people who need skills to enable them to get into work or promoting and building the infrastructure required for a healthy economy. Sinn Féin's policy will affect all those budgets so that vulnerable people who need to get into employment will have less opportunity to do so. The idea that, somehow or other, it helps to bury your head in the sand and get into a situation where you have to pay out money, is mistaken.

Of course, we also lose the ability to administer some of the benefits in the future. For example, if we get to a situation where the system of administration of benefits in the rest of the United Kingdom varies and moves away from what we have here, we will not have the ability to help the poor.

By 2015, people who are getting family tax credits will not be able to make claims because the universal credit system will have moved in. By 2016, unemployed people will not have the ability to claim additional social security payments because the systems will have been turned off. By 2016, people on a low income who make housing benefit claims will find their ability to make those claims reduced unless, of course, we spend hundreds of millions of pounds on purchasing the computer system from the Department for Work and Pensions and paying for its upkeep. I do not think that you benefit the poor in Northern Ireland by putting money into the hands of computer companies, consultants and hardware manufacturers instead of tying into the system that we have in the rest of the United Kingdom.

12.00 noon

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Wilson: The motion is a motion for disaster. The amendment paves a way forward to save disastrous cuts to Northern Ireland.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Wilson: I hope that the Assembly backs the amendment.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Sometimes, Members' preferences on how a debate is handled might differ from that of the Speaker. I happen to believe that barracking is not acceptable, while cut and thrust is. I call Mrs Dolores Kelly, who I am sure was listening.

Mrs D Kelly: The SDLP supports the motion and opposes the amendment.

The SDLP has a long record of defending the rights of the most vulnerable in society and is totally opposed to the introduction of these punitive cuts. On that note, I commend my colleagues who supported a Bill in Westminster to mitigate the most detrimental effects of the iniquitous bedroom tax. It would be wrong not to ask Sinn Féin why, if it is so committed to opposing Tory cuts, its members do not go to Westminster to vote against them.

The SDLP is not opposed to welfare reform in itself. A change that would create a fair and more transparent system ought to be welcomed. Indeed, the Bill introduced by my colleague Margaret Ritchie was about protecting disabled people and supporting them if and when they were fit to return to work. These are cuts masquerading as reform and are punishing the most vulnerable people in society for an economic crash that they did not cause. The Executive must do their utmost to agree on legislation, practice and funding to ensure that the most vulnerable in our society are not attacked by these cuts.

We have witnessed the demonisation of the disabled and unemployed in Britain as a means to justify the cuts. Like my party and me, the Assembly must reject the Tories' crass dichotomy between strivers and skivers and commit itself to protecting the most vulnerable. In Scotland, in

the Expert Working Group on Welfare's excellent report, Professor Adrian Sinfield states:

"The active creation and maintenance of the false division between 'we the people', the taxpayers, the givers, in contrast to 'them, the poor, the benefit-dependent', the takers, has not only stigmatised its receipt and depressed take-up by many entitled to benefits. It also very effectively reduces attention to and support for more positive changes by shifting attention from problems of structure and agency in the labour market to the alleged failures of individuals."

Dignity and respect must be an important part of our social security system.

Others would like to introduce the reforms and dismiss the wealth of evidence that they have failed spectacularly in Britain. Only on Sunday, we learned from the 'Sunday Mirror' that there have been botched changes in benefits for people with disabilities. New figures now show that 329,000 of the 529,000 applicants waiting for personal independent payment claims are still waiting to be assessed and that waiting time has increased substantially. This is all the more shocking when we remember that Northern Ireland will be hit much harder than the rest of the UK if the welfare reforms are allowed to pass. The administrative changes agreed to date do not go far enough to tailor reform to the particular challenges that we face in Northern Ireland.

Nearly 800,000 people live in poverty in the North. I am sure that every Member can agree that that is a disturbing and totally unacceptable statistic. The cuts would only exacerbate the situation and hit households that are already struggling. Of the 400 government districts, three of Northern Ireland's 26 are in the top four positions, and 11 are in the top 50. That is largely due to the prevalence of mental ill health and social deprivation that the conflict left in our society.

In my constituency, there is an estimated loss of £670 per working-age adult in Craigavon. In Banbridge, it is £560. In total, as the excellent report by NICVA and others suggests, £750 million would be lost to the Northern Ireland economy. There is no aspect of life that the cuts would not touch: housing, health, income or childcare. We have a higher proportion of disability living allowance (DLA) recipients than England, Scotland and Wales, and they will be adversely affected by the personal independent payment.

The infamous bedroom tax will adversely affect 33,000 people. Indeed, the social housing Minister said that 32,000 social housing tenants would potentially be affected by underoccupation restrictions. That was in an answer recently conveyed by Minister McCausland to my colleague Colum Eastwood. We should embark on a housing reform programme and build more houses.

Mr Wilson: I thank the Member for giving way, and I am glad that she has raised the issue of the bedroom tax. Does she accept that her party introduced the bedroom tax for those in the private rented sector?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mrs D Kelly: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The former Finance Minister is well acquainted with the dearth of social housing right across the North. As he

knows well, the sectarian geography here lends itself to a different establishment of need. The bedroom tax would impact even more adversely on people living in social housing here than on people anywhere else in these islands. We have heard Members —

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Mrs D Kelly: I am sorry, but I am very short of time.

We have heard Members rehearse the Tory rhetoric that we are now so accustomed to, which accompanies these cuts: “Make work pay” and “The trap of benefits dependency”. The way in which to do that is by creating sustainable employment —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mrs D Kelly: — across the North rather than penalising people who are not fortunate enough to work or are unable to do so.

Mr Copeland: Thank you for the chance to contribute to the debate, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker.

I stand here with the two great power blocs to my left and right: the land of “This must be done” and the land of “This will never be done”. The truth is that, until we see that which is to be done, it is hard to make up your mind. This legislation has been bogged down, I think, since 2012. At that stage, the Minister brought it forward, seemingly trying to implement it in its totality, including clauses that applied discounting as income compensation paid as a result of the London bombings. That was a slap in the face for many people here who were victims of bombings in the past.

We will not support the motion or the amendment. The Minister needs to bring forward the Bill and let the Chamber do its legislative job, which is to decide on it. It is wrong to assume that Northern Ireland is getting away in the smoke, because, to be frank, some of the reforms across the water have been shambolic. Universal credit was expected to be rolled out by the end of 2017. As of last month, 11,070 households were receiving universal credit. The policy in GB is clearly failing, and I see nothing to reinforce the view that it will do anything other than fail here. DWP is 986,740 short of the original target of moving one million people to universal credit by April. In fact, Iain Duncan Smith also missed his own revised and much downgraded target of 184,000. Given that there are currently 11,000 claimants, welfare reform is not working well there either. There are massive flaws, not least the fact that the male to female ratio of claimants is 7:3, with the vast majority of claims being from unemployed people under 25 — the easiest demographic to separate. Considering that universal credit is estimated to cost the taxpayer £12·8 billion, if progress is not made soon, the cost of this will be over £1·1 million for every person currently claiming it.

Welfare needs to be reformed to make the system better and to make it work for people who need it. I have buried people — I am sure that many of us have — from my constituency who took their own life because of the outworkings of the previous system and the current system. I see little in the proposals thus far that indicates that we have taken any cognisance of the sheer and utter desperation of a vast demographic.

Mr Wilson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Copeland: No, Sammy.

Fighting a DLA appeal on behalf of someone who took their life because you were not available on the day that they needed you to go to an appeal is a very heavy burden. I am sure that there are others in the Room who bear it.

Essentially, this is a row between the DUP and Sinn Féin. It is down in the castle. Sort it out. Bring us the legislation, and, when you do, we will tell you what we think.

Mr Wilson: You have seen the legislation; you are on the Committee.

Mr Copeland: Bring it here. We hear lots of talk about the packages.

Mr Wilson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Copeland: No. We hear lots about packages. I cannot remember a single —

Mr Wilson: You sit on the Committee that investigates it.

Mr Copeland: Stop barracking, Sammy. I cannot remember a single thing that was given by the Minister. It had to be forced or drawn; it was protracted. That takes little cognisance of the people listening to this. The demographic that will be the most seriously affected is not the scroungers, even though they do not really exist, or the unemployed; it is low-paid working families with children. On the day that I sat on this seat and listened to a debate about how this was about making work pay, there were 67,253 people in receipt of unemployment benefit and 4,700 available jobs. It does not take you to be a mathematician to work out the odds on that.

If this must be done, bring it forward and do it. The proper place for legislation is in this Chamber. A debate of this nature a few days before it serves no purpose except to add further concern for those who are afraid of change, whether that change be good or bad. Looking at the mainland, we can see that this has not been well done. It has not been —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Copeland: — efficiently done. Thank you for reminding me that my time has run out.

Mr Dickson: I oppose the motion and support the amendment.

My colleagues and I have no particular appetite for the full force of the reforms that are taking place in the rest of the United Kingdom. We recognise that there has been a negative impact in Great Britain, but we also recognise where our block grant comes from. That is something that the party to my right seems to completely and utterly misunderstand. It comes from Westminster. We do not have the resources in Northern Ireland to maintain an independent welfare system. Therefore, we have to work on the basis of parity with Northern Ireland variances that can be and have been negotiated on top of that. To argue otherwise is to reject political and economic reality.

The place to oppose welfare cuts was at Westminster. That is what we in Alliance and others in the House did. However, there are those who did not go to make the arguments or walk through the Lobbies. I know that members of Sinn Féin will say, “Oh, we have a mandate not to take our seats”.

Mr McCartney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dickson: No.

I argue — I have heard your argument before — that they have a greater duty to show responsibility and leadership by working for the well-being of their constituents, whom they are clearly putting in second place to stubborn ideology. That is what Sinn Féin is doing. Now, to rub salt in the wounds, Sinn Féin's grandstanding is aided by the mini-me SDLP and an abstentionist Ulster Unionist Party. Former Ulster Unionist leaders must have been spinning in their graves when the party announced abstention in this historic Chamber today. They are hurting the poorest and most vulnerable by squeezing essential public services. That is the outcome of the opposition. The penalties are real.

12.15 pm

Mr Wilson: I thank the Member for giving way. The argument made by the Ulster Unionist spokesman was that the proper place for debating the legislation is on the Floor of the Assembly. We have had a First Reading, a Second Reading and a Committee Stage, all of which the Member who made the claim took part in. What could be more parliamentary than that? He cannot say that he is against this because it has not gone through the proper parliamentary process.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Dickson: I agree with Mr Wilson.

The penalties are real. All £87 million of them are real.

Mr McCartney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dickson: They are already having a negative impact —

Mr McCartney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dickson: — as Ministers quite rightly prepare for difficult days ahead —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Will the Member be seated? I remind Members that, where it is clear that a Member does not wish to give way, other Members should not pursue it.

Mr Dickson: The negative impact is already being seen, as we can see from comments by the Justice Minister in the 'Belfast Telegraph' today, for example. Quite rightly, they are preparing for very difficult days ahead, should the reforms not be agreed. Members need to accept reality along with the fact that there is a finite amount of money available. Members and parties can promise their constituents everything under the sun, but the cake is only a certain size. What is expected of us, in this Chamber, is to solve problems not exacerbate them with meaningless campaigns.

I ask Members who continue to block the reforms this: what are your detailed proposals, and where is your master plan for getting round the huge financial dependency on transfer payments from Westminster? I have seen no evidence from any of the parties that are opposing the motion in the Chamber today. I suspect that that is because there is no plan and that, other than to continue to run away from reality and to wave placards, they have no meaningful plans, no proposals and no way forward.

In contrast, on the table there is a package of concessions that is superior to what is being implemented in the rest of the UK. If we move forward with those proposals, we can avoid the £87 million of penalties and look at what

additional measures we may be able to take to mitigate the most negative elements of welfare reform. That is the challenge that faces us.

I encourage the Minister and the Department not only to bring forward the Bill but to bring forward further proposals for changes to help mitigate the issues that are rightly of concern to all Members. Not addressing the issue further hits the poor and the most vulnerable in society. Cuts of £87 million will surely have a negative impact on the provision of health services, education, child poverty interventions, upskilling, employment schemes and job creation. That is what you are holding back. All those things would help people to escape welfare dependency, improve real-life outcomes and create opportunities. We should not be handing money back to the Treasury in fines, which we could be using to invest further in those areas.

Finally, this is about facing up to reality. Therefore, I challenge those parties in the Executive who continue to block reform to face up to their responsibilities, be prepared to take challenging decisions and let the Bill come forward so that we can begin to retake control of the issue and agree a way forward that works for all of the citizens in Northern Ireland.

Mr Nesbitt: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Mr Dickson will not have to wait to read the Hansard report tomorrow to realise that he misheard our spokesman. We are not abstaining; we will be voting against the motion.

Ms Boyle: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank my party for giving me the opportunity to speak in this debate. Most of the welfare cuts that the Tories are trying to impose on the North have already been implemented in Britain, with devastating consequences, particularly for the sick, the disabled, single parents, those on low incomes and the working poor. Poverty levels have spiralled out of control along with homelessness levels and suicide rates, with food banks and other charitable help often the only safety net that prevents more people from falling into total destitution and despair.

Given the poor socio-economic demographics of the North, we would suffer an even more severe hit than the worst affected regions of Britain if the intended Tory cuts came into full effect here. A report commissioned by the Council for Voluntary Action spells out the stark consequences of the Tory cuts, with the most deprived areas suffering the greatest losses. Based on official government data, the report finds that Belfast, Derry and my district of Strabane would be worst hit. Some of the stark figures show that, in the Strabane district alone, 1,400 single parent families will face cuts and 4,700 families will have their tax credits cut. The NICVA report that others have spoken on also shows that there will be a loss of £870 per working age adult in the Strabane district, which results in a loss of £22 million to the local economy each year. In the Omagh district, we will see a loss of £690 per working age adult, resulting in a loss of £23 million to the local economy each year. These are extremely worrying and shocking figures.

Speaking as the Sinn Féin spokesperson on disability, I am horrified that sickness and disability claimants will be hit hardest under these proposed cuts. The 66,000 individuals adversely affected by the incapacity benefit reforms can expect to lose an average of almost £3,500 per year. The 67,000 individuals changing from DLA to personal

independence payments (PIP) will lose out on an average of £2,100 per year.

This is a Thatcherite agenda that needs to be fought tooth and nail. Tory policy threatens to destroy the economy through savage cuts to public funding and welfare. The implementation of these measures in England has been a complete disaster and has plunged thousands into poverty and deprivation already.

The North is a society emerging from decades of conflict, and clearly you cannot apply here that which applies in England and Wales. Citizens most directly affected by the conflict are among those suffering the highest levels of deprivation. The percentage of people in receipt of disability benefits is higher in the North than anywhere else in Ireland or Britain. Welfare cuts will merely worsen the situation.

Mr Humphrey: Will the Member give way?

Ms Boyle: Not at this time, thank you.

The Tory Government is threatening to impose financial penalties on the Assembly Budget if we do not legislate for their regressive cuts agenda. This is despite the fact that, in Britain itself, this agenda is being increasingly challenged and cracks are now opening between the Tories and their Lib Dem coalition partners, who are now questioning the wisdom, workability and counterproductive nature of many of these cuts measures.

Mr McCallister: Will the Member give way?

Ms Boyle: Not at this time, thank you.

There is a growing realisation, generated in particular from issues being discussed in the Scottish independence debate, that the Tory cuts agenda is designed to serve the interests of the Tory heartlands in the south-east of England and their millionaire buddies. It is clear that the interests and needs of the people of the North do not even factor in their thinking.

Unfortunately, here in the North, we have the party opposite continuing to act as cheerleaders for the Tory cuts agenda. The Tory welfare programme is not about reform; it is about saving money —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Ms Boyle: — at the expense of the poor. It is a Thatcherite agenda designed to dismantle —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Ms Boyle: — the welfare state and punish the most poor and disadvantaged in society.

Mr Attwood: I was going to talk about Sammy Wilson's comments, but he has left, so I will come back to him.

A Member: He is here.

Mr Attwood: I know he is here, but I am going to respond to Mr Dickson's comments, because he said that the parties who opposed welfare reform were running away from the issue and had no meaningful plans or proposals. The last time I checked, the Alliance Party had a relationship with the Liberal Democrats, and the Liberal Democrats are now resiling from the bedroom tax. They are the people who are saying that there is a better plan than the bedroom tax. Even they are saying there are better proposals than the bedroom tax, yet Mr Dickson

pretends to himself that somehow there is no better plan or proposal. He says that we just have to accept reality.

Tell the people who will lose £750 million in benefits. Tell all the small shopkeepers who will lose the business of the people who lose those benefits. Tell those people to accept reality.

Mr McCallister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: I will in a second.

This is the time to stand and fight, because if you roll over now, when the £12 billion of welfare cuts come between now and 2020, you will roll over then again.

Mr Wilson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: I will in a second. This is the time to stand and fight and not roll over.

I will give way to Mr Wilson in a second. Mr Wilson always gives the game away, and how does he do that? In my view, this was one of his most inadequate speeches. It was a rant, if that is not unparliamentary, that flew in the face of facts and evidence. Let me ask the Minister this: does he agree with what Mr Robinson said in his 'Belfast Telegraph' article of a couple of weeks ago, where he said that the reforms that were being proposed and the mitigations that might be agreed would create in Northern Ireland :

"a more generous welfare system than any other part of the UK?"

Does he agree with that? Did he agree with the First Minister when he said that Labour's proposal to dump the bedroom tax was already what had been agreed in Northern Ireland when he added that DUP and Sinn Féin had proposed to remove the bedroom tax for existing tenants and give up to £30 million in hardship funds? Do you agree with that? If you agree with those comments, how do you reconcile that with what has happened in Scotland, where, from this month, no tenant, existing or future, pays the bedroom tax? How can you put it in the paper that we will have the most generous welfare system when even what you proposed on the bedroom tax and what Martin McGuinness agreed to before Gerry Adams pulled the rug from under him is less generous than what is in Scotland?

If there is anything that we should be doing, given that the First Minister now agrees with the SDLP that we need to have negotiations, it is preparing for those negotiations and preparing for the abolition of the bedroom tax. If it is not the abolition of the bedroom tax, it is that the bedroom tax is imposed on no citizen, no tenant, future or present, in Northern Ireland on the far side of that negotiation. That is the position of strength, and the DUP have misled, in my view, the people of Northern Ireland in that statement from Peter Robinson in the 'Belfast Telegraph'.

Mr McCallister: Will the Member give way?

Mr Attwood: I will give way to Mr Wilson.

Mr Wilson: I thank the Member for giving way. I hate to stop him when he is on a bit of a roll. Will he accept that, under the tutelage of his Ministers, the Assembly agreed the bedroom tax for the private sector, it agreed that the changes in ESA, which account for about £100 million of the cuts, should go through by accelerated passage and it agreed the disability assessment changes in 2010? All

of those are part of the £750 million of cuts that he is now ranting about.

Mr Attwood: Will the Member agree that, when I was Minister for Social Development, in complete breach of the ministerial code, I unilaterally would not table regulations that imposed hardship on our citizens? Not only would I not agree to it, I at least went and told Lord Freud the DWP Minister that I was not going to do it. Do you know what happened, Mr Deputy Speaker? Nothing happened. Even though I unilaterally decided to break parity and to refuse to table regulations, neither Treasury nor DWP ever took one bean from the Northern Ireland Budget, never mind impose any other penalties. In any case, when that welfare reform was going forward — we should all learn from the excesses of that welfare reform — we built into the legislation not these procedural advantages that the Minister has negotiated but hard mitigation for our citizens, especially those in need.

I welcome Sinn Féin to the SDLP position. They would not sign a petition of concern at Second Stage. They went to the Sinn Féin ard-chomhairle and could not get agreement on the Robinson/McGuinness package. I invite Sinn Féin to support us now in the negotiations that we are about to have with London.

12.30 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

The Business Committee has arranged to meet immediately after the lunchtime suspension. I propose, therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm. The first item of business when we return will be Question Time, after which this debate will resume.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.29 pm.

On resuming —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Finance and Personnel

Mr Deputy Speaker: We will start with listed questions, and I point out that question 2 has been withdrawn.

Rates: Foyle

1. **Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on how the revaluation of non-domestic rates will affect the Foyle constituency. (AQO 6652/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):

I am pleased to say that Land and Property Services (LPS) remains on target to deliver the new values that will be used in non-domestic rates bills from 1 April 2015 onwards. LPS has already completed draft valuations of all 72,500 non-domestic rateable properties in Northern Ireland. Individual values will continue to be refined by LPS valuers over the coming weeks, and a breakdown of the revaluation effects by sector and by council will then be available on the basis of the new 11 district council areas. Figures showing the effects of the revaluation at a constituency level are, therefore, not available at this stage. In many ways, the effects of the revaluation will not be fully understood until the new district and regional rate poundages are known.

Mr P Ramsey: I thank the Minister for his response and for responding quickly to my request for a meeting, which is taking place next week with some of the traders.

One of the fundamental concerns of retailers in the walled city is that, literally yards outside the walls, some retailers in accommodation with the same square footage pay much less. What is the justification for retailers within the walled city paying exorbitant rates? Can the Minister give any explanation?

Mr Hamilton: The Member and I will meet, I think, next Monday, and he is bringing along some traders from Londonderry to have a conversation. I hope, on the one hand, to explain why things are the way they are and, on the other hand, perhaps to give a little hope that the revaluation may be the answer for some if not all of those traders.

As the House will appreciate, the purpose of the revaluation is not to increase the overall rates take across Northern Ireland; it is to get a fairer balance. It is about addressing exactly the sort of situation that the Member talks about in which traders in one part of a city or in one town maybe think that they are being disadvantaged compared with traders or businesses in another part of the city or, indeed, another town.

There are no guarantees for Londonderry, as there are no guarantees for Newtownards or any part of Northern Ireland. However, you would expect, where the rent increase on the basis of April 2013 is below the average of what it was back in the early part of the century, rateable values to go down and, where the converse applies,

rateable values to go up. There will be some winners, some losers and many who remain the same.

It is too early to say what the situation will be in the Member's constituency or, indeed, in any constituency, but what is developing at this early stage is that the value of the list has increased by somewhere between 5% and 10% and that certain towns will do better than others, as will certain parts of towns. We expect — indeed, we anticipated this with the large retail levy — that edge- and out-of-town shopping centres will have a significant increase in their rateable value and, perhaps to balance that out, the rateable value of some town centres — not all — will go down.

Mr Campbell: On the issue of winners and losers in town centres, will the Minister outline whether there will be any hardship assistance for losers, particularly in urban centres — small traders and shop owners in those locations — that have lost out significantly?

Mr Hamilton: One of the things that I and, indeed, my predecessor — he was the Minister who initiated the revaluation some years ago — have been at pains to stress at all times is that there will be winners, there will be losers and there will be many who remain the same. We have consistently tried to communicate that, but I am not convinced that the message has always got through. I think that there are some in business who believe that the revaluation will be a panacea — to borrow the First Minister's word from yesterday — for all their problems. I am afraid that the news for some is that it will not be a panacea, and some rateable values will go up.

As I said in response to the original question from Mr Ramsey, even if somebody's rateable value goes up, we will not know whether that means an increase in the rates bill on the previous year until we and the councils strike our elements of the regional and district rate respectively. Some people will see a hit and an increase. That is something for which, in the past, we certainly would have introduced a transitional relief scheme. At this time, a transitional relief scheme would be complicated by the fact that there will be council mergers. The Member's constituency is in an area where four councils will come together. The basis on which you would work out an accurate transitional relief is complicated by the fact that you are merging all those different councils and different rates.

Shortly, I will announce the details of the rates convergence scheme that we will put in place, and that may deal with some of the problems. We are reviewing the small business rate relief scheme as well. I am waiting for the Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy (NICEP) to come back with conclusions on that. That will assist some losers as well. It needs to be done on the basis of what valuations actually come forward finally. If necessary, the Department and I are open to looking at a scheme that would deal with the ratepayers who are worst affected on the basis of an analysis of how many there are and to what extent they are worse off.

Mr Maskey: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. The Minister may have alluded to this in his last response, but can he review the rate relief scheme so that we can ensure that we maximise the survival rates for businesses, particularly in the light of the ongoing financial difficulties?

Mr Hamilton: The small business rate relief scheme has now been in existence for a number of years and has been extended twice in its lifetime, to the point at which, with it and other support that we offer as an Executive to business ratepayers, over half of the business properties in Northern Ireland get at least 20% off their rates bill. That is something that the House should be immensely proud of. It was right that we stepped in when we did and introduced the support that we did. Many businesses in Northern Ireland are still trading in part because of the help that we have been able to offer them through rates relief.

It was introduced as a recessionary measure. It was there to get businesses through the very difficult years that we have been through and out of which we are now starting to emerge. Although I think that there are clear arguments that we are in economic recovery, I do not think that it is uniform. It is patchy. Certain sectors, including retail, which is one of the main beneficiaries of small business rate relief, are still struggling and, I think, will need some further support to see them through at least another year, if not longer. That is why, rather than, as the legislation required, bringing the scheme to an end, I initiated the commissioning of a review to be carried out by NICEP. It has been engaging in consultation over the past number of months. I am due to get its report very soon. I will need to bring back the conclusions to the Executive and this place very quickly thereafter so that, if we want to extend the scheme, change it slightly or adapt it, we can have that in place for April next year and help out some more businesses at the end of the recession.

Devolution: Enhanced Measures

3. **Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has requested a meeting with Treasury officials to be briefed on the pre-referendum proposals for enhanced devolution measures for Scotland. (AQO 6654/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Government have not yet formally set out any proposals for enhanced devolution for Scotland, so I have not requested at this stage a meeting with Her Majesty's Treasury.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Perhaps the Minister will note that the question asked about a briefing on the pre-referendum proposals, but anyway.

Does he accept that it would be helpful to publish an independent comparison of the measures on welfare reform for Scotland with those that are proposed for this region?

Mr Hamilton: I was before the Finance and Personnel Committee last Wednesday. Over the course of the session, one of the issues that came up repeatedly was the plethora of information from a range of sources around welfare reform, whether they be governmental sources here in Northern Ireland or in London or, indeed, charities or other organisations that have produced analyses of the effects of welfare reform on Northern Ireland. The very clear message coming from the Committee was that it would be important that I, as Minister of Finance and Personnel, perhaps commission a piece of work that came up with, I suppose, an authoritative view on what the effects would be. That is something that I had myself been thinking about and, indeed, that the Executive

had discussed but had not taken forward collectively. Therefore, it is something that I am prepared and content to try to do. It would be done and, I hope, it would be received in the spirit of an independent, authoritative view on the best estimate, given the figures and complexities, of what the effects, good and bad, would be, what the costs are and what the costs of an IT system etc might be. That is work that I will do.

Of course, within that, there is scope to look at what is happening elsewhere and what may happen in Scotland. It is important to note that, whilst many things have been promised to the people of Scotland, it is not yet clear what they are going to get. From my perspective, on first analysis of what was on offer to the Scottish people around welfare, it did not strike me as being massively dissimilar to what we have. Scotland would have legislative devolution and authority for welfare, but any changes made or any differentiation from parity would come at a cost to the Scottish people, and they would have to find that money for themselves. That is exactly what we have at the minute. That is what is causing us problems. For us to do anything over and above what the Scots may or may not get, it has to be viewed from the perspective that there is clearly not the maturity in this place to take some very difficult decisions with the powers that we have, never mind getting additional ones.

Mr Kinahan: Yesterday, the First Minister gave us an indication of one or two fiscal measures that he is looking for. Does the Minister have a draft shopping list of enhanced devolution measures that he would like to see in Northern Ireland? Will he elaborate on what they might be?

Mr Hamilton: There are some in the House — we know who they are — who want to take a maximalist approach to the devolution of fiscal powers. My view on the devolution of any fiscal power is that it has to pass two tests. One is affordability. That is incredibly important in a region like ours, which is dependent to the tune of £10 billion a year on a subvention from London. This is an incredibly difficult hurdle to pass in respect of fiscal devolution or tax-varying powers being devolved to the Assembly. Take income tax, for example. Every percentage point that you reduced it would cost our spending power as an Executive around £90 million. The same is true for other duties and taxes. If you want to move in a downward direction, there is a cost.

I do have a shopping list. It is one that, I think, all of us in the House have, with a few notable exceptions. At the top of that shopping list is corporation tax. Whilst a discussion will naturally flow from what happened in Scotland last week — something that will continue to be played out in the weeks and months ahead as the Union as we know it undergoes a degree of change, driven mostly by Scotland — it is important that the House, the Executive and all of Northern Ireland do not lose sight of our number one objective, which is the devolution of corporation tax. It is a sizeable, chunky, costly power to devolve, but it comes with, I believe, considerable benefits. We must continue to focus on corporation tax. I think that we are this close to getting those powers and should not be distracted by chasing moonbeams such as income tax or VAT, which we cannot legally get, or other powers that we might be able to get but that would not have the transformative economic effect that corporation tax would have.

Mr McCarthy: I am glad that the Minister mentioned corporation tax. Does he agree that a lower rate of

corporation tax, by itself, will not be effective and that we would need to invest in other drivers, such as skills, to take us into the future?

Mr Hamilton: I wonder why the Member might highlight skills in particular as something that might need future investment.

The Member is right: if we get the power — I believe that we are incredibly close to getting it now that the Scottish referendum is out of the way, and there is no excuse for the Prime Minister to delay in giving us a clear indication that we will get the power — then it is over to us, in many respects, not just to pass legislation in the House but to get ourselves ready for the time when, in a few years, we would have a significantly lower corporation tax rate. It was never about just having a significantly lower rate of corporation tax. Work would need to be done in advance to ensure that we were ready for that moment and could seize the opportunity that a lower rate of corporation tax would present in Northern Ireland. Of course, that would require continued and perhaps even increased investment in certain areas, such as what Invest Northern Ireland does in projecting a positive image of Northern Ireland as a place to invest. You cannot project that image if you do not have substance behind it. One bit of that would be having lower corporation tax, which would attract types of companies to invest in Northern Ireland that have not done so before.

However, we also have to ensure that if somebody comes and invests in Northern Ireland and brings 1,000 high-tech, highly skilled, high-paid jobs that we have 1,000 people with the skills that are required to do that. So, it will be an incredibly challenging situation in which, on the one hand, we are reducing our public spending because of the cost of corporation tax, which could be in excess of £300 million a year and rising, but, on the other hand, we still need to invest. That is why it is silly for some in this House who want to pursue and are supportive of the devolution of corporation tax to fritter away tens of millions of pounds and, ultimately, hundreds of millions of pounds paying welfare reform penalties when we are already facing budgetary challenges and face the very real prospect of further reductions as the price for getting corporation tax.

2.15 pm

Rates: Landlord Liability

4. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he is aware of any increase in instances of landlords who breach verbal assurances that rates liabilities will be included in rental payments. (AQO 6655/11-15)

7. **Mr Anderson** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has considered changing rating legislation in relation to landlord liability. (AQO 6658/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to group questions 4 and 7, as they both relate to landlord liability. I am aware of a number of cases where the landlord has taken payment from the tenant in respect of rates as part of a tenancy agreement but not passed payment on to the Department. In respect of those disputed cases, I can confirm that there has not been a recent increase in the number of instances.

My Department has already taken legislative steps to clarify the position on landlord liability. Primary legislation was introduced earlier this year to remove complex tenancy criteria from legislation. I will also be taking forward new legislation later in the year to standardise landlord allowances. Both changes arose from public consultation last year. I have also asked my officials to look into the issue next year, with a view to more fundamental reform. It is a difficult area, and we need to be careful that we do not stray too far from the principle that rates are charged for services as well as a local tax. The current arrangements, however, do confuse, hence the need for a radical rethink. In doing so, it is important that other changes affecting landlords, such as direct payment of housing costs under universal credit, are taken into account.

Mr McElduff: I thank the Minister for his reply. Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil leis an Aire. I further ask the Minister whether he accepts that the current valuation threshold may be set too high to provide appropriate protection for tenants?

Mr Hamilton: The current threshold of £150,000 of capital value was amended and increased on the basis of the last domestic revaluation, which was around 2006-07. It was set a little higher. It probably should have been a little lower, but it was increased and set at £150,000. The reason why it was set at £150,000 was that it was found, on analysis, that properties with a lower capital value had a much more transient population; therefore, there was difficulty sometimes in finding rating liability, whereas those over the £150,000 threshold tended to be properties that were rented by people who remained in situ for much longer.

You can move that figure up or down, but the essential issue here is that, for a small number of people — and I accept that it is a small number of people — any threshold is, apparently, an incredibly traumatic experience for those who go through it and believe that they have paid their rates, and they then find out that they have not and the liability is still there. I do not deny that. I am not so much focused on what the threshold is; it is whether now, as part of what I outlined in the initial response to the Member, we should have a threshold at all.

Mr Anderson: I thank the Minister for his responses thus far. You touched on the issue of bringing in legislation to close the loophole. What advice can you give to those people, although few in number, who have been caught in that situation and to those who, in the future, hope to move into the private rented sector?

Mr Hamilton: The one thing that I will say is that the legislation is clear but perhaps not well understood. Section 20 of the 1977 Order makes it clear that, where the capital value is less than £150,000, responsibility lies with the tenant to pay the rates bill. I know that Land and Property Services has attempted to communicate that in various ways through landlord representatives and Housing Rights Service, but it is clear that perhaps the message is not always getting through to the people who need to get it.

In those rare circumstances where it comes up as an issue — many Members have raised various individual cases with me in the past — Land and Property Services will attempt to be as understanding as it possibly can within the current legal position and will try to work with people to

ensure that the rates are paid in as flexible and sensible a way as possible.

That is the current position; there are some changes going through this year, as I have outlined, but I am keen to look at perhaps a more radical approach and a radical rethink to ensure that this type of problem, whether small in volume or not, does not arise in future at all.

Mr Swann: I thank the Minister for his answer. He will be aware that, for a property valued between £55,000 and £150,000, if the rent is paid quarterly the landlord is liable for rates but if it is paid monthly the tenant is liable for rates. Does he intend to change that in legislation or even to make tenants more aware of that anomaly?

Mr Hamilton: It is a subject that has clearly provoked a lot of interest in the House. If the volume of correspondence and queries via the Committee are anything to go by, there is a mood for us to do something in respect of it. In broad sweeping terms, I am keen to look at how we can remove any doubt whatsoever from the situation and that it will always be the case, irrespective of how the rent is paid or the capital value of the property, that it is the landlord who is responsible.

I say that in terms of a general policy direction; there are issues that have to be considered very carefully before we end up, potentially, at that destination. It would be, as I said earlier in response to Mr McElduff, a fundamental change in the underpinning principle of rates, which is that it is a payment for services and not a payment for the property itself. We have to be very careful about breaking that principle. Because of that, and because of the fundamental shift that it would be, we have to consult very carefully, particularly with landlord interests to ensure that whilst they may not be sympathetic or supportive — most landlords do a good job and do what they are meant to do — they understand the reasons why we are thinking about heading in that particular direction.

Welfare Reform: Financial Cost

5. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the annual financial cost to the Executive of the package of proposed mitigating measures for welfare reform being proposed by the Minister for Social Development. (AQO 6656/11-15)

14. **Mr Hazzard** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to confirm the amount of money the British Government has deducted from the 2014-15 Budget to facilitate the continued standard of welfare provision for vulnerable people as opposed to implementing their proposed reductions through welfare reform. (AQO 6665/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will answer questions 5 and 14 together. The UK Government have confirmed that the Northern Ireland block allocation will be reduced by £87 million in 2014-15 for non-adherence to the welfare reform initiative. Should the stalemate on welfare reform continue, this cost will be £114 million next year and will quickly escalate to over £200 million a year. Of course, this does not include the substantial costs of securing an IT system to deliver welfare payments in Northern Ireland.

The Minister for Social Development has proposed a range of measures that will soften the impact of some of

the most controversial aspects of welfare reform. While some of these measures will have a cost attached, it will be ultimately for the Executive to determine the level of funding they set aside for this purpose. The estimates of these costs are small when considered against the costs of not progressing welfare reform.

Mr Beggs: I thank the Minister for his answer. I understand the cost of mitigation to be of the order of tens of millions of pounds. Therefore, it would have a significant impact on our overall Budget. Will the Minister explain why he attempts to solely blame the difficulties in the health service on welfare reform rather than on his failure to review the annual Budget and take these very significant changes that have occurred into context in that Budget and do it in a planned fashion rather than in the inefficient, unplanned fashion that is happening with the cuts at present?

Mr Hamilton: It is very clear that the Member who was sitting in the Chair yesterday during the debate on the Budget was not listening to a word that was said in that debate. It was very clear from what I said in that debate — I have been consistent throughout — that welfare reform is a problem. We have already lost £13 million from our ability to spend as a Government. That might be a small amount in the grand scheme of things, but it is £13 million that could and should have been spent on public services in Northern Ireland.

We are preparing to remove a further £87 million, which is the equivalent of 2·3% of reductions to all Departments excluding Health and Education. It is an issue that is growing and growing and growing as a problem. It will be £114 million next year and £200-odd million each year after that. I thought that that was something that the Ulster Unionist Party had some sympathy for; I thought that it was supportive of my party's pressing for welfare reform legislation to be passed. Perhaps, however, there is a new dispensation, again, in the Ulster Unionist Party where it is having a different position on welfare reform — having, of course, been the party that went to the polls in 2010 on a manifesto that called for the welfare reform that is going through.

I have never denied that there are other pressures in the Budget. We have basically “flat cashed” our resource budget from 2010, which, again, were spending plans in the Tory party manifesto which, of course, the Ulster Unionist Party was fully signed up to in 2010. We also have a range of other departmental and Executive pressures that have been building up, and they add up into the difficulties that we are having with our finances. If I had welfare legislation passed and I could get that £87 million and not have to hand it over to Treasury, it would not solve all of the problems, but it would go a hell of a long way to mitigating some of the worst problems that we are dealing with in our Budget in this year.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer to date. Given that his Scottish counterpart and, indeed, their colleagues in the SNP, have negotiated quite extensive additional flexibilities within welfare protection in Scotland — in fact, Ivan Lewis has come out publicly today to say that the people of the North of Ireland deserve a bespoke welfare system — can the Minister outline what he is doing to gain such additional flexibilities for the people of the North who are so reliant on welfare?

Mr Hamilton: I knew that Martin McGuinness had agreed a package on mitigating measures for welfare reform. He told us that he took it to his party and his party did not agree, but it is clear from that comment that not everybody in the party saw what the measures were. A package of mitigating measures — far in excess of what the Scots have got — has been negotiated by Nelson McCausland, the Minister for Social Development. It is a package of measures that includes ensuring that the much-hated bedroom tax does not affect anybody who is already a tenant in Northern Ireland. It also includes a series of issues and flexibilities around the payments of direct payments to landlords, split payments and more frequent payments, which is not the default position in the rest of the United Kingdom. It is a package of measures that contains support and help for some of the most vulnerable in Northern Ireland who may have had difficulties moving from the current welfare situation to where they might be after welfare reform.

Let us not forget this: on DSD's estimation, the majority of people in Northern Ireland will be no worse off or better off as a result of welfare reform. Less than a third of people would be in a difficult position as a result of it all and, therefore, needing not as much help as the rest of the people who would benefit from it all.

The Member talks about a situation in which we should go and ask for what Scotland has. Every time that I have met with the Scottish Finance Secretary, John Swinney, he has been looking to get exactly what we have — exactly what we have. Yet there are some in the House who, when they have got all that they can get, when everybody from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to the Secretary of State to the Deputy Prime Minister to the Prime Minister himself tell them that negotiations have ended and that there is no more to come, still dig in and demand more. We have a very attractive package. It will not solve everything in respect of welfare reform, but it will mitigate the worst problems for people in Northern Ireland in a way that people in England, Scotland and Wales will not benefit from.

Mr Allister: The Minister has explained the immense difficulties imposed by not proceeding with welfare reform, particularly with the figures £87 million and another £114 million and £200 million a year, and we have all seen the chaos that that is creating. As an enthusiast for corporation tax, how would he ever hope to cope with a £400 million cut in the block grant if that ambition was achieved?

Mr Hamilton: I have long been an enthusiast for the devolution of corporation tax. That is a position that is supported by almost all of the parties in this place. I have been an enthusiast for what I believe to be the right reasons. There would be a cost; we accept that there would be a cost. Perhaps sometimes it is easy for some in the House to agree to the beneficial side of it, which would be somewhere between 50,000 and 70,000 higher-paid jobs coming into Northern Ireland over the next decade, but they do not always think about the downside of it. That is something that I have been incredibly mindful of and would expect to be mindful of, and you would expect me to be so in the job that I am in.

2.30 pm

I accept the point that the Member and, indeed, other Members made in the debate yesterday about a situation where you cannot deal with it. We hear the yelping and

screaming that there has been because of the reductions in-year and the reductions anticipated next year. That does look challenging in dealing with a situation like corporation tax. Whilst I am an enthusiast — I remain an enthusiast because I think that it is ultimately to the benefit of the Northern Ireland economy in creating those 50,000 to 70,000 higher-paid, higher-skilled jobs — it requires a degree of maturity on the part of some in this House that has not been on show up to this point.

It will necessitate sizeable reductions to public spending in Northern Ireland. Sizeable reductions are required because of the position that we find ourselves in with welfare reform. The lack of maturity on welfare reform does not translate well into dealing with a situation like corporation tax, but I still remain personally committed to doing it. We are incredibly close to having those powers devolved to Northern Ireland. It would be a shame if we were not able to do what we in this House all want to do — with a few notable exemptions — and reduce corporation tax because of a lack of political maturity on the part of Sinn Féin and the SDLP.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. That ends the period for questions for oral answer. We will now move to topical questions. Before I call Mr Jonathan Craig, I should tell Members that questions 5 and 6 have been withdrawn.

DOJ/PSNI: Budget Cuts

1. **Mr Craig** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he understands how the DOJ's budget reduction this year of over £40 million to the PSNI tallies with the Chief Constable's public comments that the PSNI's budget cuts for this year amount to over £80 million and to outline to the House the reasons for these cuts to the DOJ budget. (AQT 1481/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I thank the Member for his question. I know that he has a particular interest in this issue given his membership of the Policing Board. I have listened to at least two media reports where the Chief Constable has outlined the extent of pressures, reductions and cuts that his budget is facing in-year. I suppose that I took more interest in that because they do not tally precisely with the reductions that the Department of Justice is facing in-year. The Member is right to highlight that the Department of Justice budget is facing in-year reductions of around £30 million to £40 million. The police get the biggest chunk of the Justice budget, but that accounts for, I think, only around 66% of the total Department of Justice budget. So, what the Chief Constable is saying does not, on the face of it, tally with what is happening with reductions in-year.

I am aware that there are other pressures. The Member, given his membership of the Policing Board, will perhaps be better aware of some of the pressures that the police, in particular, are facing. There are issues around working time directives and security. There are also various other issues in the Department of Justice, such as legal aid, that are causing difficulties for the Minister. I presume — and I am only presuming — that the reason why higher cuts are being outlined by the Chief Constable is that it is a reflection of what needs to be done to deal with the overall pressures within the justice family as opposed to specific cuts being levied on the policing budget.

Mr Craig: Minister, thank you for that answer. You are not the only person who gets confused about policing

budgets. Would you be prepared to sit down with the Chief Constable to discuss this? Have you any comments to make around the fact that he has also outlined that he is being asked to reduce his budget by one seventh next year? The consequences of that will be horrendous. We are talking about the parking of all historical inquiries and the end of police recruitment. The House needs to face up to the reality that he is also discussing laying off 1,000 civilian staff. That is a direct consequence of what we were discussing earlier around welfare reform.

Mr Hamilton: Perhaps I should start by saying that I would rather that we were not passing on to the Department of Justice, the whole justice family and particularly the police, any reductions in spending capacity above and beyond what is necessary. I think that we all accept that times are tough. As I outlined to Mr Beggs earlier — hopefully he listened this time — we face a range of pressures that will necessitate cuts across the board. I do not want to see any reductions in the police budget above and beyond what is necessary.

I am more than happy to meet the Chief Constable and, indeed, anybody from the policing team. In fact, in January this year, I met, along with the Justice Minister, the then Chief Constable, Matt Baggott, and the action point from that meeting was that the Department of Finance and Personnel would engage at official level with the Department of Justice and the police. That did not start off as I had hoped; it was not done quickly enough or at the level that I had wanted. It has improved and is improving, and I hope that there will be opportunities for me to meet face to face with the Chief Constable. I am more than happy to meet him, primarily for me to get a better understanding of exactly what is going on, as, if I have a better understanding of what is going on, it helps me in discussions with the Executive and other Ministers about the real pressures that need our attention and ones that, perhaps, the overall justice budget can absorb itself. So, I am more than happy to have the discussion. However, the Member is right to highlight that there are consequences coming, and that will not be helped by the fact that we will have welfare reform penalties to pay, which will have a disastrous impact on justice and policing just as they will on health, education and other public services as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Ms Caitríona Ruane is not in her place.

Budget 2015-16: Preparatory Work

3. **Mr McKinney** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consultation and preparatory work is being done ahead of the 2015-16 Budget. (AQT 1483/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In December last year — I think it was 10 December — I tabled a paper to the Executive outlining at that stage — obviously things are quite fluid and change all the time — what I believed the challenges were for living within our means for the next financial year. It also set out a fairly extensive pre-consultation process where we could have involved a range of people from the community, business, the voluntary sector and various interest groups and could have had a gradual, slow process of building up towards formal agreement of the Budget. Unfortunately, like so much in this place, that was unable to proceed. It was not taken or examined by the Executive, and it was not discussed. It then got bogged down in the issue of welfare reform, and we quickly moved into the June monitoring

situation, where it was pointless for it to come forward until we knew exactly what was going on, or not going on, with welfare reform. The long and short of all that is that we are now in an incredibly challenging position in respect of our 2015-16 Budget.

Sometimes, in this place, there is a focus on getting the October monitoring round dealt with, and I absolutely accept that it is incredibly pressing and that urgent action is required in respect of the October monitoring round, but we should not lose sight of the fact that we do not have a Budget in place for next year yet. I would like ideally to get agreement on a draft Budget by the end of this month or the start of next month, enter into a 12-week consultation with the public and then come back with final Budget proposals by the end of this year. That is an incredibly challenging timetable. It would be challenging in any circumstances, but it is exacerbated by the fact that we have all the pressures that I was talking about before plus £114 million of welfare penalties next year and the potential of investment in IT costs next year as well. So, there is work going on, but it is not moving at a pace that I would like it to, and it is imperative that the Executive very quickly agree a draft Budget to give a degree of certainty across Departments about what next year will look like.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister. Given all the welfare debate that we have had over the last months, would there not be merit in a re-prioritisation in the Programme for Government, particularly around deprived areas, and a focusing on deprivation to help to alleviate some of the deprivation in those areas and maybe take some of the weight off the welfare reform discussion?

Mr Hamilton: As much as we may sometimes wish welfare reform would all go away, we cannot lose focus on the fact that we are arguably past decision point on this. It is now starting to infect our political discourse generally, but, particularly from my perspective, it is infecting our ability to do budgeting and finance properly in the Northern Ireland Executive. We need to do that because the second tranche of reductions in-year is related specifically to welfare reform and there may be other things that we want to fund in October monitoring, but £87 million has to be found to pay for the penalties and then £114 million next year and the IT costs as well. We should not lose sight of the issue or say that it is not an issue and that we can park it. It is absolutely core and central to the problems we face.

Whilst the Programme for Government is not my ministerial responsibility, other than the responsibility that I have for DFP-specific targets in it, the Member might like to know that a midterm review of our Programme for Government targets is ongoing, and the targets are being looked at in the context of having an additional year. Rather than a brand-new, full Programme for Government, Ministers are looking at extending existing targets and, when appropriate, introducing new ones. Progress is being made in developing a list of additional targets, some of which reflect emerging problems. As the situation has not largely changed, we will want to roll forward many of the issues in the existing Programme for Government. However, some things have developed, and Ministers will want to include them as new targets to try to work on in the final year of our mandate.

Perhaps the lack of a fundamental redrafting of the Programme for Government will not be to everybody's satisfaction, but I think that, in the circumstances we find

ourselves in, in which the Budget is challenging and time is pressing, the midterm review, many targets being rolled forward and the insertion of a few additional targets is the right way to go.

Written Questions: Failure/Refusal to Answer

4. **Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why he is showing such contempt to the House by failing to answer questions for written answer, given that, on 18 November 2013, Mr Allister tabled a question for written answer about a letter from Turkington Holdings to the Minister's Department and, despite the fact that that was a priority question and he has since tabled three reminder questions, the Minister, so far, has failed or refused to answer him. (AQT 1484/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I like to think that I know quite a lot about my brief — in fact, I know most of it — but I am not entirely familiar with the question the Member has asked about. If he wishes to have a word with me afterwards and give me the exact number of the question, I will look into it and see what we can do.

Mr Allister: I do not know how many times one has to ask the Minister, having tabled three reminder questions, but the question is AQW 28360/11-15. Will the Minister publicly commit to answering that question, and will he explain to the House why, despite the reminder questions and the fact that it was a priority written question, he has so far refused to answer the question? What is he trying to hide?

Mr Hamilton: The Member has given me the question number, and I will do what I committed to do in my previous answer. I will look at it and answer it if I am able to.

Budget 2014-15: Adjustment

7. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why he did not adjust the 2014-15 Budget in advance of the huge pressures on the health service this year and the significant costs from welfare reform clawbacks and mitigation, which he will have known about. (AQT 1487/11-15)

Mr Beggs: The Minister has previously avoided answering my question, so I have had to ask it again.

Mr Hamilton: The Member will be well aware that the Executive agreed a four-year Budget. That included a substantial increase in the allocations for health, above and beyond what other Departments received. As I pointed out yesterday in the debate when the Member was in the Chair — I am not sure whether he was listening at that point — in spite of the warnings of doom from the then Health Minister, Michael McGimpsey, about what would happen to the health service, those warnings did not come to pass.

I will remind the Member about the things that his party colleague Michael McGimpsey said at that time about what would happen to the health service and what happened in reality, because I do not think that the Member was listening yesterday. Michael McGimpsey told us that there would be around 4,000 job losses in the health service in this Budget period, when, in fact, the number of nurses has gone up by nearly 6%, the number of medical and dental consultants has gone up by 15%, and the number of allied health professionals has gone up by over 12%.

So that is another area in which Michael McGimpsey was wrong. He also told us that hospital waiting lists would rise, but, in reality, the number of people spending longer than 12 hours in emergency departments is down by over 73% from May 2011. Of course, he also famously told us that we would be in chapter 11 bankruptcy by 1 April 2011. He is in the House, and perhaps he could explain — I am happy for him to explain to me afterwards — why we would file for bankruptcy in an American court. We did not enter bankruptcy, of course, and the Minister, who is looming behind the Member's shoulder at the minute, found a further half a billion pounds of efficiencies and has committed to finding another £170 million this year.

Despite the doom and gloom predictions, there was an increase in health spending for this year, and the Minister has done an excellent job in ensuring that the inefficiencies that were there have been extracted from the system.

2.45 pm

Mr Beggs: The Minister has still failed to explain why he adjusted what could easily have been the provisional Budget. Does he acknowledge that many Ministers are saying that they are making cuts but not the cuts that they would have made had they had a choice? Rather, Ministers say that they have very limited choices to make unplanned in-year cuts, which is the most inefficient way to make cuts and savings in any Department.

Mr Hamilton: I will try to address the point. Making adjustments would necessitate new money, but there is no new money and no more money coming from London. I presume that the Member does not want to substantially increase rates, not that that raises a huge amount anyway, and I presume that his party still holds the position of opposing water charges. Therefore, we do not have any new money to play with. Money has to then come from existing budgets, and I do not hear anything from the Member or any of his party colleagues about where we would find the money to move to health or education or, indeed, to any other budget that might be deemed a priority. You can ask about new budgetary processes, as you did yesterday with a terribly worded motion that called for the redrafting of the Budget for three months of the year and showed a complete lack of understanding of the budgetary process in the House. However, the fundamental point is this: even if you redraft the Budget, you need to have money to do something substantially different with it. I hear nothing from the Ulster Unionist Benches or any Benches in the House about where we would find the money to do things radically differently or better with our Budget.

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Medical Staff: Local Retention

1. **Ms Fearon** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to retain nurses, midwives and doctors who are training at local universities. (AQO 6666/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): My Department invests approximately

£30 million each year in supporting the training of undergraduate nurses, midwives and doctors at local universities. Beyond graduation, my Department invests significantly in ensuring that health professionals continue to receive the highest-quality training and can therefore achieve rewarding careers in Health and Social Care (HSC). The attractiveness of what we offer is reflected in the comparatively high rates of retention of health professional graduates in the system here. The foundation programme for doctors is highly regarded, with 80% of training places filled by graduates from Queen's University Belfast (QUB) medical school. That is a much higher percentage of local medical school graduates than in any other region of the UK.

Similarly, we have a good record of retaining nurses locally after graduation. In 2011-12, for example, 79% of graduates from the School of Nursing and Midwifery at QUB were employed in Northern Ireland. However, we are not complacent and are working on strategies to encourage nursing graduates to remain here. We invest nearly £8 million a year in supporting the post-registration training of nurses. My Department is also scoping the cost of developing a graduate nurse programme for newly qualified nurses and has commissioned the Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery to develop career pathways to support all newly qualified nurses.

I also observe that HSC is a good employer, providing flexible conditions of service, including part-time working, term working etc that are attractive to graduates. It is inevitable that the highly qualified and motivated health professionals whom we produce are well regarded by other English-speaking health systems across the world. However, we have considerable success compared with other parts of the UK in retaining our health professionals after qualification.

Ms Fearon: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. How does he intend to encourage new graduates into the specific fields that we require most for our health service?

Mr Poots: I have given the responsibility for the education and training of nurses to the Chief Nursing Officer so that a much greater nurse-led focus will apply to the further training and upskilling of our nurses, and I think that that is wholly appropriate. Various strands of nursing and specialisms can be developed, along with the further upskilling of nurses who do so much more than they would have done 10 or 20 years ago, and there are still many opportunities. That is work that she will be engaged in.

Mrs Cameron: Will the Minister provide a breakdown of how much he is investing in the training of nurses?

Mr Poots: We invest around £30 million in total in the training of doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers. The nursing provision is an important component of that. The Department provides support by way of the payment of university fees to students taking up commissioned places. For 2013-14, that totalled some £14,629,000. In addition, £12,703,000 was paid by the Department to provide non-loan financial support in the form of bursaries to nursing and midwifery students at local universities. The Department also supported the post-registration training costs of nurses by £7,766,972. So, it is fairly evident that

we are very supportive of nurses in general, and we will continue to be.

Recently, I gave greater support to the training of health visitors. In 2011-12, 18 health visitors were trained. That figure moved up to 25 in 2012-13 and to 37 in 2013-14. However, I have approved the commissioning of 61 health visitors for 2014-15 to ensure that there will be sufficient numbers trained to meet the needs of the population. That is a very significant commitment, given the financial pressures that we are under at this time. However, I believe in Transforming Your Care, a key element of which is early intervention. Health visitors are an important, essential and critical component of that. Health visitors are also vital to the work that we are doing in family nurse partnerships and all of that, and that is why I am investing in them.

Mr Eastwood: What assessment is being made of the bank system to ensure that those who are qualified get full-time and permanent jobs?

Mr Poots: Given the nature of nursing, the bank system has been used and used successfully for many years. However, capability studies show that it is important that we have an adequate number of nurses in the first place, and the bank supplements that number at weekends, when someone is not available or takes ill or when nurses take holidays or whatever. The bank is merely to supplement the core workforce. I raised the issue of normative nursing when we were discussing the gap in the budget. Normative nursing is something that we are working towards and keen to bring to a conclusion. That was under threat and, I suppose, will remain so until, in the October monitoring round, we see where we stand. However, we are committed to ensuring that we can have what is described as normative nursing, which is approximately 1.3 nurses per patient.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Members, please note that question 11 has been withdrawn.

Mental Health Services: Western Trust

2. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he will decide on the location of acute mental health services in the southern sector of the Western Trust area. (AQO 6667/11-15)

Mr Poots: I cannot be precise about when a decision will be taken on the location of the facility. The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) report on the issue, which I received in May, was inconclusive, and I have now asked the Western Trust to develop a full business case to assist in determining the need for and location of the facility. It will take account of financial and value-for-money considerations, together with the findings of the board's report. After that, the timing of the project will be subject to budgetary availability, and the project will have to be considered alongside all other demands on the capital budget as we move to the next budgetary period, which commences in 2015-16.

Mr McElduff: I thank the Minister for his answer. He will be aware of my long-standing interest in the issue. Does his recent welcome decision to develop and enhance the addictions treatment unit in Omagh, together with the commencement of the building of the new hospital, provide compelling arguments for the retention and development of

acute mental health services there, where they have been professionally delivered for over 100 years?

Mr Poots: That was a good try by the Member to make the case. We will await the report and the recommendations that come from the Western Trust. Strong and cogent arguments are being made both for a facility in Omagh and for one at the South West Acute Hospital. I am not in a position to make a final decision at this point, but I am in a position to listen to all the arguments that are being put forward and consider them. I know that the issue is important at constituency level, but it is also important at a health level, which has to be where we place our priority.

Mr Byrne: I welcome the fact that the Minister has progressed the enhanced hospital in Omagh. Will serious consideration be given to the capacity and expertise on mental health that has been built up in the past in the Omagh area? Will that form part of the consideration process before a final decision is made?

Mr Poots: The fact that expertise exists in that area and that it has provided care for people in the past and currently will be part of the consideration. The problem with the argument being made for Omagh is that every other mental health facility will be beside an acute hospital. Had the decision been taken under the previous Administration to have an acute hospital in Omagh, as opposed to having the South West Acute Hospital, it would be an easier decision to make. We have a complex set of issues to go through before making a final decision, but we will give everything due and fair consideration.

Pay Restraints

3. **Mr McGimpsey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will be introducing pay restraint measures. (AQO 6668/11-15)

Mr Poots: In the absence of additional funding being provided for health and social care, it is now necessary to consider the implementation of a range of measures designed to address my Department's current funding gap. One of those is pay restraint. I have asked the Northern Ireland Executive to consider these measures and their potential impact on the citizens of Northern Ireland. The decision on pay will be taken forward following this consideration.

Mr McGimpsey: Bearing in mind the stress that many staff feel in attempting to deliver the service for patients and the fact that one of the key ingredients is having the right number of people in the right place at the right time with the skills necessary to address the needs of patients, is it wise to allow a situation to develop that may cause staff to consider industrial action concerning the proposed 1% pay rise, which is, let us face it, a very small amount?

Mr Poots: The situation is simple: I want to give them more than 1%. I want to give them the 1% plus their incremental pay rise. That is not what has happened in England, where it is either 1% or an incremental rise. I have raised the issue with the Executive twice.

At this moment, my budget falls £140 million short. If I were to introduce pay restraint, which would mean that staff would get a 1% rise or their incremental pay rise but not both, that would save £14.9 million. While the gap of £140 million remains unmet, this is an area that will be considered. It is really for the Executive to decide in the

October monitoring round how much money I will receive. I hope that the October monitoring round comes forward sooner rather than later, because I do not think that it is good for staff morale to have uncertainty on any of these issues. At least if we have some certainty, people will know what the situation is.

I am not holding back on giving a pay rise: there will be a rise of some description. Whether it involves pay restraint depends on the envelope delivered to me by my Executive colleagues.

3.00 pm

Mr Dunne: Does the Minister recognise public concern about bonuses — probably better known as clinical excellence awards — paid to consultants, and has he any plans to review them?

Mr Poots: We froze clinical excellence awards for the past two years. In fact, we are paying out less now for clinical excellence awards than was previously the case. I recognise public concern on this issue, and it is a difficult one.

First, these are now recognised as part of people's contracts, so taking clinical excellence awards away from people who have them will almost certainly leave us in the courts to make our case from a very weak base. The second element is that, in many of our hospitals, we are hearing the message that it is difficult to get and to retain consultants. That is particularly evident in the west of the Province, and, indeed, in hospitals such as Causeway. So, on one side, we have people arguing, "Well, you shouldn't be giving these consultants bonuses", and, on the other hand, arguing, "But we want all of the services, and those services can only be provided by having the consultants available to do the job". Sometimes — very often, in fact — people are asking for what is impossible.

If you want to get the consultants there, you are, on occasions, going to have to pay them to be there. We are competing in a global market for consultants. They are very skilled people, very sought after people worldwide, and we have many consultants here in Northern Ireland who could get jobs anywhere in the world. There is a high demand for people with those skills and capabilities. Maybe, sometimes, we would do well to appreciate just what we have in the work and skills that are provided through our consultants.

Mr McKinney: I think that we all understand that there are pressures. Can the Minister reassure the House that he is taking all measures possible to deal with admitted waste in the health service?

Mr Poots: Well, you see, I would never be one who would try to claim ridiculous things like, "There is no waste in the health service". Can we pinpoint every pound of waste? No, we cannot. Can we reduce waste? Yes, we can. Have we reduced waste? Yes. All of those things are important. We have saved £492 million over the last three years. We are saving a further £170 million this year. If I am asked to live with something less than £140 million, on top of £170 million, we are heading close to saving £0.75 billion over the course of the four years, while bringing down waiting times and waiting lists and increasing the number of nurses and doctors, consultants and allied health professionals. So, yes, I want to continue to drive out waste, because getting rid of it allows me to employ more people to do front line service jobs. The more that I can

employ people to do front line service jobs, the more I can ensure a better health service for the people, which is what we all want.

Workforce Planning Action Plan

4. **Ms McGahan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the workforce planning action plan flowing from the regional workforce planning group. (AQO 6669/11-15)

Mr Poots: The regional workforce planning group was established to take forward the specific proposals in 'Transforming Your Care' relating to workforce planning. The group is completing the development of a framework for workforce planning that will strengthen HSC workforce planning across the region and inform the basis for taking forward a programme of workforce reviews.

Whilst the framework is being finalised, my Department continues to lead on regional workforce planning, and a number of workforce reviews are in progress in relation to nursing, medical specialists and medicine. In addition, workforce planning is an essential element of several other reviews, going forward, such as the review of imaging services. These reviews will provide important evidence to help influence education-commissioning decisions. My vision for HSC workforce planning is to move towards a more integrated, flexible and responsive system that identifies the workforce numbers, skills, values and behaviours that patients and their families need today and into the future.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his response. Over the years, consultancy work has been conducted into workforce planning. Can you tell me how much that has cost?

Mr Poots: The Member has not been specific, so it is impossible to answer that question. We are spending around £1 million on the TYC consultation support that is being provided. The level of skills relating to very specific issues was not available in the HSCB, the Department or the trusts. That is why that support has been provided. It is being provided in the belief that we will save money — more than the £1 million that is spent — as a result of the work that is carried out on our behalf.

Mr Campbell: Will the Minister outline the impact that he has had on the numbers of key staff in the local health service workforce?

Mr Poots: In terms of where we are, in administration and clerical, if we look at the period between March 2011 and 2014, we see that that has changed; it has moved significantly downwards. In terms of qualified nurses and midwives, we have had a 5.7% increase. In terms of nursing and midwifery support, we have had a 3.1% increase. In terms of consultants, we have had a 15% increase. In terms of allied health professionals, we have had a 12.7% increase. In terms of allied health profession support, we have had a 21.7% increase. The whole-time equivalent number of nurses has moved up well. We will continue to seek to ensure that that is the case.

On the other side, administration and clerical has gone down from 12,693 to 11,054. Estate services has dropped from 697 to 694, and support services has dropped from 6,532 to 4,840. We have made changes to a series of things, which is to the good.

DHSSPS: Duty of Care

5. **Mr Rogers** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps his Department is taking to ensure its duty of care is fully exercised for all members of society. (AQO 6670/11-15)

Mr Poots: My commitment, my Department's commitment and the commitment of all those who work in Health and Social Care is to provide high-quality services that are safe, effective and person-centred. To achieve that, my Department develops priorities and objectives, and it sets standards for the provision of health and social care in Northern Ireland. We set targets to monitor performance; we listen to the experience of clients, patients and their families; and we ensure that professionals and services are appropriately regulated.

The Department's statutory duty in relation to health and social care is set out in section 2 of the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009. The Act places a duty on the Department to promote an integrated system of health care that is designed to secure improvement in the physical and mental health of people in Northern Ireland and in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness; and social care designed to secure improvement in the social well-being of people in Northern Ireland.

The Department does not provide services directly to the public. A total of 17 arm's-length bodies provide or contribute to the provision of health, social care and public safety services. In addition to its responsibilities for setting the policy and legal framework for those services, my Department is responsible for holding those bodies to account for the manner in which they govern themselves and the extent to which they deliver on my priorities.

My Department issues an annual commissioning plan direction to the HSC board and the Public Health Agency. The direction details my priorities and sets standards and targets to be achieved in any given year. In responding to the direction, the HSC board, in consultation with the PHA, produces an annual commissioning plan, which sets out the services to be commissioned.

Mr Rogers: I thank the Minister for his answer. I speak of a courageous young lady in south Down whom you know of who has spinal muscular atrophy and needs an uninterrupted supply of electricity in order to live. What can you, as Minister, do about the provision of a generator to ensure that she receives the same level of care as the rest of us?

Mr Poots: I know the young lady very well. She is a very brave young person who has done much in raising awareness of the particular condition from which she suffers. Her fortitude in how she manages that condition is a great encouragement to us all.

The matter has been dealt with quite extensively by the trust that provides the service for her, and I understand that she has particular concerns and worries about the circumstances should there be a long-term power failure. I know about the back-up battery provision that exists should the supply of electricity stop and the plans that have been put in place for a transfer to Thompson House in the event of a very, very long-term electricity cut-off. She has particular concerns and has not been fully reassured by the trust as yet. It is a matter for the trust and Mr Rogers's constituent to work out.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his answer to the question. In relation to the Department's duty of care, will the Minister give an assessment to the staff and the patients of the Royal Hospital on trolley waits last evening? Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Poots: I happen to know a fair bit about what happened in the Royal yesterday because a relative of mine went through the emergency department (ED): they went in at 11.30 am and were admitted to the ward before 3.00 pm. Sometimes, what you hear in the media and press does not accurately reflect what goes on.

There was certainly considerable pressure on the Royal yesterday, with 312 patients attending. It remained constant throughout the day. On average, the Royal sees 256 patients a day, so there was a considerable spike of close to 20% yesterday, and the consequence of that was that it was a very pressurised place. Emergency departments are pressurised places, and that is their nature.

We are doing considerable work, and I trust that, while Ms McLaughlin did not support my efforts to get more money at the Committee, her Executive colleagues in Sinn Féin will be more supportive than her. Some of the things we were looking for were money for domiciliary care to ensure that people can be discharged reasonably, money for the social work teams that carry out the discharge, money for radiology so that people will have the proper imaging at the hospital door, money to ensure that we can continue to invest in emergency departments and money for normative nursing. If Sinn Féin does not think that that is money well spent, it is a matter for Sinn Féin to bring to the public. We can really improve our flows in hospitals and ensure that our emergency departments operate more efficiently if we get that support.

It was suggested that the October monitoring round could actually be completed for the end of September. I hope that that is the case and that Sinn Féin does not cause any delays in it coming forward earlier rather than later, because it will help us make these very important decisions earlier, which will be to the benefit of the community.

Mr Kinahan: I thank the Minister for his answers so far. Does he believe that his Department is showing a duty of care to all those who walk through the doors of Antrim's A&E? The provisional figures for last month, which is meant to be the quietest time of year, showed that only 65% were treated within four hours, even though the target is 95%.

Mr Poots: If the Member's party had not closed the Mid-Ulster Hospital and the Whiteabbey Hospital at the same time and sent all of those people to Antrim ED, there might be less pressure on Antrim ED. However, that is the decision that his party made and supported, and the rest of us have to live and work with the consequences of that.

Subsequent to that, we have made significant investment in Antrim ED. We have built a new emergency department which is capable of dealing with 90,000 patients per year, we took on 40 more full-time nurses, and a considerable number of consultants are available to the department. So we are doing our best to ensure that the emergency department in Antrim Area Hospital is capable of dealing with the numbers that come through its doors, in spite of decisions made by the Member's party.

3.15 pm

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

6. **Mr Boylan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the allocation from the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme since January 2014. (AQO 6671/11-15)

Mr Poots: A pharmaceutical price regulation scheme (PPRS) has been in place for over 50 years. The latest PPRS started on 1 January 2014. A payment of £2.89 million in respect of the first quarter of the scheme — that is for the period 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2014 — was received by the Health and Social Care Board in June 2014.

The PPRS is a UK-wide scheme. The quarterly payments under the provisions of the scheme by the pharmaceutical industry are received by the Department of Health in London in the first instance and are then allocated to each of the devolved Administrations. The apportionments are agreed by the devolved Administrations each year. The payment in respect of the period 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2014 was made under the provisions of the apportionment methodology agreed for the 2013-14 financial year. The methodology for apportioning payments for the 2014-15 financial year has not yet been finalised.

It should be noted that the PPRS does not create new funding; rather, moneys will no longer be required to meet an increase in the branded drugs bill and will ensure that the existing budgets are not breached.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. In light of the Minister's answer, how does he propose that that allocation should be used and is it best value for money?

Mr Poots: One thing I noted when my predecessor was in place was that people regularly called for savings to be made through moving from branded drugs to generic drugs. My predecessor started to do that, and I have done a lot more work on that since coming into office. Therefore, we are spending less money on branded drugs. But people did not always say that that always had to be invested back into drugs. There are massive demands out there. Last year, for example, we needed something like an additional £6 million or £7 million for looked-after, vulnerable children because of additional numbers coming through. We also needed additional money for domiciliary care. So, this does not go back into some pot that says "drugs" and that cannot be used for something else. It goes back into the health service budget, and that budget has many stresses and strains, as everybody in this House should well know given the conversation that has been had over the past six or eight weeks.

Mr Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for questions for oral answer. We now move to topical questions.

Antrim Area Hospital: Challenges

1. **Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following his decision to install a turnaround team to deal with waiting time pressures at Antrim Area Hospital, to outline the challenges facing the hospital's new chief executive, Dr Tony Stevens. (AQT 1491/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are a number of key challenges in the Northern Trust area. I think that all trusts outside the Belfast Trust have particular challenges in having the requisite number of consultants available to them. That is an area where hopefully having someone who has real standing in the medical community will be able to attract people to Antrim Area Hospital. I see terrific work going on in that hospital, including in the labs, cancer units and so forth. Great service is being provided throughout the hospital. It had, for a long time, been the focus of a lot of negative attention relating to the ED. Whilst it is not perfect, it is certainly considerably better than it was two or three years ago. That negativity that existed around Antrim Area Hospital has diminished greatly over the course of the past two or three years, and that is something that we need to continue to work on with people like Dr Stevens to ensure that that remains the case.

Mr I McCrea: I thank the Minister for his response. Given the pressures that the Minister outlined in respect of his budget, does he feel that not receiving the £140 million that he believes is required to continue to run the health service will have an impact on the new chief executive's job?

Mr Poots: It almost certainly will. The Northern Trust has always had significant difficulties with historical funding, and it provides for the largest population of any trust. Whilst Belfast is a larger trust and is the centre for a lot of expertise, the Northern Trust has a larger population. So, it faces huge challenges, particularly when you get into areas of how we care for the elderly, vulnerable adults and all of that. There are massive pressures upon that trust, given the population that it serves and the budget that it has. People talk about the £140 million, which is the pressure that is unmet. We have already asked for £170 million of savings before that, which the Northern Trust and others are facilitating for us. I am encouraged that people want to take on the job of chief executive of a trust, because, whilst we can all criticise them and they will not always please us, it is an immensely difficult job to have to carry out, particularly when we are facing more and more demand and less and less resource.

Paediatric Cardiac Care and Surgery

2. **Mr Girvan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the international expert group on paediatric cardiac care and surgery. (AQT 1492/11-15)

Mr Poots: I thank the Member for the question. We sought specific advice on this issue, and we brought in key people to assist us on that. Professor Mayer came over and led a team from Boston in the United States of America to look into paediatric congenital cardiac care, and that has led to a report being produced, which is now with our Department and, indeed, the Department in the Republic of Ireland. At this stage, the Department in the Republic of Ireland is not ready to release the contents of that report, although I hope that that will change over the next month. I think that it is important that the public are aware of the recommendations at an appropriate time. There is one particular issue of concern to parents, their representatives and the various organisations that provide that support, and that was around surgical care being provided in Belfast. Regrettably, the conclusion that these key experts have come to is that the overall model for delivering children's and adults' congenital heart services

on the island of Ireland would not allow Belfast to sustain surgery at that site. That would mean that the vast majority of surgery would be carried out in Dublin.

Mr Girvan: I thank the Minister for his answer. He mentioned that the report has been compiled and is ready. When will it be published and made available for everyone to look through? I understand and appreciate that there seems to be some delay in the Republic of Ireland in allowing that to happen.

Mr Poots: One of the issues is that the Republic of Ireland has to develop more intensive care beds in their children's hospital. They are building a new children's hospital, but transferring all the surgery to Dublin at this time would put considerable pressures on them. They have work to do to respond appropriately to this. We are hoping that, over the next month, we will be in a position to make a further announcement on it. This, clearly, is a report, and it has recommendations. It is up to me to hear the views of the Assembly and others in arriving at a decision based on the recommendations. I think that the standing of the people who carried out the report is very important. You have Dr Mayer from the Boston Children's Hospital, Dr Adrian Moran from the Maine Medical Center and Dr John Sinclair from Yorkhill Children's Hospital. Nursing expertise was provided by Dr Patricia Hickey, also from the Boston Children's Hospital. We brought in people who have real expertise on the issue. They have made their recommendations, and we will have to give them serious consideration.

Rheumatoid Arthritis: Drugs

3. **Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress has been made on waiting times for specialist drugs for those who suffer from rheumatoid arthritis. (AQT 1493/11-15)

Mr Poots: I remember doing the door during the 2007 election and listening to someone who had been waiting for specialist drugs. It had been eight months since the individual had been recommended for drugs for rheumatoid arthritis. They could not bear the pain so, after two months, had started to buy the drug themselves on the basis that they would get it after nine months but had had warnings that the drug would be delayed even further.

I am glad to say that there has been a 65% reduction in the number of patients waiting for specialist drug treatment for arthritis, from 393 in June 2011 to 137 in June 2014. The number of patients who were waiting over three months for treatment in June 2011 was 290 compared with zero today. That was something that was reflected to us. Mr Wells brought rheumatologists and individuals who were suffering to see us, and we made a decision that people would not have to wait for the specialist drug. The drug is also used for the treatment of psoriasis, and the number of people waiting has moved from 48 in April 2012 to 18 in June 2014. The number waiting over three months for the treatment fell from 26 in April 2012 to one in June 2014. Considerable progress has been made on what is an expensive drug but one that, nonetheless, makes a dramatic difference to the well-being of individuals who use it.

Mr Weir: I thank the Minister for his response. It is good that progress is being made and to see improvements in that field. How difficult would it be to recover from any slippage in the waiting times for those drugs?

Mr Poots: Obviously, a considerable investment is involved to reduce the waiting times for the individuals concerned. If it becomes an annual issue, we will have to make a considerable investment again to pull back to the position that we are now in. It is important that we as an Assembly do not allow slippage. The issue should be important to us. People who were not employable are back in employment on the basis of receiving these drugs. They have normality in their life again, which did not exist because they were constantly in quite severe pain.

Consultancy Services: Legal Challenge

4. **Mr Rogers** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that when the framework for consultancy services was issued earlier this year, consultants were informed in early June whether they were on the list, with the process terminated in late June due to a legal challenge, how he can ensure that, if there is a rerun of the system, those who were successfully on the list for the first stage will not be disadvantaged second time round. (AQT 1494/11-15)

Mr Poots: That is a very good question about sustaining a legal challenge the second time round. That will obviously involve a course of work. We will work closely with the representative bodies to arrive at a conclusion whereby we can deliver as much as possible of what would be acceptable to the representative bodies and ensure that we can move forward with it in a very professional way.

Mr Rogers: Bearing in mind the delay for all concerned, is the money that was set aside for improvements across the trusts ring-fenced or is it to be spent during 2014-15?

Mr Poots: All these moneys will be identified at the start of the year for a particular service. If the money is not spent, it will be spent somewhere else because it certainly will not be handed back. In the meantime, we will seek a way forward and an agreement that is in everybody's interest.

A&E: Winter Pressures

5. **Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will reconsider the closure of the A&E department at Belfast City Hospital, given that winter pressures will soon be upon us, meaning that it is not good enough to hide behind that excuse, and he will be aware of the pressures over the past couple of evenings in Belfast hospitals, particularly the Royal Victoria Hospital. (AQT 1495/11-15)

3.30 pm

Mr Poots: I am not sure why the Member wants me to consider the closure of an emergency department that has not been open for a period.

If the Member had followed the health brief particularly well, she would have heard that it is our intention to open up facilities in Belfast City Hospital to ensure that general practitioners will be able to directly admit mainly older people who have respiratory or renal conditions and to use facilities there for a medical assessment unit. So, many older people will not have to go through an emergency department to be admitted to hospital. All their tests will be run at the City Hospital, after which admittance will be allowed, although, if a different decision is arrived at by the consultants, that will not be the case. That is the plan for

this winter, and I am glad to be able to inform the Member of that.

Mrs D Kelly: I assure the Minister that I follow the health brief closely. Minister, you will know that my question was about reviewing the decision to close A&E services. I understand that it was always the case that the closure was to be temporary. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you and others will forgive me for doubting Ministers when they use words and phrases like “shortly” and “in due course”, because what they are referring to seldom happens. Is it now the case, Minister, that there is no money for Transforming Your Care and that you are relying on monitoring rounds to plug the gaps?

Mr Poots: Of course, TYC came after the Budget, so it was never part of the original Budget. It has always been reliant on monitoring rounds. I know that the Member does not sit on the Committee, so she may not understand the issues as well as she might otherwise, but that has always been the case, so it is not a breaking story today.

We have managed to invest £40 million in TYC. I would like to have invested more at this point, but we are making a dramatic difference. The Member might not like to hear about it, but ongoing work on atrial fibrillation will ensure that 150 fewer people in Northern Ireland suffer from stroke than is currently the case. That will not make headlines, because the fact that you have not had a stroke is not news, but for the 150 people who do not have a stroke, we will take great pride in delivering that through Transforming Your Care. That is what we mean when we talk about prevention and early intervention to get better medical outcomes.

We now have elderly people who get blood transfusions and IV antibiotics in their own home. We have cancer patients who are getting treatments in their own home that were not previously available. That is Transforming Your Care in action, and that is where we are progressing to. That is why I am totally committed to Transforming Your Care, despite Members on her Benches questioning, for some considerable time, whether we should be doing it.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Time is up. Before we return to the welfare cuts debate, I invite Members to take their ease while we change the top Table.

(Mr Principal Deputy Speaker
[Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair)

Private Members' Business

Welfare Cuts

Debate resumed on amendment to motion:

That this Assembly notes with deep concern the disastrous impact of welfare cuts in Britain, particularly on the most vulnerable in society, including families on low income, those with disabilities and those who are unemployed; asserts that a modern, caring society should place the protection of its most vulnerable citizens at the very top of its agenda and calls on the Executive to oppose this Tory cuts agenda. — [Mr Maskey.]

Which amendment was:

Leave out all after “notes” and insert

“the negative impact of elements of the current welfare reform agenda in Great Britain; welcomes the proposed package developed by the Minister for Social Development in conjunction with the First Minister and deputy First Minister in the summer of 2013, which will mitigate the most negative elements of welfare reform; and calls for the implementation of this revised and improved welfare reform package for Northern Ireland to avoid the unsustainable cost of opting out of welfare reform, which will impact on public services, the most vulnerable in society, including families on low income, people with disabilities, people who are unemployed and the thousands of public servants who will face unemployment.” — [Mr Wilson.]

Mr McKinney: I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate today. I support the motion and oppose the amendment.

Saying a fundamental no to Tory cuts has to be the starting point for negotiation. Ultimately, whether the DUP likes it or not, further movement on some of these issues could emerge from talks, and I will touch on those later.

It is worthwhile pointing out that the motion talks about the disastrous impacts that welfare reform would bestow.

Even the DUP, in its amendment, admits that there would be a “negative impact”. At least, we have got agreement on something.

I will spell some of that out from a financial and health perspective. We are being asked to deliver over £750 million of cuts as part of our contribution to over £19 billion that the UK Government want to save. We are 3% of the population being asked to deliver 4% of the cuts. It is unfair. If we had a direct read-across of population to cuts, we would be £200 million a year better off. Surely that is worth arguing for.

Mr Weir: I thank the Member for giving way. Is there not a dangerous element of logic in that? If we are saying that we will take 3% of the cuts because that is our population base, the Government could turn around and say that we should get only 3% of the overall welfare budget, which would be an enormous cut in our figure. Surely you cannot have your cake and eat it in that regard.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McKinney: At least we are now getting into the space that I will arrive at in my contribution, which is about agreeing in a consensus form what it is that we are saying to the Treasury. At the moment, we are not.

The moneys are huge and will have major implications for all. We have already heard how three of the worst-off districts most affected by the reforms are in the North, not in the Tory heartlands. Although the impact has not fully been felt here yet, it has been in the rest of the UK. For example, in Wales, another in-depth study — this time by Citizens Advice — found that many have been left struggling to maintain a minimum standard of living and are now forced to make a choice between eating and heating. The study also found that those with mental health problems were most adversely affected. At this stage, it should be noted that the coalition Government have come in for huge criticism for not carrying out a cumulative impact assessment of how welfare reform will affect that vulnerable group of people.

In Scotland, the organisation GPs at the Deep End, a group of over 100 GPs in the most disadvantaged areas of Scotland, has found that the welfare reform package — not elements of it but in its entirety — will be detrimental to the poorest in society. So alarmed are they that they have called on the Government to act to avoid a potential social disaster. Some of our sick and vulnerable people will fall victim to welfare reform. The Macmillan cancer charity has done a specific piece of work that demonstrates the effect that the personal independence payment will have on people with cancer. Its research, which is, once again, in-depth research, shows that PIP is just not responsive to the needs of cancer patients. Macmillan's research shows that people with cancer are waiting up to six months before they receive the support to which they are entitled. That is an absolute disgrace.

We have evidence from elsewhere, concern for here and, as we have heard, a fraying among the coalition over its own plans. What can we do? We can create a strong argument based on political consensus around recognition that we have a legacy issue here: 40 years of violence, long-term mental ill health, deprivation and unemployment. Tory welfare cuts — “reform” as they describe it — were about people getting out of welfare and into jobs. What jobs? In particular, what jobs are there in our most disadvantaged areas? We have no consensus on what is in reality a problem shared across all the constituencies reflected in the House. Instead, we have the DUP behind closed doors at Downing Street saying one thing and Sinn Féin behind closed doors saying another. That is a failure for our people. That experience shows us that there is room for renegotiation based on the consensus that our people are worse off but deserve better. Indeed, if there is not room for negotiation, what is the point of putting welfare reform on the table in the upcoming talks?

Mr Humphrey: I am grateful to the Member for giving way. In the SDLP's talks with the Prime Minister, the Chancellor or the Treasury, what wriggle room has the Member seen for renegotiating a greater deal for Northern Ireland?

Mr McKinney: I will put the same point to you as I put to your colleague: it is not about individuals but about us all going to Downing Street with the same message, saying

the same thing, not different things. I do not believe your negotiation. I do not know whether you did a deal with the Tory Government over some of the issues and future strength at Westminster. I do not believe, when you come back and say that you negotiated the best deal possible, that you dealt for all our people —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I remind the Member to address his remarks through the Chair and not across the Chamber.

Mr McKinney: The Scottish experience tells us that if we shout long and hard and with commitment the Government may listen. The DUP says that its negotiation was the best on the table and there could be no more movement. The Scottish experience tells us that it might be a hard negotiation, but there is room. Why is it that the DUP is not up for tough negotiations on behalf of its own people? Here, for me, is the implication of the talks. Everybody has to approach it with equal standing and, in that respect, if the Government are willing to enter into negotiations, the least that we can do is tell the British Government to take the fines off the table. We cannot negotiate with our hands up our back.

Mr Agnew: We have to be honest about what the debate is about. It is not, as it may appear from the motion and the amendment, about whether we oppose Tory cuts or implement them. The reality is that the amendment and the motion propose that we implement cuts. What they disagree on is which cuts we implement.

The DUP's proposal is to implement welfare reform, and we have seen various reports produced on how much that would take out of the benefits coming into Northern Ireland. The one that I find has most basis in fact is NICVA's figure of £250 million on top of the cuts that have already been made to welfare. That is the DUP's proposal, and, to be fair, the party has been pretty upfront about it. As mentioned in the debate, the DUP brought forward a Bill, and we were able to debate it. Had the Bill come back to the House, we would have been able to make amendments. Indeed, prior to that, the DUP tabled a motion welcoming the introduction of universal credit. It is pretty much known that the DUP may be opposed to elements of welfare reform, but, ultimately, there is much of it that that party agrees with.

There are many other elements that, I believe, the Minister could have brought back with changes — for example, the sanctions. For something as simple as a missed appointment, you can lose your benefits for three months. There is no cost implication and no reason why we would have to breach parity to change that. This is the type of thing that we could have come back with, had the DUP been more enthusiastic about really challenging the welfare cuts.

Sinn Féin's proposal is not a rejection of cuts. We have had the October monitoring round. We are implementing cuts. It has happened. It has been necessary. I do not necessarily criticise Sinn Féin for taking the decision and agreeing the October monitoring round; it was the necessary, pragmatic thing to do. What I maybe do criticise is the pretence that by saying no to the Tory cuts we are somehow protected. That is not the case, given that we will see £87 million come out of our Budget this year. Essentially, it is a choice between two cuts. Do we cut welfare to some of the most vulnerable in our society —

the poor, the sick and the unemployed — in an economic downturn, or do we cut public services?

Mr B McCrea: Will the Member give way?

Mr Agnew: Yes.

Mr B McCrea: I am interested in the Member's argument about parity and where we make cuts. How does he feel we should address the issue of super-parity? There are areas where we do better than other areas of the United Kingdom, and, surely, we might have to consider reducing those areas, just to bring us back to parity.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Agnew: I am more wedded to us making our own choices for Northern Ireland than I am to parity. We make the choices, and we take the consequences. There are areas, such as air passenger duty, where we chose to break parity and take the financial hit. That was a choice and, again, one that we should be open about, because that was another cut that we voluntarily introduced to our block grant.

Ultimately, whatever way we make these cuts, they will fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable in our society. What is really incredible and what makes the Sinn Féin position in particular a farce is that they are now going to go back to the Treasury to ask, "Can we have more cuts, please? Can we cut corporation tax, which will see up to £700 million come out of public sector spending?". That is a voluntary cut that we are going to beg for. Sinn Féin said in the debate that its priority was to protect the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. The corporation tax cut clearly shows that its priority is to equalise tax across Ireland to get a step closer to a united Ireland. That has been, is and always will be its priority. If the most vulnerable have to suffer in the short term, Sinn Féin believes that that is worth it in the long term. That is their policy. They go to the electorate and get voted in on that basis. But, at least, be honest about it: you are going to voluntarily impose a cut in public services to give a tax break to those in big businesses. I do not see how anybody from either side of the House can argue that we cannot afford £87 million to protect welfare spending on the most vulnerable, but we can afford anything between £200 million, if we want to take the DUP's figure, and £700 million, if we want to take the Treasury's figure, per year to give a tax break to big businesses.

3.45 pm

There is a debate going on at the minute in Westminster about whether there should be a mansion tax. We have a mansion tax break in that we put a cap on rates. Therefore, the poorest homeowners in our society subsidise those with the largest houses. Instead of having a mansion tax, we have done the reverse and given a mansion tax break.

The issue of making work pay has come up continually, yet, again, the Assembly made its choice and rejected my proposal for a living wage in all public sector contracts. We are not interested in making work pay; this whole agenda is about punishing the poor for being poor. It is not an argument about whether we should have cuts. No one is proposing in the motion or the amendment to do anything that will stop the cuts. It is which way we hit the poorest hardest. I do not think that is acceptable. I do not think

that it is good enough. It is time that our two main parties stopped pointing the finger at each other and stopped simply saying no to the Tories and worked out solutions rather than creating problems.

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development):

I welcome the opportunity to make a contribution to the debate on the motion and the amendment. Let me say at the outset that I welcome the opportunity that we have had today to debate the policy around welfare reform and the spending priorities as regards that. Sometimes, some of the contributions have contained more heat than light, and I hope to shed a little bit more light on some of the measures as I proceed.

As Minister for Social Development, I believe that tackling disadvantage and building strong communities should be a key priority for the Executive. I want to see a society based on social justice where individuals have access to equality of opportunity and believe that they can maximise their potential but also accept the personal responsibility for themselves and their families and feel able to make a contribution to their community. In essence, my work and that of my Department is about helping people to improve their life for the better.

My Department carries out many functions that directly protect some of the most vulnerable people. Housing for homeless people and providing homes for people with a mental or physical disability are examples of how my Department daily provides services that protect the most vulnerable. The Supporting People programme provides assistance to 17,000 vulnerable people, helping them to live independently. The annual Supporting People budget of £74 million funds a range of services, including those for homeless people.

At the same time, my Department provides funding and support — over £4.5 million in the last year alone — for voluntary and community organisations that provide good generalist advice services to the many hundreds of our most vulnerable people who seek help. We work with disadvantaged communities, helping them to improve the physical environment in which they live and to enhance the services available to the people living there. In doing so, my Department works in partnership with other Departments on key Executive policies such as the neighbourhood renewal strategy. In the past year alone, my Department invested over £8 million in neighbourhood renewal to support the delivery of capital regeneration projects and a further £20 million to support service delivery, all in the most disadvantaged areas. By way of an example, that funding was instrumental in establishing 20 new nurture units and 11 social enterprise hubs. Members will be aware that Delivering Social Change is a key Executive priority, and my officials play a key role in the different elements of that programme.

In terms of direct financial support for the most vulnerable, my Department administers over £5.5 billion paid out in social security benefits. Last year, over £800 million in financial support was paid to the 190,000 disabled people claiming disability living allowance in Northern Ireland. Those payments are made to disabled people regardless of whether they are in work or unemployed. Over £212 million was paid to people who are unemployed as part of the support available to help them back into work, and £224 million was paid to the families on a low income and not in employment. To add to this, over the past year DSD

has provided funding in excess of £800,000 to support the provision of approximately 88,000 two-hour free childcare places for parents in the margins of employment. This funding enables those parents to improve their opportunities to gain employment through participation in training. We also paid over £27 million last year through child maintenance payments, which is money that keeps children warm, fed and clothed.

That is clear evidence of how my Department delivers real and practical support to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable. I want to assure Members that those services remain at the top of our agenda, even as we deal with cuts that are being forced on us by the refusal of some parties to pass a suitable Northern Ireland Welfare Reform Bill.

As Minister for Social Development, I have a responsibility in the Executive to argue that tackling poverty and supporting vulnerable people should be the highest priority for the Executive. However, I also recognise that Executive colleagues have equally valid arguments when they say that the health service, education or justice should be the number one priority for the Executive. Not everyone can be the highest priority, and, at Executive level, Ministers have to decide what the priorities are and make decisions on where resources in Northern Ireland are best spent. Like families have to do every day, at ministerial level there is a fixed budget and we have to make difficult decisions. That is what being in government is all about: assessing need, weighing up the different priorities and making decisions — often difficult, real-life decisions. It is not about dated rhetoric or rants spelled out on billboards or on social media aimed at frightening the most vulnerable rather than supporting and informing them.

When the Assembly votes on the motion, Members need to be clear that, if they support it, they are saying that the Executive should prioritise spending on welfare, which supports the most vulnerable, over the provision of our health care system and the education of our young people, over justice and the protection of people across Northern Ireland. That is the reality.

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Minister give way?

Mr McCausland: No, I will not. I have no extra time, and I need all the time I have.

Let me now turn to the second part of the motion and the amendment, which relates to the changes in the welfare system. As I said at the outset, I welcome the debate about the type of society we want and where the protection of the most vulnerable should sit in regard to priorities. Let me be clear: I recognise that there are elements of the Westminster welfare reform package that are cuts and are unpalatable, such as severed disability premiums and the bedroom tax. Indeed, I have stated that in the House before. As a locally elected Minister, I have successfully negotiated a good package of measures in the best interests of the people of Northern Ireland, but I cannot deliver such a package for locally inflicted cuts, which are already impacting on public services and vulnerable people. What is disappointing, however, is that the proposers of the motion have sought to hijack the debate about the protection of the most vulnerable, and, refusing to face up to facts and reality, they are pressurised to back up a political mantra in another country with the rehearsal of their catch-all chant about welfare cuts.

Let us look at the real position on spending on welfare over the past five years and through to 2018-19. Spending on social security has risen from over £4.5 billion in 2009-2010 to £5.2 billion in 2013-14, and it is projected to rise, even when we implement welfare reform measures suitable for Northern Ireland, to over £6 billion by 2018-19. These figures represent real and increasing levels of resource being spent on helping those who need help, including the most vulnerable. The only cuts that are happening here and now are those that impact on the people of Northern Ireland as a consequence of parties refusing to pass the Bill, including the Northern Ireland-specific package to deal, where possible, with the unpalatable elements of GB reform.

Once again, the figure of £750 million has been quoted by some people as the cost of implementing the Welfare Reform Bill in Northern Ireland. That figure comes from a NICVA-commissioned report. At the time of its publication, I was heavily critical of the authors — I expressed that directly to NICVA — for the inaccuracies in the report and the negative impact it could have on people claiming benefits. Let me repeat what I said previously: the NICVA report is wrong. The costs of £750 million that have been quoted do not reflect the cost of implementing the Welfare Reform Bill in Northern Ireland. The £750 million figure listed in the report includes costs of nearly £630 million arising from changes that have already taken place in the social security system and that parties in the Assembly supported. They also include changes to the tax system that relate to HMRC and the Treasury for which the Assembly has no responsibility and over which it has no control. If people actually took the time and trouble to look at the facts and figures, they would discover that, instead of the £750 million that they throw about as being the impact of what is proposed, it is actually around £120 million.

Mr Flanagan: Will the Minister give way?

Mr McCausland: No.

These include changes to the tax system for which the Assembly has no responsibility or control. The report also takes no account of the positive financial impact of universal credit and enhanced childcare provision. I encourage Members to go home, get their calculator out, go through the figures, read what we said and get the real figures rather than those that were concocted at the time by, I think, Goretta Horgan from the SWP, who wrote the report.

Let us get the scare tactics off the table and have a genuine debate. That is the real strength of the amendment, which I am supporting, because it calls for the Chamber to support the implementation of a revised and improved package for Northern Ireland and therefore avoid the financial cuts from not passing the legislation.

The social security system is complex, large and bureaucratic. There is a need to reform, and, every week, the Assembly approves small changes to the system. I want to say this, particularly to the SDLP Members: over the past six years, the Assembly has voted through two pieces of primary legislation — one in 2007 and one in 2010 — that brought about significant change to the social welfare system in Northern Ireland. All the parties in the Assembly have therefore been part of the process of changing the welfare system over the years.

In 2007, the Welfare Reform Bill brought in the employment support allowance (ESA) by accelerated passage, and in

2010 we introduced incapacity benefit reassessments. In fact, the hated Atos was signed off by none other than Alex Attwood. Bear in mind also the 2010 Welfare Reform Bill. Earlier, Alex beat his chest like some Sinn Féiner on steroids or something, as though there was nothing outstanding. The fact is that, when he left the Department, there was not one breach of parity. When he went out the door and I arrived, it had all been done. There was no breach of parity and not one issue outstanding. He can try to portray it differently, macho man that he is, but the fact is that there was no breach of parity.

Mr Attwood: Will the Minister give way?

Mr McCausland: You can go away and check that some other time, Alex, and help your memory.

Let everyone in the Chamber be honest and stop pretending that their opposition to the Welfare Reform Bill — *[Interruption.]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr McCausland: — is based on a deep ideological commitment to the existing social security system and that it should never change. The SDLP changed it.

What we are really talking about is how best to change the social security system, rather than refusing to reform it. I understand that parties in the Chamber have concerns, as I have, but to simply say no is nonsensical in this case. Unless we can agree a way forward, we will only see reductions in services for the people in Northern Ireland. There is clear evidence that the current system is not working, that we need changes and that the package of measures that I have negotiated provides the best way forward.

For brevity, let me finish with some points that Members have raised. Alex Maskey talked about figures. I have commissioned and published research that clearly sets out the impacts of such changes. They are readily available on my Department's website and in the Assembly Library. I encourage Members to read them. That is why I referred to the difference between the £630 million and the £750 million. The £120 million is the real figure.

Michael Copeland talked about the limited progress on universal credit IT, but he misses the importance of the policy intent of getting people into work. I thought that he would agree with me that that was a good thing that we want to support.

Alex Attwood made reference to how he authorised breaches of parity and measures he had taken to mitigate the impact of welfare reform in 2010. That, of course, introduced the reassessment of the 83,000 people previously receiving incapacity benefit, which has now been completed with the significant majority — nearly 60,000 — moving on to ESA. It is my understanding from officials that all regulations have been implemented. Whilst conscious of the code of practice for officials sharing information on previous Ministers, I would be happy if Mr Attwood would like to provide the Assembly with further information. I am sure that he will put that in writing to all of us.

In the last two minutes, I will pick up quickly on what Fearghal McKinney said about the Scottish experience.

Mr Attwood: Will the Minister give way?

Mr McCausland: There will be plenty of opportunity for the Member to put it in writing and to circulate it to all of us. There is a bit of a love-in over there between the really green nationalists and the wannabe green nationalists.

Fearghal McKinney talked about the Scottish experience. The fact is that this is not a devolved matter in Scotland.

The fact is that, in Scotland, a decision was taken about the bedroom tax; that is correct. However, the package of measures that we have proposed here in Northern Ireland, and which was agreed with Sinn Féin, far surpasses anything anywhere else in the British Isles. Mrs Kelly will have heard about it in the Committee, and although it goes against her mind and heart to acknowledge it, it is a fact that it is by far the best package anywhere in the British Isles; that needs to be recognised.

4.00 pm

Steven Agnew talked about sanctions. In fact, the package includes that very issue. The package that we have brought forward says that there would be reduced sanctions here in Northern Ireland. It will be done differently from in GB. As regards the overall situation — he was right in this regard and made the point well — the fact is that this is about Sinn Féin sacrificing the people of Northern Ireland for its ambition of a united Ireland. It really is as simple, cold and crass as that.

Let me finish by saying that, over the past year and a half, we have completed our negotiations with Westminster and the negotiations here in Northern Ireland to get the local changes and mitigations that I wanted. The package that was agreed with Sinn Féin a year ago is actually a very good package. People are conning themselves if they think that they are going to do any better. When people from elsewhere in the United Kingdom comment on it, their general view is that we in Northern Ireland have done a really good job and that the Department for Social Development, in its negotiations, has brought back for Northern Ireland something that people should be pleased with because it is a compassionate package that cares for the vulnerable.

Ms P Bradley: I also welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion and to make the winding-up speech on the amendment in the names of me and my party colleagues. I am sure that I am not the only one in the Chamber who recognises just a hint of hypocrisy in the motion's deep concern for the poor, vulnerable British people. That has certainly not been the case over the past years, but the shift is very welcome today.

As we are all aware, welfare reform is a highly emotive issue that has received a lot of media coverage. As a result of the coverage and peddling by individuals and certain parties, a lot of misunderstanding and scaremongering is being fed to the general public, which has heightened fears, especially among those who we have a duty of care to protect.

Mr Flanagan: Will the Member give way?

Ms P Bradley: No, I will not.

Rather than having this "block everything" reaction, we have not only a financial responsibility but, more importantly, a social responsibility to look at what the facts are and implement a welfare reform system that, as the

Minister said, has been tailored specifically to the people of Northern Ireland.

Welfare was designed initially to help the most vulnerable and poor within our society. We know that it was envisaged as being a hand up rather than a handout. Sadly, as time has evolved, we now see families in a second or third generation of non-working. None of us can deny that the circle of poverty is thriving in areas of Northern Ireland where more people are more dependent on welfare than on work and among those who are in work but find themselves part of the working poor culture. These areas tend to be among the most disadvantaged in our society.

By not implementing welfare reform, we are not protecting vulnerable people. In fact, what the House is doing by dragging its heels on the issue is financially impacting on everyone in our society. In his written statement to the Assembly, the Finance Minister —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: There is much too much noise coming from the Benches. Sorry about that, Ms Bradley.

Ms P Bradley: Thank you for that, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, because it is rather difficult. During the entire debate, I have shown Members in the Chamber respect by not having conversations. I would like that same respect in return.

In his written statement to the Assembly, the Finance Minister, Simon Hamilton, made the impact of delaying welfare abundantly clear to everyone. The increasing financial penalties imposed from Westminster for us not implementing welfare reform will have far-reaching effects and, as we know, have already started impeding the delivery of public services. By not implementing welfare reform, we will affect everyone right across our society. Rather than defending the poor and vulnerable, all that we are doing by delaying this, and not having a proper debate and facing the reality, is inevitably making things worse for those we want to protect.

I believe that it is time we stopped hiding and looked at the facts about welfare reform. In an article by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, it studied the figures and came to the conclusion that, when dealing with child and working-age poverty, universal credit could have a positive effect. It is anticipated that 35·5% of households will be better off, 34·5% will see no change and 30% will be worse off in some way. If we accept the motion and do not accept welfare reform, we will be sacrificing 70% to protect 30%. Instead, I believe that we should work to help that 30%, discover why they are worse off and move to a position where that will not be the case.

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Ms P Bradley: No, I will not; I do not have time.

I have been a member of the Social Development Committee since the inception of the Bill. When it was introduced to us, all members from all parties raised many concerns but never once did I hear anybody say, "Let's scrap this. Let's start our own Bill". We wanted to change it, and I believe that what we have from the Minister brings forward the changes that we wanted.

In conclusion, we have looked at the experiences on the mainland and learnt from their mistakes. We are in the best place now to implement this package, which will clearly bring us into line with the rest of the UK while

also acknowledging the uniqueness of Northern Ireland's position. I oppose the motion and call on those who really want to protect the vulnerable to support the amendment.

Mr Brady: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Paula Bradley mentioned being on the Social Development Committee since the inception of the Bill. My colleague Fra McCann and I have also been on that Committee since the inception of the Bill, and we, in Sinn Féin, have consistently opposed welfare cuts and will continue to do so. I do not think that anybody can question our record on that, whether it be from the initial stages of Margaret Ritchie trying to rush it through by accelerated passage, to Alex Attwood trying to introduce Atos and all the rest of it and through to our present Minister, who seems hell-bent on destruction as far as vulnerable people in the Six Counties are concerned.

Mr Wilson: Will the Member give way on that point?

Mr Brady: No, I will not give way. You did not give way this morning.

My colleague Alex Maskey opened the debate. He talked about noting with concern the disastrous impact on the most vulnerable and called on the Executive to oppose the cuts. He talked about a battle with the Tories and not with other parties and said that we should stand resolute. That is the call. Let us stand resolute. It is a battle with the Tories, not a battle with other parties. He talked about how the cuts have affected people in Britain. Paula may talk about our lack of concern for people in Britain. I can assure you that I do not have a lack of concern for anybody who is oppressed by these cuts. I want to make that clear.

I will go on to Sammy. Sammy came out with the usual tired arguments. I know that he likes alliteration, so maybe I could best describe his speech as rambling, repetitive rhetoric. Nothing new whatsoever. He talked about Sinn Féin's dictators in Dublin but did not mention the DUP's dictators in Downing Street and their cosy wee tea parties when making decisions about the people here and how we can best oppress them with welfare cuts.

Dolores Kelly supported the motion, but, interestingly enough, her first statement was attacking Sinn Féin for whatever reason. Then again, that is hardly surprising; she takes every opportunity she gets. She talked about cuts masquerading as reform, and, in fairness, she did talk about the demonisation of the disabled and unemployed in Britain. That has been a fact.

I do not think that Michael Copeland has made up his mind yet. He tells us one day that he is totally opposed to the cuts; however, obviously the next day Mike talks to him and he is back on board with the party. So, he wants to make up his mind because the Ulster Unionists' lack of support for the people whom they represent is fairly clear and obvious.

Stewart Dickson really showed his true colours in his allegiance to the Tory Government and, indeed, his fellow travellers in the Liberal Democrats, who, as was pointed out, are now reneging on things like the bedroom tax.

That is interesting because Naomi Long signed a no-day-named motion in the British Parliament about the effects of transferring from DLA to PIP. That was also signed by Mr Wilson and Gregory Campbell, who is not here at the moment. Maybe that gives us some indication of what is involved.

Talking of Gregory, he spoke about a vote in Limavady Borough Council. A motion was passed by the council that called on the Executive to oppose the cuts. Apparently, an amendment was then tabled, which was passed on a technicality. Eleven people abstained, and it was retabled, not as an amendment but as a separate motion. I want to clarify that.

Mr McCausland: Yes, a mere technicality — [*Inaudible.*]

Mr Brady: Just in case you are interested — I am sure that you are not really interested — there were 11 abstentions on that particular vote.

My colleague Michaela Boyle spoke about how the cuts are affecting people in Britain and the devastating consequences on the sick, the disabled and the vulnerable. She also spoke about the rise of food banks. That is not just happening in Britain but is happening here. The number of people in Britain being admitted to hospital with malnutrition has quadrupled since 2008, and the number in Britain who use food banks has gone up from 24,000 to 340,000 in a matter of a few years. Mostly —

Mrs D Kelly: Will the Member give way?

Mr Brady: No, the Member will not.

The reasons that are given by the Trussell Trust for the use of food banks in Coventry and places like that is that people's benefits are being sanctioned.

Alex Atwood talked about the Alliance Party's relationship with the Lib Dems and their reneging on the bedroom tax. He said that people here will lose £750 million a year and told us to stand up and fight. He also talked about £12 billion being taken out of our Budget by 2020.

Fearghal McKinney talked about the disastrous impact of welfare cuts, the £750 million loss and the fact that we make up 3% of the population.

I am not sure what Steven Agnew was talking about. I was trying to write it down, but I did not really understand it. I think that he was trying either to offend everybody or to please everybody, but then again, there is nothing new about that.

The Minister eulogised about what DSD has done for the poor population in the North. Not once did he mention the effect that these cuts will have on that poor population and how people will be affected. He referred to the NICVA report about the loss of £750 million and said that it was inaccurate. Maybe he is doing his figures on an abacus, because, as far as I am concerned, the report is fairly accurate. In fact, it is probably a conservative — if you will excuse the pun — estimate of what we might lose.

Paula, in her summing-up, spoke about the hint of hypocrisy. I think that I have dealt with that, because we are not being at all hypocritical. She also talked about scaremongering, and I think that the Minister is probably an expert on that. He seems to be playing Monopoly every night because he comes out with different figures every day, as does the Finance Minister, which is quite worrying.

I want to talk about the Bill. The Bill was passed in 2012 in Britain, so the debate is not academic. There is a plethora of hard evidence of the effects of the changes right across the British state.

It is interesting that Jeffrey Donaldson is the only DUP member who has publicly talked about the shortfall in the

Budget before welfare cuts. He said that on television in the early hours of Friday morning when talking about the Scottish referendum and then went on to talk about welfare cuts. I think that the Minister of Finance and Personnel also mentioned that today in answer to a question from Roy Beggs. The evidence against the cuts is there, right across the board.

Not one of the contributors from the DUP mentioned the people they represent. Not one of you mentioned the people you have engaged with about these cuts. I have attended public meetings across the North, including in east Belfast with Paula Bradley, and the message we got, loud and clear, is that these cuts will be a disaster. They will impact working-class loyalist communities and working-class republican and nationalist communities equally badly. What are you doing about it? You are getting up and scaremongering and telling us what we should and should not be doing. What are you doing?

4.15 pm

Michael Copeland, in fairness, mentioned that approximately 67,000 people are unemployed, with 4,000 jobs on offer. Let us start to try to create jobs. Maybe that will be a solution. Nobody disagrees with the underlying principle of so-called welfare reform that people are better off in work than on benefit.

I am wondering whether Mr Humphrey has engaged recently with his constituents on welfare cuts —

Mr Humphrey: All the time.

Mr Brady: I am sure that you do. I was out on Saturday — [*Interruption.*]

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Brady: — dealing with my constituents and asking them about —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I ask Members to address their remarks through the Chair, please.

Mr Brady: When you look at the effects — for instance, the Minister mentioned the severe disability premium — you see that it is already costing some adults in Britain £58 a week. Obviously, for people on limited incomes, that is huge. There is a myth that all people on benefits are well off, and I want to deal with that now. Could any of you live on £72.40 as a single householder on income-based ESA or jobseeker's allowance? Could you feed and clothe yourself, run a household and pay for electricity and all of that? I very, very much doubt it, because it is simply not possible. Benefits are at subsistence level, and any cuts will take them below that. It is interesting that the Tories — your friends — have already frozen benefit increases at 1% a year from 2013 to 2016. That is without these cuts being imposed. So, you can play with the figures — I see that the Finance Minister has been kind enough to join us; he was probably upstairs working out more figures —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Brady: — on his abacus. Who knows?

'The Guardian' has leaked Government papers — British Government papers — in which they admit that at least 100,000 children are being pushed into poverty by the benefit cap alone.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Brady: The benefit cap is predicated on the south-east of England, not on the large families here who will suffer most.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 44; Noes 46.

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Ms Lo, Mr McCallister, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Attwood, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mr Copeland, Mr Cree, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Kinahan, Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr B McCrea, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Nesbitt, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs Overend, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Boylan and Mr Brady.

Question accordingly negated.

Main Question put.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order, Members. I have been advised by party Whips that, in accordance with Standing Order 27(1A)(b), there is agreement to suspend the three minutes and move straight to the Division.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 36; Noes 54.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Boylan and Mr Brady.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Kinahan, Ms Lo, Mr McCallister, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr B McCrea, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

Main Question accordingly negated.

Assembly Business

Mr Swann: On a point of order, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. I am aware that a point of order was raised this morning in regard to my use of what, I think, was described as unparliamentary language, when I called the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment by her first name. I inform the House that I have spoken to the Minister. She did not take any offence from it. None was meant, none was made and none was received. I hope that the Speaker does not waste any of his time investigating a matter that I apologise to the House for and have apologised to the Minister for.

It is also surprising that the Member who raised the point of order did not see fit to raise one when a Sinn Féin Member called Mervyn Storey “Mervyn”, but I will not make a point of order about that.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I responded to it this morning; I did not accept it as a point of order. However, you have put your explanation on the record now, so we will call it a draw.

Motion made:

*That the Assembly do now adjourn. —
[Mr Principal Deputy Speaker.]*

Adjournment

Waste Tyres: NIEA Disposal in East Antrim

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The proposer of the topic will have 15 minutes in which to speak. All other Members who wish to speak will have approximately seven minutes.

Mr Wilson: I thank those who organise these things for the opportunity to raise the issue today. When I put down the motion of tyres in east Antrim, some people thought that I was speaking about my spare tyre, but it is not that; it is a much more serious issue. It affects the general policy of the Executive in dealing with waste in a sustainable way. The problems that I want to highlight are encapsulated in a story that I will tell about a constituent, who sought to work with the Department of the Environment, only to find himself bankrupt as a result of the way in which he was treated by the Department.

The disposal of tyres is something that is of great concern to the Executive. Indeed, the Department of the Environment’s heritage service has already shown its concern in its publication ‘Used Tyres - What’s All The Fuss About?’. In that, it indicates the extent of the problem with disposing of hundreds of thousands of tyres in Northern Ireland each year.

The Environment Committee has also highlighted the inadequacies of the current system — I want to come to some of those by using the story of a constituent — and the way in which the Department of the Environment and especially the Northern Ireland Environment Agency deal with the issue. Indeed, it made a number of recommendations in its report to the Department, some of which are very pertinent and illustrate the problems that have been experienced.

It seems that one of the most popular ways in east Antrim of disposing of used tyres is to put them on bonfires. I have no doubt that one of the reasons for that is that the regulatory regime that we have in Northern Ireland is totally inadequate and totally contradictory and is left to the arbitrary decisions, which are sometimes very inadequate, made by officers in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. That is one of the reasons why we have a persistent problem with the disposal of tyres in Northern Ireland.

In November 2009, a young man who was clearly eager to start up a business — he was a keen environmentalist and believed he had an idea that could deal with an environmental problem — came to see me and said, “Look, I’ve a problem. I want to set up a business that will employ people and will enable me to collect tyres across east Antrim from a number of people and recycle them in a way that is sustainable”. He had applied to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency for a waste management licence and was told that he would have to have certain qualifications etc. Those qualifications were well above what would have been required to simply bring in tyres and bale them, which is what he wanted to do.

I took him to see the then head of the Environment Agency, Mr John McMillan. He was given advice by Mr

McMillan and was told, "Look, you should apply for a waste exemption licence. There shouldn't be any problem, but it will take some time". He had secured premises and was told by the planners that he would not need planning permission for them. He proceeded with the business, only to be told later that he would require planning permission, because the Northern Ireland Environment Agency had indicated, when it was consulted, that planning permission was required, even though the planning officers and the Department of the Environment's planning division had said that he did not require it.

He obtained other premises, moved to them and was collecting tyres. He applied for the waste exemption licence and expected it to go through with no problem. Within two days, a decision was made that a waste exemption licence would not be granted for the activity that he wished to engage in. The reason given was that, despite the fact that the Environment Agency's own literature at that stage indicated that one of the ways of disposing of tyres was to shred or bale them, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency had not agreed the regulations that had been agreed in Scotland, England and Wales — PAS 107 and PAS 108 — which treated baled tyres as a manufactured product.

4.45 pm

He spent £806 on the advice of the head of the Environment Agency. It was immediately returned to him because, despite what the literature from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency said, there was no mechanism for giving a waste exemption licence for that activity. It was all the more confusing because, when he looked at the Northern Ireland Environment Agency website for the register of firms that had been given waste exemption licences, he saw that firms from Strabane, Kircubbin and Londonderry had been given waste exemption licences for the shredding and baling of waste tyres and rubber chippings. So, he was turned down, even though the literature stated that that was one way of disposing of tyres and other firms had been granted waste exemption licences.

When I asked the Minister why that was the case, he replied to me in a written answer that in Northern Ireland we had not adopted PAS 107 and PAS 108 because there were concerns about chemical leaching from baled tyres. That was on 30 September 2013. You can understand the confusion of my constituent, who had put a lot of money into the activity, bought equipment, got premises and started gathering tyres, only to find that the literature published by the NIEA was incorrect, the advice given by the head of the NIEA was incorrect and the register that the NIEA had about waste exemption licences was contradictory and contradicted the advice from the Minister.

Furthermore, when you look at another branch of the NIEA that deals with landfill regulations, you see that it was telling people that one of the acceptable uses for tyres — tyres that the Minister told me in a written answer could not be given a waste exemption licence for bundling because there was a danger of chemical leaching — was to line landfill sites. One branch of the NIEA did not seem to know what the other branch was saying. How can anyone deal with such contradictory regulations? On the one hand, some people get a waste exemption licence; on the other hand, others do not. On the one hand, we are told that

the regulations have not been signed; on the other hand, we are told you can use the bundles of tyres, which are in danger of chemical leaching, for landfill sites. Furthermore, companies got waste management licences to bundle those tyres, provided they sent those contaminating bundles of tyres to other countries. They could send them to England. They could send them to South Korea — think of the carbon footprint in transferring them across half the world — but you could not get a waste exemption licence for them in Northern Ireland. They could also be used, apparently, for some purposes in Northern Ireland.

As it turned out, because he had already acquired tyres because he thought that there was no problem and the advice that he had been given when I had taken him to see the head of the Environment Agency was that there would not be a problem, the next thing was that enforcement came down on him. He was easy pickings because he was not one of these boys who had a huge fence around the place and guard dogs or who threatened officers or anything like that. He was a mild-mannered and meek individual. So, he was easy pickings. He was visited by an officer from the Environment Agency, Neil Adair, who told him that he wanted him to come for interview under caution. He did not tell him that he could bring a solicitor. He went along in all innocence and was questioned and, probably because he did not take a solicitor, disadvantaged himself. He was taken to court, and he was fined. He was left with the tyres. Of course, because of the fine and because he had not been able to operate a business for nearly two years, he had no means of disposing of the tyres, and the tyres were put into storage until he could find the money to get somebody to take them off his hands.

This is where it takes another twist because, at that stage, the Environment Agency officers visited the site where his tyres were being stored. This meek and mild individual was summoned to the site to find that the enforcement officer was there with 14 policemen. Do not forget that he had never resisted the attentions of the Environment Agency or anything like that. Aleathea Brown was the officer on site with the 14 police officers and she demanded that he be arrested even though he had written to her indicating that he was prepared to volunteer to come in to be interviewed in the offices. When this was pointed out, she still insisted that he be arrested, and he was taken and held in Antrim police station. He was denied medication for some time, which is an issue for the police. Now, he does not know where he stands.

Here is the irony of this all. He could dispose of these tyres to other firms in Northern Ireland. One of those firms is NK Ferguson Tyres in Londonderry, a company that was in December of 2011 exposed in the 'Sunday Life' as operating without a licence, without planning permission and of dumping illegally in Donegal. Subsequently, of course, the Minister informed me in December 2013 that the company, even though it was under investigation, had been granted a licence to dispose of tyres and to bale tyres. I pointed out to him that it was under investigation. I had a letter from him saying that NIEA had no knowledge that this company was disposing of tyres illegally in Donegal. Unfortunately for the Minister, four months earlier on 6 September, his Department had indicated to my constituent that the Environment Agency was preparing a file to be sent to the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland for this selfsame firm. So, it seems that,

even in his own Department, there is confusing evidence given to the Minister.

The questions that I really want answered are these. Why do we have such confusing regulations? When will the regulations be changed? Why does the Environment Agency, when faced with individuals who are prepared to comply, have to come down with a heavy hand in the way that it has done? Why are firms that are already under investigation and which are not operating within the law given waste exemption and waste management licences even though they are under investigation by the Department? Does the Minister believe that NIEA is fit for purpose, and does he not see why there is a problem with waste disposal in Northern Ireland when we have such contradictory behaviour by his Department?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I have given the Member some leeway.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I suppose that the first question people will be asking is: why is somebody from east Derry sitting at an Adjournment debate on tyre disposal in east Antrim? I agree with Mr Wilson that many of the issues that affect his constituency affect all constituencies, so his point is relevant, although, in fairness, I am here representing my colleague Mr McMullan, who is fulfilling his DARD duties at the National Ploughing Championships in Laois.

It was a constituent of Mr Wilson and Mr McMullan who first drew attention to an enforcement issue that he had with tyre storage on his farm. This year and down through the years, there has been a reduction in the use of tyres, particularly for silage pits, because of round baling and new technologies, but this year has been an exceptional year, with three or four cuts of silage being done, and a lot of the old, redundant silage pits are coming into use again. Some farmers have required an increased number of tyres, maybe because they could not afford the new technology. That constituent has fallen foul of storing extra tyres because of that. He has been cautioned and visited, and he is quite concerned about his business.

I agree with much of what Mr Wilson said about the lack of joined-upness in the NIEA, not just in reference to this issue but to a lot of environmental issues. It is in reference to things like hydroelectric schemes and other issues across the board. I refer to a letter dated 13 September from the Department to Oliver McMullan MLA, which indicates that there are no investigations into unauthorised disposal of tyres that involve persons whose full-time occupation is farming. Part of the reason for that is that there is no differentiation between those involved in farming and those involved in other activities.

Mr Wilson referred to baled tyres and the fact that they can be sent to England to be baled, but I believe that they can come back into this part of the world to be used for other purposes. I have a second case — one in my constituency — of a man who has acquired some of those tyres to protect his land from sea erosion, which I think is common practice across the water. That individual has lost some 12 acres to the sea, and, with that, he has lost the single farm payment on that land, which amounts to quite a substantial sum. Indeed, in the area that he talks about, some 60 acres have been lost. That is quite a loss of land, plus the payments that could be gained thereof.

The bonfire issue is ongoing and really needs to be addressed. I passed a bonfire in Finvoy in north Antrim this year that was absolutely spectacular in its stupidity and its height. In its stupidity, it was built beside a petrol station. In height, it was about 80 feet high and made entirely of tyres. There might have been a wee bit of chemical leaching going on there as well. That issue has been left to local councils in the past. Indeed, when I was in council, I risked life and limb on occasion removing tyres from fires and helping our local council officers to deal with that issue. There are issues further and wider than east Antrim to be discussed for dealing with tyre disposal. We also have, of course, the fly-tipping issue.

Another issue is the charges that are taken from people who change their tyres. I know of a certain lady who paid for four tyres on her car to be changed. As she was leaving the premises, she passed four lads going out with the tyres. She recognised the tyres and knew that they were hers because her name was written across the side of one of them, and she had already paid. I do not think that accurate records are being kept of the moneys that are potentially being accrued annually. All the regulations on reports to the NIEA during a year have to be tightened up.

5.00 pm

I welcome the fact that increased technology has led to improvements in the retreading of tyres so that more tyres are being retreaded. However, tyres and how we deal with them are still a problematic issue here. There is inconsistency between what we do here and what others do elsewhere, so there are hard questions for NIEA, and I hope that the Minister will take some of those on board.

Mr Beggs: This is a very interesting subject. A variety of issues has to be addressed, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss some of them.

The Environment Committee carried out an inquiry into waste tyre management in Northern Ireland. In its interim report, it highlighted that waste tyres, if handled illegally, have the potential to generate financial benefit for those involved. We know that, in the world of waste management generally, particularly in the constituency of the Member who spoke previously, sizeable illegal operations have been uncovered, and individuals have profited from the misuse of waste management, which is detrimental to the environment.

Mr Ó hOisín: Will the Member give way?

Mr Beggs: Certainly.

Mr Ó hOisín: I think that the Member is perhaps referring to the finds at Mobuoy, which is in the Minister's constituency of Foyle.

Mr Beggs: Thanks for that correction. I knew that it was up there in the north-west.

The Committee has made a start, but this is clearly an area of ongoing work for it and the Department.

One of the other points that the Committee highlighted was that the current rationale for allowing some businesses to operate under an exemption from a waste management licence in relation to used tyres should be revisited because of the risks associated with it and that the NIEA should conduct compliance checks before issuing licences to carry tyres. I noted in a letter that a constituent of mine

received from the previous Minister, Alex Attwood, that the Environment Agency in England has been made aware by the waste tyre sector of widespread abuse of waste exemptions. Further to that, the industry has called for a moratorium on tyre exemptions until the growing problem with waste tyres has been reviewed. This has to be handled carefully so that tyres are not misused and profits are not made by those behaving illegally.

Tyres can be recycled into rubber crumb. They can also be used to generate energy, particularly in the cement industry. With a controlled burn, energy can be extracted safely, without carcinogens being emitted that would endanger the public. Of course, this goes back to the bonfire issue mentioned by Mr Wilson. Clearly, when tyres are burnt on bonfires, huge dangers arise, particularly to those in the immediate vicinity, as a result of emissions from the fire, as well as other fire hazards and dangers to the public. This question strikes me: are some people profiting from putting tyres on bonfires? When you go to get a new tyre, you pay for your old tyre to be recycled. Has someone just dumped that tyre on a bonfire and made money? Clearly, there needs to be greater traceability of what happens to our tyres.

I now turn to the farms issue, which was mentioned by the Member who preceded me. I declare an interest in that my dad grows silage and has a silo that uses tyres, which is in a part of the farmyard that I own and live beside. So, this is real, and it affects me as well. I noticed that a regulatory position statement issued in September 2014 by the NIEA and the Department of the Environment states:

“You may keep waste tyres on your farm for reuse, e.g. a silage clamp. If you are disposing of tyres you must pass them to a registered waste carrier, obtain complete waste transfer notes and retain these for two years.”

My question to the Minister — it would be helpful if he could clarify this because I also heard comments on the radio about a farmer required to get an exemption — is this: why do some farmers require exemptions if they are using tyres on their silos? Surely that regulation entitles farmers to retain tyres and use them. I have to say that the amounts of silage that are made by individual farmers vary. Some years, such as this one, are bumper years, where more tyres are required; other years, not as many are needed. Some years, big bales become more suitable than precision-chopped, so it is not as popular. There can be tyres left over from year to year. I would be interested to know why there is a particular issue on farms, given the regulation that is there. It would be helpful to the farming community and the general public to learn more about this.

There has also been a number of illegal tyre stores throughout Northern Ireland. I remember from my time on the Environment Committee that there were some sizeable ones — some with perhaps one million tyres in them went up in smoke. Frankly, that was good business, as someone no longer had to pay to recycle them. They went up in smoke. Many of those stores exceeded their legal capacity and approval. It is clear that there needs to be greater monitoring by the Department of tyres, retailers, where tyres go and the whole product chain to ensure that they are not stored illegally or misused.

I am aware of some aspects of the case that Mr Wilson referred to, but, coming from the other side, as well as

waste management, planning permission has to be got in order to set up a business in the countryside. Although the site in question above Glenoe was granted approval for restricted agricultural use a number of years ago, there was a fresh application. Who thinks that storing 32,000 tyres adjacent to residential property is wise? Who thinks that having a processing unit for baling tyres literally across a lane way from a constituent's bedroom is a good place to have industrial processing of that type? Generally, waste processing is encouraged to locate in industrial centres in units where there will be not be the conflict between industry and residential property. With tyres, aside from the noise issue, there is a very real concern about the danger of fire and the horrendous smoke that comes from the burning of tyres. That could endanger —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Beggs: Of course, there were a number of illegal tyres on this particular site. It was not being handled well. I am pleased that planning permission was not granted for the site in that isolated rural community. Mr Wilson may have been wise to have advised his constituent to seek somewhere with an industrial unit. I understand that he was in the Kilroot area originally, where there is an industrial unit and where such a proposal may well have worked.

Mr Dickson: I welcome the opportunity to have the debate. We have heard from Mr Wilson and Mr Beggs that there may be two sides to the argument that has given rise to the debate. Mr Wilson is absolutely right to bring the debate to us, whatever the rights and wrongs of a particular constituency issue, because there is a serious issue around the enforcement and disposal aspect of dealing with tyres, whether they are in the countryside or urban areas, and around the whole way in which the Environment Agency is being set up to deal with those matters.

As others have mentioned, the Environment Committee, as we know, has tried to untangle the web of how tyres should be disposed of safely and successfully recycled. Very little action seems to have come from that. That is why I am glad to see the Minister here this evening. I hope that he will set out some clear pathways and clear intent on his part for how the issue of the collection and recycling of tyres will now be tackled by the Environment Agency. If there is need for change to regulations, I hope that he will bring those changes forward.

Members have referred to the disposal charge. I recently paid the disposal charge for the replacement of four tyres on my car. However, we are told — at least, as I understand it, the Environment Committee was told in response to its questions to the NIEA and the Minister — that you did not administer the scheme, you did not know where the money went and, if you were asked to administer the scheme, it would be impossible.

The Minister's Department successfully — at least I hope it is successfully — administers a plastic bag tax scheme. If it can do that, why on earth can it not administer a disposal charge for tyres, which are infinitely more traceable than plastic bags, into landfill sites? There are not that many tyre dealers across Northern Ireland compared to a number of years ago. The businesses have got larger and there is less backstreet exchange of tyres going on. Therefore, it is not beyond the wit of the NIEA or the

Department to come up with an appropriate registration scheme that accurately tracks the life of a tyre.

Mr Ó hOisín: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he agree that the Department estimates that the amount generated could be upwards of £3.6 million annually?

Mr Dickson: I defer to the Member's greater knowledge in relation to the sum. However, we know the damage that tyres can cause when, as others have made reference to, they catch fire in illegal dump sites. We have not even come to the issue of bonfires and how that disposal causes serious problems, but I will come to that aspect.

I think it is important that the Department comes back to us and tells us how it is going to rectify the issues that Mr Wilson raised about somebody who wanted to set up a business, the appropriate advice they were given in respect of that, and whether they had planning permission. Those are all important issues for that particular constituent. To be told one thing and then be prosecuted for another seems to me to be eminently unfair.

The NIEA further compounds its problems. It does not seem to be able to control the disposal of tyres on a large-scale basis. It does not seem to be able to control, or want to control, or have any idea about, how the charge may be levied and who looks after it. I will ask a direct question to the Minister and I hope that he will deal with it: where does the money go?

It seems that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. I have correspondence between the NIEA and me and between the PSNI and me in respect of tyres on bonfires. Other Members have referred to the height of bonfires. Whether we support bonfires is not the subject of this evening's debate. It is about the content of the bonfire. I do not think that you could find anything more polluting, distressing or concerning to my constituents. I have had letters from people who have to live beside bonfires. These are people in communities that support bonfires and who enjoy the spectacle of the fire, but they are living in fear, for themselves and their children, because of the pall of intense black toxic smoke that rises from those bonfires. It is vital that the NIEA gets a grip on that. However, no, it would rather send me letters saying how difficult it is and that it is not actually the prime body responsible.

The NIEA passes the buck to the council, the council passes the buck to the police, and it goes back round in circles again. We need a clear, round-table meeting — I recently met the police — between NIEA, environmental health staff and the police to thrash out how we will deal with the problems.

I say to the Minister that perhaps we would not have a problem with tyres on bonfires if we had a proper disposal scheme, proper traceability and proper accountability. Therefore, if a tyre ended up on a bonfire, the NIEA would know where it came from. It should not be that NIEA gets into confrontation with communities about trying to remove them. It should be that it prosecutes the person who got it to the bonfire site in the first place; the person who let it out of their store and made it available for the bonfire.

I am pleased that Mr Wilson secured the debate this evening. He raised an important issue, and I am seriously concerned that the Minister now deals with it in a comprehensive way. I hope that he will answer the Member's questions about the constituent in East Antrim

and that those matters can be resolved. Perhaps the siting is not the best, and perhaps good advice can be given. It seems to me to be rather heavy-handed to go down an enforcement route when advice and guidance given properly in the first instance could have obviated the problem. I encourage the Minister to look seriously at the charge and why he is not taking control of that charge. If he does not want control of that charge, surely he must have an interest in who is taking that money and what it is that they are actually doing with it.

Finally, I think that we need to sort out the whole issue of the NIEA's responsibility, local councils' responsibility and the police's responsibility when it comes to tyres that end up on bonfires.

5.15 pm

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank Mr Wilson for bringing this very important issue to the House this evening. As Mr Ó hOisín outlined in his opening remarks, this is an issue that is not, unfortunately, exclusive to one constituency. I welcome the motion that has been proposed by the former Minister of the Environment. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will be relieved to hear that I am going to avoid any puns today. I know that the tyre jokes got a bit out of hand on the last day that we had "Mitchel-in" the Chair. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: *[Inaudible.]* tyres.

Mr Durkan: Sorry, Mr McLaughlin. *[Laughter.]* Waste or used tyres and their storage can represent a huge risk to the environment, human health and animal welfare. We have seen at first hand that major fire incidents can occur at sites used for the large-scale storage of waste or used tyres. Everyone should be aware that burning tyres generate toxic fumes and by-products that are extremely dangerous to human and animal health. Tyre fires can be extremely difficult to extinguish and have been known to burn for many weeks. In addition, where waste tyres are stockpiled, leaching of chemicals onto land and into rivers may also occur, posing a big risk to animal and human health.

In particular, tyres pose considerable risk to the environment and must be handled and disposed of properly. The potential risks are numerous and include the use of waste or used tyres on bonfires, as Members have alluded to, generating toxic fumes, which are dangerous to health, produce unsightly burnt residues, damage properties, roads and open spaces and impact on Northern Ireland's economy. The leaching of chemicals from stockpiled tyres can have a devastating impact on farmland. Leaching into local rivers kills fish and potentially puts our drinking water at risk. The use of unsafe part-worn tyres can cause road traffic accidents, which result in serious injury or loss of human life.

My Department continues to progress the key actions in its waste tyre action plan in order to try to deal with the many problems. We do that through partnership. The key outcomes of the plan include: understanding the problem; effective regulation and enforcement; exploring alternative uses; examining policy options; and developing effective guidance for the relevant sectors

Examples of the outputs from the plan include the production of key guidance in the form of a regulatory

position statement, 'Used Tyres — The Risks and Your Responsibilities'. The guidance clearly highlights the risks and clarifies the responsibilities for those dealing with and handling part-worn and waste tyres. The guidance has been placed on the Environment Agency website.

Under the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 2003, it is the responsibility of anyone who produces, collects, stores, treats, reuses or deposits waste or used tyres to minimise the risk to the environment, human health and animal welfare. To that end, we are also working in partnership involving four local councils through a pilot study set up by my Department, where NIEA staff and council environmental health officers carry out joint inspections of part-worn and waste tyres at tyre retailer premises to regulate the duty of care — in effect, a control on the disposal route for waste tyres. To date, joint inspections of tyre retailers have taken place in Cookstown, Ballymoney and Antrim District Council areas.

I have also asked my officials to work hard to create the conditions that will support the recycling and reuse of significant amounts of used tyres in a series of products. Just recently, NIEA met with a major tyre recycler in north Antrim to help put in place the conditions that will support the potential recycling of up to 5,000 tons of used tyres. I will come on now to the use to which Mr Wilson referred. Those tyres will be recycled into shredded tyre crumb, which can then be used at the bottom of landfill sites as filter material.

I am very aware that farmers may keep —

Mr Wilson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Durkan: Certainly.

Mr Wilson: I am at a loss to understand how, if his concern is that stored tyres can contaminate the land as they deteriorate, the same tyres, for which he will not give a waste exemption licence in the case that I mentioned, can be used to line a landfill site to stop leachate. Surely if the contamination comes from the tyres, they will contaminate the water sources around the landfill site.

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his intervention. I can understand his confusion, which I share, but it is something I will address before I conclude my speech.

I am very aware that farmers may keep waste tyres on the farm to reuse in agricultural activity. An example of this, as Mr Beggs mentioned, would be for use in silage clamps. However, it is important that the quantity of tyres should not exceed the number required for the silage clamps. If a farmer wishes to bring waste tyres onto the farm, the farmer must hold an appropriate waste authorisation. The transport must be undertaken by a registered waste carrier, complete waste transfer notes must be produced and these must be retained by the farmer. A waste exemption is also required from NIEA that costs £825 and lasts for three years.

Guidance on the use of tyres on farms has been produced and incorporated into the single farm payment form. I am aware that DARD has no statutory role in this legislation but seeks information from farmers via the single application form regarding the number of tyres present on the farm business. This information is then passed to NIEA.

Mr Beggs: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Durkan: Yes.

Mr Beggs: I would find it very useful if the Minister could clarify what happens in situations where, perhaps, tyres were gathered up 20 years ago, prior to all this legislation, because that is the case on most farms. What is required and how does he justify an additional cost to farmers, if that is what he is talking about? Why is there a need for change if there is no difficulty at present?

Mr Durkan: I thank the Member for his intervention. Just because something has been there for a long time does not mean that it should have been there all that time or that it should have been allowed to accumulate over that time and, indeed, into the future. As I said, there are guidelines on how many tyres are required on a farm for the conducting of a farm business. Flexibility exists in those guidelines for the very fluctuations that Mr Beggs outlined in his speech.

I am keen that we approach the issue of regulating waste or used tyres on an all-island basis, as it makes common sense that we cooperate with our neighbours in dealing with the issue. Indeed, Mr Wilson referred to an operator who was convicted of the illegal disposal of tyres in Donegal. Discussions have commenced regarding proposals for a new used tyre scheme in Ireland and the potential for a complementary scheme here in the North. I can advise Members that the main producer responsibility initiative review in the Republic is at an advanced stage, and it is expected that the final report will be published before the end of this year. The report dealing with waste tyres was published in November 2013 and was subject to a period of consultation until the end of January this year to allow for the fullest consideration of the report. The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government has been meeting stakeholders to discuss the report, and it is expected that the report will be finalised in the near future. A tyres working group has been established to assist the Department in the drafting of new regulations to underpin the structures recommended in the draft report. The group has met several times and includes a representative from DOE.

I want to be clear that waste tyres not only pose serious risks to health but present considerable risks to the environment. Mr Wilson and others have highlighted considerable flaws, as they see it, in the current system. Let me assure all who have remained in the House until this time of my desire and, indeed, the agency's determination to ensure that we have a system that is easy to understand and easy to comply with. I have commenced a restructuring of the NIEA with the aim of eradicating situations where, as Mr Wilson described it, one branch of the agency does not know what the other is doing or saying and to make the agency more customer-focused, with a single point of contact. He asked if I think the NIEA is fit for purpose: I have asked for a root-and-branch review of the agency. That is under way. It is a structure that I inherited and my predecessor inherited, and it is one that we hope to improve to get the best out of the agency for the environment and for the people of the North.

Mr Wilson recounted his constituent's tale of woe, which, at least, was a bit more accurate than Mr McMullan's musings over the airwaves have been. The full facts of that matter will emerge in due course.

Mr Ó hOisín went on to the issue of bonfires, as did others. I am determined that the agency will work more closely and harder with councils on that issue. Councils have the

lead on that, but I am determined that the NIEA will play a full role in addressing the scourge of bonfires as well.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Thank you. That was a very interesting and important topic. Thank you very much for bringing it to the Chamber this afternoon and for the contributions and responses.

Adjourned at 5.26 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 29 September 2014

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon (Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Assembly Business

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Order. Before we proceed to today's business, I have some announcements to make. Members will know that two new Ministers took up office last week. Following Mr Poots's resignation, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson nominated Mr Jim Wells to hold the office of Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Mr Wells affirmed the terms of the Pledge of Office in the presence of me and the Clerk to the Assembly on 23 September. I, therefore, confirm that Mr Wells has taken up office as Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Following Mr McCausland's resignation, the Rt Hon Peter Robinson nominated Mr Mervyn Storey to hold the office of Minister for Social Development. Mr Storey also affirmed the terms of the Pledge of Office in the presence of me and the Clerk to the Assembly on 23 September. I, therefore, confirm that Mr Storey has taken up office as Minister for Social Development.

In relation to Committees, I have received the following resignations: Mr Mervyn Storey as Chairperson of the Committee for Education; Miss Michelle McIlveen as Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure; Mr Paul Frew as Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development; Mr Jimmy Spratt as Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development; Mr Jim Wells as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety; and Mr William Irwin as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure. The nominating officer has informed me that these vacancies will be filled as follows: Miss Michelle McIlveen has been nominated as Chairperson of the Committee for Education; Mr Nelson McCausland has been nominated as Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure; Mr William Irwin has been nominated as Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development; Mr Trevor Clarke has been nominated as Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development; Ms Paula Bradley has been nominated as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety; and Mr Gordon Dunne has been nominated as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure. The listed Members have accepted the nominations. I am satisfied that the requirements of Standing Orders have been met and, therefore, confirm that the appointments took effect from 23 September 2014.

Committee Business

Committee Membership

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: As with similar motions, this will be treated as a business motion and there will be no debate.

Resolved:

That Mr Kieran McCarthy replace Mrs Judith Cochrane as a member of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development; that Mr Chris Lyttle replace Mr Kieran McCarthy as a member of the Committee for Regional Development; and that Ms Anna Lo replace Mr Chris Lyttle as a member of the Committee for Employment and Learning, with effect from Monday 29 September 2014. — [Mr Dickson.]

Private Members' Business

Students: Financial Hardship Funding

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members will have five minutes.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I beg to move

That this Assembly believes that funding provided for students in financial hardship is vital in ensuring that students, many of whom are experiencing financial independence and budgeting for the first time, are able to continue studying in times of financial difficulty; and calls on the Minister for Employment and Learning to ensure that funding for student support is prioritised for those in greatest need and to ensure that his Department, working proactively with students' union organisations, colleges and universities, makes students aware of the availability of this support and how it can be accessed.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to bring this issue for debate before the Assembly today. I am aware that the Minister has what he terms "huge frustration" at what people are saying publicly about the hardship fund. He may well be frustrated at the response to his decision to reform how financial assistance is provided to students undertaking accredited courses at further education colleges. However, I believe that this debate will allow a sensible and rational discussion to take place and will afford the Minister the opportunity to outline the rationale for what has taken place. I hope that he notes the more conciliatory wording of the motion that is before us today as opposed to that in the initial one, and I hope that all Members can support the motion as presented.

In terms of background, there are two main sources of support for students who are undertaking an accredited course in one of the further education colleges. Both of those are means-tested, and we have been told that both are demand-led. On the face of it, changing how further education awards are distributed and, in particular, the changing of the closing date has allowed many more people to avail themselves of those funds and has apparently led to a knock-on reduction in the demand for the other source of funding, the hardship fund. In overall terms, we support that change. We think that it makes sense to get more people on to the bursary schemes at an earlier stage as opposed to trying to get them when they are in the deepest financial difficulty at the worst time of the year. However, the knock-on impact on further education students in financial hardship is, as yet, unknown. We are concerned that, given the growing rate of financial hardship amongst our student population, some people who are in desperate need of support may not be able to access help if the budget allocated for hardship funds is not sufficient. There remains a degree of uncertainty as to how the funding allocation is calculated, and perhaps during his response to the debate or at some later stage, the Minister can provide us with the logic or, indeed, the algorithm that is used to allocate each college's funding allocation.

We have been told that the key revisions in the hardship fund from 1 August are that college allocations are now based on the Civil Service's targeting social need student numbers from the 2012-13 academic year as well as historical data that is based on previous expenditure and the new criteria for the operation of the hardship fund. The hardship fund is intended to provide support to learners who are experiencing exceptional financial difficulty in meeting costs associated with learning. The Department for Employment and Learning states that priority should be given to learners who are economically or socially disadvantaged, which is a concept that I, of course, fully support. The motion talks about the need for the Minister to ensure that funding for student support is prioritised for those in greatest need, and I believe that the Department's statement on giving priority to those who are economically or socially disadvantaged certainly resonates with those sentiments. The fund is also provided to increase access, retention and the achievement of students in our further education colleges.

The National Union of Students - Union of Students in Ireland (NUS-USI) has taken umbrage at the Minister's policy decision — I suppose that is the phrase to use. It has stated that it is "deeply concerned" at the direct cut in hardship funds over the period 2009-2010 to 2014-15 and believes that hardship funding should be increased to take account of the rising living costs and financial difficulties that students face. It has stated that it is fully aware that the FE awards fund has increased over the same period, but that it does not believe that that provides justification for reducing the hardship fund.

To support its argument, NUS-USI has used the findings of its recent research report, 'Pound in Your Pocket', which found that 52% of FE students over the age of 19 disagreed with the statement:

"I feel able to concentrate on my studies without worrying about finances".

Furthermore, 59% of those surveyed reported feeling overwhelmed by their finances and more than half, 52%, said that they had seriously considered leaving their courses and that financial difficulties had been a factor. That evidence cannot be ignored. It is clear that greater support needs to be provided to our FE population.

NUS-USI has also argued —

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for giving way. I do not want to interrupt the flow of his argument, and I recognise the constructive contribution of the work of NUS-USI. Would he agree that no applications have been rejected due to a lack of available funding?

Mr Flanagan: I certainly agree that we have been told that and, because we have been told that, I have no reason to disbelieve it. However, as I will come to in my free-flowing and lovely speech, I have some concerns about how the fund is promoted and marketed. I will come to that point in a minute. If you want to come back in at that stage to discuss that matter, I will happily let you.

NUS-USI has also argued that the eligibility criteria for allocating funds should be less restrictive to ensure that more people in significant financial difficulty can avail themselves of funding. However, my view is that those who are on a course that is part of their educational progression should be prioritised.

It has been said — it will be repeated today — that the hardship fund is demand-led. However, NUS-USI contends that demand and allocation should reflect the financial difficulties that students face in these times of rising living costs. They argue that the allocation to the fund does not reflect reality.

Moving on to Chris's point, one of the greatest problems has been the exclusion of student representatives from the discussions. I agree with NUS-USI that there needs to be much greater consultation on DEL's financial allocation to the student support funds to ensure that they reflect the very difficult financial circumstances that students face. I think that it is useful that the Minister recently met representatives from NUS-USI. One of my colleagues had been due to ask the Minister for an update on that meeting during Question Time today, but it is my understanding that that question has been withdrawn. Perhaps the Minister will reflect on his recent meeting with NUS-USI in his contribution at the end of the debate.

Another problem that has been identified as a result of the controversy is how the hardship fund is promoted and marketed. It is my belief that serious improvements need to be made to the way in which the funds are promoted and publicised. Given that it is apparently a demand-led scheme, the quality and extent of promotion will have a major bearing on the level of demand. To improve the take-up of the schemes, the Department for Employment and Learning needs to work proactively with the students' union organisations, colleges and universities to make students aware of the availability of the support and how it can be accessed. The cynic in me would say that colleges may well reduce the promotion and publication of the schemes as their allocated funding runs dry. Perhaps the Minister will clarify that the promotion of the schemes is consistent across opening times and will not simply be done when colleges are flush with cash.

It is concerning that the Department seems to dismiss the extent of the financial difficulties that students face. I do not think that any of us in here should do that. I am aware of the challenges that students face with soaring living costs and the continuing growth in poverty and deprivation among the student population, as highlighted in the recent NUS-USI report. We also see evidence that a food bank has been set up in one of our regional colleges; while payday loans, with their extortionate interest rates, are causing serious problems for our student population.

It is imperative, therefore, that appropriate support is put in place to protect students from falling into financial difficulty and having to rely on such sources of finance at extortionate interest rates or face dropping out of college. None of us wants that to happen; we can all agree on that. I ask each of you to support the motion and send a message out to students that their needs are a priority for all of us in the House.

12.15 pm

Mr Swann: I thank Mr Flanagan for moving the motion.

I want to repeat the statistics from the NUS-USI 'Pound in Your Pocket' survey, which are that 52% of FE students felt unable to concentrate on their studies without worrying about finances and that 59% of students in further education had seriously considered leaving their course because of financial difficulties. A key statistic in the

Programme for Government is on student retention, so the Department should do anything and everything it can to support students who have already taken up a course to see it through to completion. One reason for the student hardship fund was to give students a facility to support and help them through their study period.

One of the things that Mr Flanagan raised was the rationale that the Minister has given for moving the money from the hardship fund to the front-loaded support mechanism, which was that it related to student take-up. The funding calculation was based on targeting social need, and the Department has a calculation for doing that. However, when I was researching for the debate, one of the most worrying statistics that I came across was the fact that, from the academic year 2010-11 to 2012-13, the number of students at FE colleges from the 40% most deprived areas in Northern Ireland has dropped by 3,000 from 47,000 students to just over 44,000. If students from the most deprived areas are not taking the opportunity to enter our FE colleges because of the lack of financial support — I am not even talking about higher education and going on to university in trying to help the most vulnerable —

Mr Wilson: I thank the Member for giving way. He makes an important point: lots of factors could influence the figure that he has just given. Does he not accept, however, that many of the welfare reform changes that have been proposed and have been rejected by the Assembly could help to address that problem, because it could make it worthwhile and, indeed, maybe compulsory for people who do not have qualifications to seek qualifications as a way to get state support?

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Swann: Thank you very much, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker.

I do not want to bring welfare reform into the student hardship debate. I know where the Member is trying to go, which is to draw out the Minister on welfare reform and the hardship fund. It is also to do with the Members who tabled the motion and how they accept welfare reform with regard to student support. I do not think, however, that it is politically beneficial to make people go to further education establishments to gain qualifications when there are no jobs for them in the workplace. There have to be support mechanisms. The rationale behind the debate is to make sure that the support mechanisms are in place for those students.

Mr Lyttle challenged Mr Flanagan about the fact that nobody had been rejected by the student hardship fund due to a lack of money. It needs to be pointed out, however, that, for the last three academic years, 7,585 students applied to the hardship fund, and 1,349 were rejected. There seems to be an inconsistency across the higher education establishments about the proportion of applications to successful applicants. That, coming from the most —

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for giving way. If the issue that he raises centres around eligibility and awareness, does he agree that framing the issue in the drastic terms that he did — spiralling, uncontrollable student poverty traps as a result of cuts — is not, perhaps, the way that the debate needed to be framed?

Mr Swann: I thank the Member for his intervention. That was not the way I was taking the debate. I was trying to make a point about the students who are counting on applying to the fund. Of the 7,585 who have applied, 1,349 have been rejected. The point is that each college is allowed to set, administer and judge its own criteria, so we have to make sure that there is consistency across all the colleges and that the criteria are applied fairly. I go back to another part of the motion, which is that we must make sure that students are aware of what the criteria are, how they are applied and what steps to take to apply for funds. There are drastic differences in the number of students applying across the colleges.

In conclusion, I refer to the presentation that the Minister gave to the Committee on the Department's expenditure limit out-turn. He talked about a reduction based on the analysis of spending patterns in student support provision across several demand-led programmes, and we are talking about demand-led programmes. The Minister estimated that, if reform is not implemented, there will be a reduction of £3.5 million, so the Member who intervened previously made a valuable point.

If there is a change as a result of previous changes to the eligibility criteria for means-tested grants and education maintenance allowance, we have to make sure that it is conveyed to students so that more do not lose out on this benefit.

Mr Buchanan: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the very important issue of students and, in particular, student funding. It is interesting that Sinn Féin has changed the entirety of its motion. There was no real sense to the first version, given the moves that the Minister had already made. It is interesting to see that, while the issue of what the Minister was doing was being bandied about in the papers, instead of decreasing the funding, he actually increased it for financial hardship and further education awards. Nevertheless, I welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion, which can be divided into three distinct parts. First, there is funding for students, which is:

"vital in ensuring that students ... are able to continue studying in times of financial difficulty".

Then we have the issue that "funding for student support" should be:

"prioritised for those in greatest need".

Finally, there is a call for more collaboration between the Department and:

"students' union organisations, colleges and universities"

and so forth, to make it available for students.

First, we need to tackle the issue that funding should be available to students in times of financial difficulty. Life can be very unpredictable, and students who embark on a journey of study for a specific time, in whatever further or higher institution, do so without knowing how their circumstances might change or what incidents might arise during the period of their studies. Difficult situations outside the classroom can have a direct impact on the level of study and the concentration of our students. It is imperative that we have the mechanisms in place to ensure that outside circumstances, particularly financial

problems, have the minimum impact on students' studies. We do not want to be in a position where students cannot make the most of their time in college or university because they are impeded by circumstances outside their control that plunge them into financial hardship or dire circumstances where they are forced to withdraw from studying. This, of course, is where the financial hardship fund comes into play.

At this point, we turn our attention to the second part of the motion, which:

"calls on the Minister ... to ensure that funding for student support is prioritised for those in greatest need".

I argue that, at present, the hardship fund gives priority to students who, for whatever reasons, are economically or socially disadvantaged. Already, only those in greatest need are eligible for the hardship fund, which is like a safety net for students who unexpectedly find themselves in financial difficulties. The hardship fund was never intended to be a long-term solution or permanent fix; it was only ever intended to provide a short-term solution for students who experience unexpected financial crises that may otherwise deter them from finishing their course. Despite headlines to the contrary, the Minister for Employment and Learning has increased the funding available to students by £800,000.

Of course, the bigger, longer-term picture needs to be tackled. It is time that the Department led the way in challenging the short-term, band-aid, quick-fix thinking and instead focused students on longer-term solutions of good financial management. It is imperative that students who are experiencing financial independence and budgeting for the first time learn to manage their money as a life skill to take them through adulthood. Financial responsibility is one of the key factors that is essential for the future, yet it is one of the least talked about areas of responsibility.

Reliance on funding such as the hardship fund is a result of a wider societal issue of reliance on credit. The short-term fix of dipping into credit rather than earning money resulted in the financial collapse. It is wrong to rely on a hardship fund as a principal means of funding a course. Students must be taught to prepare for their course in advance. While in their final years at school, students need to prepare for the next stage in their studies, and that means not only a step-up in the level of study but a significant increase in financial expenditure and a reliance on self-funding. It is not good for students to come to university expecting to be able to get money —

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Buchanan: — from the hardship fund and to have the mistaken belief that that will help them through their course.

It is imperative that the Department work with all the other bodies to ensure that details of whatever funding is available are made clear to the students in an open and transparent manner so that they fully understand what is available to them and when they can access it.

Mr P Ramsey: I support the motion. The SDLP recognises that the student hardship fund represents a crucial option for financially stretched students who have exhausted all

other avenues of assistance and who clearly struggle from time to time when coping with the burden of academic study and financial strain. It is also key that the debate acknowledge the importance of third-level education, either in higher or further education. Members of the Employment and Learning Committee believe that, to ensure that one of the key elements of the Programme for Government — widening participation — is realised, it is crucial that funds are in place that will help those on the borderline and those who are dependent on families to subsidise their stay at university.

I recognise that the student hardship fund exists as a vital support structure for those who have become economically disadvantaged in the noble pursuit of education and knowledge. The recent report from the NUS-USI suggested that 52% of those in further education — it is important that the Minister hears the survey results — considered themselves overwhelmed by finance to such an extent that they have considered abandoning their course. It is important that the Department examine a survey of that nature. The Department for Employment and Learning has done good work in looking at increasing participation, the young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) agenda and youth unemployment, but it must address the issue that over 50% of young people in colleges across Northern Ireland feel in financial hardship and may abandon their course.

Mr Ross: I thank the Member for giving way. I acknowledge the point that he makes about 50% of students considering leaving their course, but the real statistic that we need to know is how many of those actually left their course. I imagine that a lot of young people — in fact, most people in today's society — will worry about financial hardship. Surely we need to know how many of them actually left their course because of financial hardship rather than how many considered it.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr P Ramsey: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker.

I accept the point that the Member makes. Maybe the Department can give us those figures, because it is a subject that the Committee has been discussing in a number of meetings recently, given the media relevance. The Member will know that as a member of the Committee.

The proposer of the motion mentioned that the North West Regional College, in my constituency, had set up a food bank. Nobody comes up with such ideas unless there is a need there. Teachers in the college in the north-west area clearly thought that there was a need for food banks. They would not have set them up otherwise. It is as simple as that.

12.30 pm

For many students, the journey in further education can be perilous. Many find themselves on a new level of social and financial independence that was, possibly, not there before. They had depended on their families, parents and other guardians to take them through. Undoubtedly, on the journey through student life, many never plan for rainy days. They fall short of money and struggle to cover rents. In this recession, it is clear that the cost of rental accommodation across Northern Ireland, particularly for students, has also increased significantly. Again, research reveals that 70% of our students rely on parental support

to proceed with their education. All of us who have had a daughter or son go through third level education know it to be a fact of life that, at the end of the day, we are the subsidy when they need money for a range of matters related to their full-time studies.

The hardship fund does not cover merely the cost of living. It provides funds for transport, for childcare, but, ultimately, for learning. It is further recognised that financial strain does not always occur due to poor budget planning.

The student hardship fund protects our economically disadvantaged students from things that they can have no control over. The students of today live and learn in the shadow of one of the greatest recessions in living memory. The cost of living continues to rise, threatening prepared and unprepared students alike. In many cases, they are adversely affected later. As I have said, accommodation costs have risen. Maintenance grants continue to fall.

Several years ago, the Assembly and Executive made the important decision to protect our students from a rise in tuition fees that was demanded by the Tory Government in Britain. Today, students still face the threat of rising tuition fees, only now they may find that the safety net of the student hardship fund, which so many depend on, has been weakened. I am keen to hear from the Minister. We have been told that the money available in the student hardship fund has decreased by £1.3 million over the past five years. Although I accept the point that the Minister made to the Committee that nobody has been refused money, how, over the past five years, have we found there to be £1.3 million less in the system? That is at a time when needs, one would imagine, were increasing. The proposer of the motion made a good point when he asked this: is there enough education and awareness getting through to our community's most vulnerable students who are struggling? I take Alastair Ross's point that they may have given up because they could not cope any more. It would be good to get those figures, going forward.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr P Ramsey: It is important to ask the Minister for Employment and Learning to continue to ensure that student support programmes are kept in place and remain high on his agenda.

Mr Lyttle: On behalf of the Alliance Party, I support the motion. As a passionate supporter of fair access to education for everyone, I am happy to support the principles that students in financial hardship should be provided for and prioritised to ensure that they get the help that they need and deserve, and, of course, that we work to ensure that students are made aware of the help that is available to them. I am glad, therefore, that we have, under devolution, an Alliance Party Minister for students who has been in place to make sure that we deliver for students. That is against a backdrop of UK Ministers, and, indeed, a previous Ulster Unionist Party Minister, who had planned to increase tuition fees in Northern Ireland. However, we had an Alliance Party Minister who was able to work with Executive colleagues to ensure a freeze in tuition fees and who supported —

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair)

Mr Wilson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Lyttle: I will give way, yes.

Mr Wilson: When he is going through the litany of the records of previous Ministers, maybe he will also bear in mind the speech that was made by the SDLP Member who talked about the Tory cuts in further education. Perhaps, he will also remind the House that the SDLP, in its Budget proposals at the beginning of this four-year period, recommended a reduction of, I think, £20 million in the budget for further education (FE).

Mr Lyttle: I thank the Member for his intervention. He indeed set out important points that sometimes get lost when we are campaigning on these types of issues. It is important that we are accurate and that students get the information that they deserve about where people stand on these issues. I am also glad to say that the Minister has been able to bring forward other positive developments for students, such as increased student places, particularly in economically relevant subjects, such as STEM subjects, the retention of the education maintenance allowance, and an increase in PhD places.

Perhaps most importantly, from the point of view of the Alliance Party, I welcome the work that the Minister is doing to ensure parity of esteem for vocational training and further education here in Northern Ireland. He is a Minister for further education students. Therefore, I am glad that we have seen a net increase of £0·8 million in assistance for further education awards and college hardship funds to a total of £8 million and that further education student support funds have increased by around £2 million over the 2009-2014 period.

There is also additional support available to our students, including childcare support through the Care to Learn scheme, and the additional support fund supports students with learning difficulties and disabilities. If work needs to be done to raise awareness around that particular support, I and my party are certainly up for engaging in that work to ensure that that occurs.

We have heard that these are demand-led funds and that they are planned on the basis of anticipated levels of demand. However, where demand exceeds the level of funding, it is my understanding that mechanisms are in place to allow in-year additional funding to be provided. Perhaps that is something that the Minister can address.

It has been somewhat unhelpful that the original debate around this issue was framed in extreme ways at times. Unfortunately, we had the Chairperson of the Employment and Learning Committee using phrases such as students slipping uncontrollably into poverty traps as a result of cuts. Today's debate has been useful to set forward the facts in relation to reform around student hardship funding and the type of funding that is available to students across our community.

I recognise and support the work done by the NUS-USI to highlight the financial difficulties that many of our students are facing. I welcome the fact that the Minister has met the NUS-USI delegation. Indeed, I would be more than glad to do that as well to find out what more can be done to raise awareness and address any types of eligibility issues that might exist in relation to the funding.

In closing, the Alliance Party is very much a party for students. We are for fair access to further and higher education for everyone. It is vital that the financial assistance is in place to support students in greatest

financial need. We will certainly work to ensure that that continues to be the case.

Mr Ross: The motion is a fairly innocuous one. I doubt that anybody could disagree with its sentiment. It goes without saying that funding for student support should be prioritised for those in greatest need. There is a greater story behind the changing of the wording of the motion that was originally submitted by Sinn Féin. Mr Flanagan was in a rush to leave the Chamber after giving his initial speech. If he had not been in such a big rush to make a political point by putting a motion down before he actually learnt of the facts of the issue, perhaps Sinn Féin would not be in as an embarrassing situation as it is in today. Had he investigated by asking the Department or the Minister about the true facts of the issue, he would have learnt that, rather than a £1·3 million cut, the Minister and his Department have, as the Deputy Chair said, increased funding for student hardship by about £0·8 million to £8 million over the last five years through the FE awards and the hardship funds. That is an important point to make. Perhaps it is a lesson to be learnt by Sinn Féin and other Members that they should probably try to identify an issue and ask questions before they run to the Chamber and put a motion down to try to make a political point.

As was outlined by Mr Lyttle and others, not a single application to the hardship fund has been rejected because of a lack of funds. That in itself tells a huge story. Whilst I acknowledge that some of the research conducted by NUS found that many students are worried about financial hardship, I would be surprised if they were not. I think that all of us are worried about financial hardship. That does not mean that they are going to drop out of the course immediately or that they would be prevented from doing it. A lot more work needs to go into identifying just how real those figures are.

I wish to make two points about the motion. First, we need to ensure that any public money given out for hardship funds is well targeted. If we learnt anything from the debate that we had on the education maintenance allowance (EMA), it is that we cannot afford to have a broad fund that is available to a broad range of students. When we investigated the EMA, we found that much of it is "dead money". So, much of that public money that was being given out to young people was not being used for educational purposes: it was not being used to keep them in education or to get them to their educational sites. Much of that money was being used on social activities and things like that. Whilst a good social life is undoubtedly important as a student, it should not be funded by the taxpayer. It is important that we ensure that any public money being given out is scrutinised and well-targeted. That point has to be made.

The Chair of the Committee was reluctant to get down to the issue of welfare reform, but the reality is that we cannot debate any motion in this House in isolation to the discussion on welfare reform. The failure of some parties to agree to welfare reform, even when a DUP Minister has secured the concessions he has and made us the envy of other regions across the United Kingdom, will have an impact on the budgets of every Department in this Assembly. That means that every motion that we talk about that requires any level of funding will be impacted on by Sinn Féin and the SDLP's refusal to agree to welfare reform.

Sinn Féin should not be allowed to get away from the hypocrisy of running straight to the Chamber and complaining about cuts when it, because of its actions, is contributing to cuts against those people in society whom it claims to represent. Sinn Féin claims that it wants to protect young people in hardship from financial pressures, but its actions are contributing to the financial pressures that those young people will face. Whether Sinn Féin likes it or not, refusing to have welfare reform implemented means that we will be fined by Treasury and will have to pay for a new computer system. That is money that would not need to be spent if Sinn Féin just agreed to the changes.

Anybody who listened to the Minister, when he came to the Employment and Learning Committee, would have heard the very stark warning about budget cuts that are coming down the line. I asked the Minister about projected cuts for next year, and he talked about double-digit figures of cuts in his Department. That will have an impact on his ability to pay hardship funds, to train young people, to get young people apprenticeships —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Ross: — and to get young people off welfare and into work.

It is important that we note that Sinn Féin's actions and its hypocrisy today are hurting young people rather than helping them.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I support the motion. This is an issue that affects every student. Student finance is an important lever in supporting and encouraging students to remain in college and continue with their studies. There is a range of financial help to assist students with FE and higher education (HE) fees. However, that is not always sufficient.

Just last week, I was dealing with a constituent who had her loan and bursary awards reduced. She is a final-year student, and I am engaging with the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) and the university on the matter. My constituent was not eligible for hardship funding, and I can only assume that she did not meet the criteria. Nevertheless, that situation could have an adverse impact on her continuing with her studies.

In another slightly different case, a student who is studying for a social work degree in Manchester has been told that she does not qualify for a bursary from England because she has not been resident there for three years or more. She has been told that she does not qualify for a bursary from the North because she is studying in England. The social work degree is costing a substantial amount of money, and she needs that funding to be able to continue studying. Again, I can only assume that that girl was not able to obtain a place in the North. I have been told that when the University of Manchester and student finance in the North were contacted, they said that the North had stopped paying for students who study outside the Six Counties. Perhaps the Minister can provide some clarification on that matter.

I read through the report from NUS-USI, 'Pound in Your Pocket', which explores the financial well-being of further and higher education students in the North.

12.45 pm

The report had a number of key findings, and some have been touched on: 35% of students have seriously considered leaving their course due to financial difficulties; over 58% have worries about not having enough money to meet basic living standards, such as paying utility bills and rent; and 45% of students surveyed struggled to concentrate on their studies, never mind worrying about finances. It was also found that mature students, students with dependants, students with disabilities or those from peace-line areas are the worst off in financial well-being and overall finances. It was also stated that information about the availability of financial support is not clear to all students. The report also outlined that there still appears to be a lack of information on how to apply for hardship funding. So, it is important to put a focus on this issue and evaluate where all of this is at.

Another briefing paper by NUS-USI flagged up that those who have a degree and want to study a course may not be eligible for an award. I think particularly of highly skilled individuals who cannot get a job and may need to reskill.

During the Committee for Employment and Learning inquiry into careers, evidence outlined the mismatch between those leaving school choosing certain careers and the number of jobs available in those careers. It was outlined how young people need to develop the skills that are relevant to the job opportunities. Young people pursue education journeys where they do not find work relevant to their qualifications once they leave school. So, if a young person decides to go back to school to reskill or upskill, it is important that they are encouraged to do so by having that financial help available.

I am aware that the Minister is doing a review of higher education funding, which will include a review to encourage more participation of part-time students and a review of the current support offering. I support that, given that in the North we have a high number of low-skilled individuals. That has a negative impact on the strength of the labour market and the wider economy. In the North, we have the highest levels of economic inactivity.

There are many benefits to increasing skills levels, which would have a positive impact on social inclusion and economic performance. We need to remove any restrictions on individuals participating in higher education or on those who want to reskill or upskill, especially in terms of student finance.

Mr Douglas: I support the revised motion. I am from a background of lifelong learning and further education. If this debate does anything, it emphasises the importance of that. Students who are in hardship and need extra financial support do get that help and support from universities and colleges across Northern Ireland. We have a very good scheme here, and none of us wants to lose that.

It is interesting that, just earlier this month, the Welsh Assembly decided to cut their fund for student hardship, but, as a result of a lot of lobbying and negotiations, they have parked that for the next year. For me, that shows that devolution in Northern Ireland is working. As it states in our Programme for Government, this is about local people setting priorities for the future of Northern Ireland. For me, it is about growing the economy.

I want to say three things. The first is that it is so important for us to continue with this fund. I was delighted that, when the Minister was asked this question at a meeting of the Committee for Employment and Learning, he said that he supported it and that, in fact, more money had been allocated to support students right across Northern Ireland. I want him to reiterate this afternoon that there is that support of a safety net for people who, as my colleague Tom Buchanan said, come to a point at times in their life when they need help and those resources. So, for me, it is vital that we have that sort of network.

My second point is that the students who get that support will go into the world of work. Certainly, in terms of higher education, this is linked to the jobs that are available in Northern Ireland. I suppose that all of us recognise the number of jobs that have been created over the past number of months. We have heard the First Minister and the deputy First Minister say that we have created more jobs than at any time in our history, second only to London in the wider United Kingdom. So, for me, there is a real link between the Programme for Government, creating jobs, and encouraging and supporting students to get to that higher level where they can access these jobs.

The third thing that I want to say is that, in our constituencies, we have all come across people who do want to go to university. In my own constituency, there are areas of disadvantage — some of the worst in Northern Ireland. I was speaking to two young women recently, and I encouraged them to embark on lifelong learning and then to embark on a university career because they are as bright as anybody who I know who goes to university. However, at this time in their lives, they have not had a chance. We need to ensure that the likes of one of those young women, who has three children, gets the help and support if needed, particularly with the likes of childcare, as an example. The second of those young women is 21 and is as bright as anything but just has not had the life chances. We need to support those people in our constituencies. As I said earlier, we need to grow the economy. It is not just about growing the economy for people who get the opportunity to get funded to go to university but is particularly about getting the help and support that is required for those disadvantaged areas.

The NUS says that where things are at the moment does not reflect the reality. I think that the Member who proposed the motion talked about consultation. Of course we want to encourage a wider and broader consultation, and, again, I am sure that the Minister will welcome that. I want to finish by saying that I support the motion, and I am waiting on the Minister to confirm what he spoke to us about at our Employment and Learning Committee.

Mr Wilson: Despite what my colleagues have said, I find it difficult to support this motion because of the point that the Members across the way are trying to make. Namely, they are trying to create an issue that does not exist. They are trying to point the finger of blame where no blame lies, and, of course, it is totally inconsistent with the approach that they have taken on other issues.

In the last three weeks, we have had three different stances on what the priorities for expenditure should be for this Assembly from Sinn Féin. Two weeks ago, health should be the priority. Last week, the priority should be the people who are poor. This week, now the priority should be people who are disadvantaged and in further education.

Meanwhile, Sinn Féin is doing its darnedest to make sure that we do not even have the money to finance the existing priorities that we have in this Assembly. It is one of the reasons why I find this motion difficult to support. On this side, we get a bunch of opportunists who jump on every bandwagon that comes along on a weekly basis, yet there is no substance behind anything that they produce.

The first thing that I have to ask is whether there is actually a problem. The problem that the proposer of the motion presented is that people are in financial hardship. Lots of people are in financial hardship in the current situation of lack of jobs and wages being kept down at a very low level because of the recession, but does this actually stop people studying? We have heard quoted the NUS-USI survey, but, of course, it depends what question you ask somebody. If you ask somebody the question, "Do you feel able to concentrate on your studies without worrying about your finances?", I guarantee that you can be fairly sure about the kind of answer that you will get. In fact, I am surprised that only 52% of the students answered yes to that or, indeed, when you ask people whether they are seriously considering leaving education because of the financial pressures.

When I listen to the economic incoherence from the other side of the Chamber, some mornings I seriously consider bringing in a big copy of Lipsey's 'Positive Economics' or Samuelson's 'Economics' — both of them, as the Member from the Green Party will know, weighty tomes — and beating the Member across the side of the head. I might consider doing it, but I do not do it.

The real questions should be whether people leave further education and why they do so. I am sure that the Minister will be able to give us the figures, but, despite all the economic hardship that we are told exists at present, retention rates are actually going up, not down. When we are looking to see what the issue is that we are facing, we have to bear that in mind.

The second thing is what is being done already. The Executive are committed to promoting further education; it is part of our strategy for restructuring the economy. Indeed, I know that the Minister will probably complain about it, but one of the budgets that got a degree of protection when we set out the four-year Budget was his own, because, along with DETI, his was regarded as an important Department. As a result, he has been able to put additional money into the student fund, not less money. It is demand-led, as has been pointed out, and on occasions in monitoring rounds he would have had to ask for more money if the demand went up.

The third thing that I want to say is about what is to be done. If it is to be made a priority, what do we make a lesser priority? I am sick and tired of this, and it is a sign of the immaturity of this Assembly that we come to the Chamber week after week, and we all know what we want to spend more money on, but we do not know where we are going to take those resources from. Since it does not fall out of the sky or grow on trees, there are hard choices to be made, instead of having a motion that whinges, which we are getting so used to in the Assembly. Even the SDLP talked about the Tory cuts and how we have to resist them. The SDLP actually proposed a cut in the Budget. If we had acted on the SDLP's proposals, there would be less money available.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr Wilson: I will give way.

Mr P Ramsey: I would like to know where the Member is referencing the cut in further education in the SDLP document. In the economic recovery document that we produced we made it clear that we wanted an extra £10 million, including for the NEET strategy. Where is he referencing that material from?

Mr Wilson: When we had the Budget debate and I quoted liberally from the Budget document that the SDLP had produced, most of them were not even aware that they were going to sell an airport that they did not own and that they were going to sell the Speaker's house. They were going to sell off half the countryside. Talk about Maggie Thatcher's privatisation programme: the SDLP seemed to be blissfully unaware of its own privatisation programme. Maybe he should check his own party document. I am sure that he has access to it, unless it is kept secret from them.

In conclusion, of course we want to see people in further education. We want to see people encouraged to take on training and other things like that —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is definitely up.

Mr Wilson: — but let us bear in mind that there is always a cost when it comes to the support for it.

Mr Agnew: I think it has been clear — I certainly have not heard anyone disagree — that there has been an increase in hardship. As the Member who previously spoke pointed out, that is something that we are seeing across society, not just among students, but with fewer part-time jobs available, or at least with greater competition for those jobs, students are less able to get that extra finance that many of us had access to during our student days through part-time employment. We are all well aware of increased living, energy, food and travel costs. Parental incomes, of course, are hit by wage freezes and increased unemployment. The use of payday loans is something that we have talked about in the Assembly. We obviously do not want to leave people in the position of requiring them. Indeed, the NUS-USI has stated that it has had to set up food banks to help some students.

I think that it is clear that there has been an increase in hardship, yet we hear that there has been a decrease in demand for hardship payments. The question that we have to ask is why. The Minister may well be able to give good reasons for that, but the need to better promote those funds has been highlighted and may need to be looked at. The core thing that we need to know is why demand has gone down, given that need appears to have gone up. If that is due to a lack of awareness, maybe we have taken this decision hastily in the sense that, if we do not have all the evidence for the reasons, maybe the preceding action was misguided.

1.00 pm

We have been told — this was pointed out most noticeably by Mr Lyttle, the Minister's colleague — that net funding for student support has gone up overall, which has to be welcomed. The increase in further education awards has been cited as one of the things that has compensated for the cut to the hardship fund. Again, if that is the case, what are the roles of those two funds? Are they complementary? Do they overlap? If it is the case that the

student hardship fund is not successful in achieving what it seeks to achieve, does that need to be looked at? We need to find out what the solutions are. However, I certainly do not have the information to point to the correct solution as to where support needs to be tailored.

One thing that concerns me is the fact that some of the arguments made by the Minister and his party colleagues have been lost on the NUS-USI. I hear that the Minister is to meet or has met the NUS-USI. I wonder what consultation was done with it in advance of this decision. Obviously, as a student representative body, it will be the point of contact for many students in accessing those funds. Surely it is beholden on the Minister to have good communication with that group and to ensure that, if this is the right way forward, sufficient conversation took place with the NUS-USI and other student representatives to ensure that we did not have the reaction that we have seen. Rightly or wrongly, there was a backlash against the Minister's decision. Perhaps that is a lesson, in that better consultation and discussion with student representative groups could avoid such a backlash in the future.

The point was made that it is demand-led and that perhaps greater money can be accessed in monitoring rounds, should it be needed. I am concerned about that approach, because, as we know, monitoring rounds have become ever-contentious, and greater demands are being placed on them. I am certainly not reassured by that approach. If there is a fear that we need extra money, that money needs to be there up front rather than seeking to get it through monitoring rounds.

I think that the Minister has been committed to further education. I will not make petty party political points —

Mr Wilson: Will the Member give way?

Mr Agnew: Certainly.

Mr Wilson: Does the Member accept that, when budgets are tight, to commit money to spending, especially if it is demand-led, and to have it sitting there is probably the worst use of resources? If something is demand-led, you put down a certain amount of money for it, and, if it needs to be topped up, the best way to do that is through monitoring rounds.

Mr Agnew: There is a need for good accountancy. Certainly, relying on monitoring rounds is a worry when, as I say, I am not sure that this would be a priority, particularly given the hole in the health budget.

I go back to welcoming the Minister's commitment to further education, for which I give him credit. I do, however, find it hard to stomach the fact that his colleague said that he was the Minister who refused to increase student fees, when, as the Minister knows, we sat on many panels before the election during which he told me that I was unrealistic if I said that we could not raise student fees. So, it is clear that the credit there lies more with the overall Executive than with the Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is almost up.

Mr Agnew: I support the motion. I welcome the Minister's commitment to further education. Whatever we do, we need to ensure that students facing financial hardship can access support, whatever the mechanism, when they need it.

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): I welcome the opportunity to speak to the motion and to

correct what has become either a major misunderstanding or a misrepresentation of what student support my Department and I, and, indeed, the wider Executive, are providing to students in further education.

I think that it was Mr Douglas who referred to the situation in Wales, where there have been media reports on the reduction in the hardship fund there. Perhaps we can surmise that the assumption has been made that the reduction in spending on hardship funds in Northern Ireland means that a cut has been made here that is similar to that made in Wales, which is not the case. Indeed, I think that there has been a failure to look at the much wider picture of what we have been doing on student support.

There has not been a proper appreciation of how my departmental budget operates with regard to hardship funding and support for further education students, such as the interaction between further education awards and hardship funds, and other steps that we have taken. A lot of Members referred to decisions that I have taken or a lack of consultation on those decisions. Let me be very clear: this system of further education awards and hardship funds goes back to 2009 and 2010. No changes have been made to the approach adopted by the Department since then. If Members worked through the sums, they would realise that those changes took place before my term in office. I am happy to take credit for many progressive, imaginative proposals and new strategies that we have taken forward over the past number of years, but that change lay within the tenure of the previous Ministers. I am sure that Mr Swann, as Chair of the Committee, will wish to pass on the regards of the House to Lord Empey and Mr Kennedy.

I believe that considerable steps are being taken to communicate properly the existing support mechanisms, but I am happy to consider how this could be improved further. My Department recognises the importance of providing support to students facing financial difficulties associated with learning. Even with the support that is available, I acknowledge that it can be difficult for some students to enter and remain in further education. As Mr Wilson said, retention rates have improved in colleges over the past number of years. I think that someone also referred to a drop in enrolments, which may well be due to, for example, demographic change affecting the number of eligible young people and also the fact that schools tend to hang on to young people post age 16 more than in the past. That is a much wider debate. I would welcome the Assembly's turning its mind to it on some other occasion.

Across higher education and further education, significant efforts are being made to widen participation. This was one of the key motivations behind the Executive's ongoing commitment to the freezing of tuition fees for local students at local universities. It is also at the heart of the current review of higher education funding that my Department is undertaking, the results of which will go out to public consultation in the coming months. For the first time, Northern Ireland has a widening participation strategy for higher education called Access to Success. With direct relevance to further education, we ensure that financial assistance is provided to students through further education awards, bursaries and hardship funds, which are administered respectively by the Western Education and Library Board and each of the six colleges.

Further education awards and hardship funds are means tested to ensure that support is directed at students most in need. Further education awards are available to eligible students who are over 19 years of age and undertaking an approved vocational course up to level 3. The maximum amount payable is £2,092 per annum. Hardship funds are provided to help students who are facing financial difficulties and who would otherwise not be able to attend a further education college. The maximum amount payable through the hardship fund is £3,500 per annum.

These two funds are inextricably linked because, for most students, to be eligible for hardship funds, they must first have applied for a further education award. The maximum payable for applications from both funds cannot exceed £3,500 per annum in total, excluding childcare costs.

A number of years ago, the deadline for applications for further education awards was extended from 30 June to 31 August. The effect of this was positive as it provided more time for students to apply for bursary awards, resulting in increased demand for awards and, consequently, reduced demand for hardship funds. This has been a positive outcome for a number of reasons. Hardship funds are meant to be a last resort for exceptional financial personal problems, so it is to be welcomed that there is reduced demand for these and increased demand for bursaries. It is also welcome that fewer students having to apply for hardship funds means fewer having to go through the potentially intrusive process of disclosing information about their personal finances and circumstances — much more intrusive than the application route for further education awards.

FE awards are up-front payments made at the beginning of each term, whereas hardship fund payments are reactive when students are in difficulty. It is surely better to shift the balance of government intervention to earlier intervention and, indeed, prevention.

I wish to emphasise that, contrary to earlier reports, I have not reduced funding for hardship funds. The amount of money distributed is purely demand-led and is not curtailed by any budgetary considerations. The budget itself is only indicative for planning purposes and is determined by historical factors, including previous spending levels and data on the number of disadvantaged students. That is adjusted during the academic year to ensure that appropriate funding is made available.

It is important that Members understand the difference between actual spend and the budget-setting process. Budgets are an estimate for financial planning. Mr Wilson is quite right when he says that it is important to try to estimate the budget accurately as best you can. I have not made any monitoring round bids for hardship funds. We have sought, where appropriate, to make internal sums available from elsewhere in my Department's budget in the circumstances in which demand exceeds what we have budgeted for.

Allocations to students take account of personal and family financial circumstances. Over the past number of years, hardship fund requirements have been met in full, and no application has been refused because of lack of funding.

As I stated earlier, financial help is also provided to students through FE awards. Over recent years, we have encouraged take-up of those awards to reduce dependency on hardship funds. Both funds are, however,

inextricably linked, and the majority of applicants are required to apply for a further education award in the first instance before being considered for hardship support. Although there has been a reduction in hardship funding requirements over recent years, there has been a corresponding increase in the uptake of FE awards. Over the past five years, there has been a net increase of approximately £800,000 in the total amount available in the combined funds, with the budget set aside for FE awards rising by over £2 million. Although the drawdown of resources in the demand-led hardship fund may have decreased by just over £900,000, the spend on FE awards has increased by £1.5 million. That support is helping to alleviate financial barriers to education.

Hardship funds and FE awards are advertised extensively through a variety of media by the board and the colleges. FE awards are promoted on the board's website and through a television advertising campaign, which is run during May and June each year. Each college promotes both funds through a range of channels, including prospectuses, websites, posters, a variety of funding guidance literature, and information in student college diaries. Funding advice is also provided by student support services staff at induction sessions. My Department consults the board on the content of its advertising campaign and provides colleges with good practice guidelines for publicising hardship funds. Higher education support funds are administered and publicised by the higher education institutions and by colleges delivering higher education to help students experiencing financial hardship. My Department provides the funding and copies of the conditions booklet to the universities and colleges. We also place information and the conditions booklet on the NI Direct website and that of my Department.

It is important to highlight the range of support that my Department provides to students. Extensive help is provided with childcare costs through several of the funding streams. For higher education courses in FE colleges, eligible students can avail themselves of tuition fee and maintenance loans. They may also apply for a range of means-tested grants. A disabled student allowance is available. For students aged between 16 and 19, help is available through the education maintenance allowance. That provides a payment of £30 a week, plus bonus payments based on achieving objectives. My Department has provided further assistance of £4.5 million per annum to colleges through the additional support fund. That fund has been significantly increased in the past couple of years and helps colleges fund technical or personal support to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

In short, there has been a lack of understanding of how student awards and hardship budgets work. There has not been a reduction in the overall expenditure across the interconnected FE awards and hardship funds. Calls for me to reverse a cut in hardship funds are meaningless, as there has not been a cut, never mind a decision; rather there has been a natural displacement to FE awards. It would be perverse to reduce access to FE awards to see an associated displacement back towards hardship funds. That would be regressive in nature. That is surely not what the NUS-USI and others are calling for, even though that would be the logical inference from what they have been saying.

1.15 pm

Mr Flanagan: I thank the Minister for giving way. Mr Buchanan said that students must learn to budget as a life skill, but in no other sphere of life would you be given money on a three-monthly basis and asked to budget for three months without any money coming in. Instead of looking to take money from one fund and put it into another, would the Minister consider moving this to a monthly payment scheme to allow students to budget better in the same way as the rest of us do?

Dr Farry: I am happy that we look at that. That can be one of a range of interventions that we can review.

Mr Wilson: Will the Minister give way?

Dr Farry: Yes.

Mr Wilson: Does the Minister find it odd to hear that argument from Sinn Féin when, for welfare recipients, instead of being paid every two weeks, they will continue to be paid every month because of that party's refusal to implement welfare reform? If regular payments help people budget, why is Sinn Féin standing in the way of regular payments for welfare recipients?

Dr Farry: That point stands well. I want to come back to the Budget issue in a moment to make a very important point for the House to note.

I met NUS-USI representatives on 17 September to discuss these and other issues and to explain our approach to proactively supporting students in further education. I trust that I have now corrected any misunderstandings with them.

It is legitimate for students and others to campaign for a change in the eligibility criteria and the scale of the awards that we offer. However, I cautioned the NUS-USI and I will caution others that, if those were to be relaxed to make the scheme more generous or to bring in a greater number of eligible students, it would require additional funding, in times when my Department has to find savings.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Minister for giving way. Does he agree that, rather than meeting the NUS-USI to explain the changes he has already decided to make, a better approach would have been to consult it prior to that about how best to support students in hardship?

Dr Farry: My door has always been open to the NUS-USI to talk to me about such issues. We had a long-standing engagement, which coincided with their campaign in the media around the issue, and, no doubt, I will meet them in the future to discuss any important issues.

I want to make an important point around funding. At present, we are going through huge difficulties with the Northern Ireland Budget, and my Department and all the services that we provide will suffer as a consequence of that. Members need to be aware that decisions have been taken to give protection to the Department of Education. We now have the situation in which young people who fall between the ages of 16 and 19 who happen to be in the school system will avail themselves of that protection, whereas young people in that age group who attend further education or are in other training programmes have no such protection. We are very aware of the differences between the cohorts in respect of demographic and socio-economic backgrounds. There is inequity in the system

that Sinn Féin Members in particular may wish to reflect on. Hopefully, they will respond in the winding-up speech.

Mr McCarthy: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. I know that he is coming to the end of his speech, but will he and the Assembly join me in offering our deepest sympathy to the family of Kellyanne Teggert from Portaferry who was a student at Magee College in Derry and who lost her life in a very tragic situation?

Dr Farry: Absolutely. I am sure that it has been very deeply felt in the college and in her wider family circle.

In closing, I take on board the point that Members and the NUS-USI have made around looking to see how better we can promote and make people aware of the fund. We will undertake that, though Members should appreciate that we are already doing quite a lot of things to make those funds known to people.

Mr F McCann: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Phil Flanagan said that he was aware that the Minister was frustrated about what people are saying about the hardship fund. He said that there were two main sources of support and that there was a growing rate of hardship among students. The fund is there to provide increased access in relation to achievement. NUS-USI said that it was deeply concerned about the cut in the hardship fund from 2009-2010 to 2014-15. Phil Flanagan was concerned that the growing rate of financial hardship meant that some students were in desperate need of support and may not be able to access the hardship fund.

Robin Swann, the Committee Chair, said that the Department should do whatever it could to help students, and he understands that the hardship fund does that but more needs to be done. The number of students from the most deprived areas has dropped by 3,000, and there is a need to make sure that the support mechanisms are in place to help students. Of over 7,000 applicants, 1,700 have been rejected.

Tom Buchanan said that funding was vital for students, especially those in need. Students' circumstances change over their time in college. He argued that the hardship fund gives protection but should not be seen as a long-term fix. He said that reliance on funding was more to do with wider societal issues.

Pat Ramsey of the SDLP recognised that the fund was in place to help students in financial difficulty. He quoted NUS-USI and said that a huge percentage of people were looking at abandoning courses because of financial concerns. He mentioned the North West Regional College and spoke of the need for food banks and said that 70% of students rely on parental help. He said that financial support is not always in place but parental support plays a major part. He asked whether the support is getting through to the most vulnerable.

Chris Lyttle supported the motion and the principle that students should get the help that allows them to participate in education. Most importantly, he said that the Minister guarantees parity of esteem and has made additional support available for students as well as demand-led funds for fairer access for students.

Alastair Ross doubted that anyone would object to the motion. He said that he would be surprised if students were not worried about finance. He also said that we could

not have any motion without welfare reform being brought into it.

Bronwyn McGahan mentioned a very important issue. She had spoken to a constituent who was not entitled to apply to the hardship fund, and that has had an impact on their studies. Again, she quoted NUS-USI as saying that 35% of students spoke of leaving courses and that we needed to focus on that issue. There are highly skilled people who need to reskill but cannot because of financial constraints.

Sammy Douglas said that he came from a background of lifelong learning and that nobody wants to lose the scheme. He said that the Minister stated that there had been an increase in funding. He spoke about jobs and said that we had the best record in recent years. He represents an area of high social deprivation, where people have not had life chances. He supported the motion.

Sammy Wilson never fails to surprise me in these debates. He said that he found it difficult to support the motion and that people were finding problems where none really existed. He said that people were jumping on the bandwagon and asked whether there really was a problem. He asked whether this really stopped people studying. He mentioned the NUS-USI study and said that any study depends on the questions that are asked. He talked about what is being done at present and praised the Minister for the way he has handled the issue. He said that people do not know where money comes from.

Steven Agnew said that he had not heard anybody disagree that there had been an increase in hardship across society, and he asked why there had been a decrease in demand for this finance. He spoke of the need to advertise it. He also said that net funding for student support had gone up, and he spoke of the need to welcome that. He went on to say that if the student hardship fund is not successful, the Minister will need to look at it. He also said that the Minister should have good communication with NUS, and he welcomed the Minister's commitment — *[Inaudible.]* The Minister said that he welcomed the opportunity to speak. He believes that there is a misunderstanding about what he and his Department have done. He said that there is no appreciation of the steps that have been taken, and he said that considerable steps are being taken to communicate. He said that he will look at that. He spoke of the demographic changes, schools hanging on to students, Access to Success, and finance for students being means-tested. He spoke of the breakdown of finance, and he spoke at length on the different funds available and explained what those funds were for. He said that hardship funds are a last resort. He also said that he had not reduced hardship funds and had, in fact, encouraged the take-up of funds. He said that the spend on FE awards has increased, and he believes that there is a lack of understanding of how grants are awarded.

By and large, there was general support for the motion. Like always — you get it time and time again, especially when the Minister comes to the Committee — whilst we may be fixated on what may exist, it would sometimes be better to look outside the box and see if we could do anything better to ensure that things are done more effectively or to communicate better with students about how they can tap into it. There may be a lot of processes in place, but people may be slipping through the whole thing.

I am not surprised at the DUP attitude. Every place you turn now, they bring in the question of welfare reform. Rather than come off with the same tired, old thing, they need to look at the impact that welfare reform will have on communities. It would be better if they stood by and defended those most in need in society, especially within their own communities, rather than continually accusing this party, which has always had a position against welfare reform.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly believes that funding provided for students in financial hardship is vital in ensuring that students, many of whom are experiencing financial independence and budgeting for the first time, are able to continue studying in times of financial difficulty; and calls on the Minister for Employment and Learning to ensure that funding for student support is prioritised for those in greatest need and to ensure that his Department, working proactively with students' union organisations, colleges and universities, makes students aware of the availability of this support and how it can be accessed.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Members will take their ease for a moment while we change the top Table.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Postal Charges

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. One amendment has been selected and is published on the Marshalled List. The proposer will have 10 minutes to propose the amendment and five minutes in which to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Flanagan: I beg to move

That this Assembly expresses concern at the continuing existence of barriers to greater North/South economic development; fully recognises the importance of a reliable, affordable and effective postal delivery service, particularly to micro and small businesses; further recognises the findings in the recent Ofcom communications market report whereby 47% of people questioned felt that the current costs of posting a letter across the border represented poor value for money; further expresses concern at the significant additional cost differential and time delay to deliver post intended for across the border; calls for all companies and agencies involved in postal delivery to introduce a single pricing structure for mail being delivered anywhere on the island of Ireland; and further calls for the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to raise this matter at a forthcoming meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) when it meets in trade and business sectoral format and to use the NSMC to exert maximum pressure on the above companies and agencies.

Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. As we all know and have acknowledged on many occasions in the Chamber, the border presents a serious barrier to economic development on the island of Ireland. Some problems are quite challenging; some are quite complex; and some are quite ridiculous. The issue that we are debating today certainly falls into the latter category. The fact that it costs more to post a standard letter from Belcoo to Blacklion, a mere stone's throw apart, than it does to post the same letter to anywhere on the island of Britain or any of its offshore islands, makes absolutely no sense on any level. In fact, you could nearly crumple up one of those pieces of paper, make it into a paper aeroplane and throw it some of the distances in question. However, that situation is not reflected in the price and standard of cross-border postal services.

1.30 pm

What makes things worse is that there is often a considerable delay in such items being received by the intended recipient, sometimes up to three days after it should be there. This is because, for some unknown reason, post destined for the rest of Ireland has to go on a round trip to Britain for sorting. Such a situation is just not good enough. We should not tolerate it, and we must challenge those involved in the postal sector to do much better. The policies that they put in place must reflect the particular circumstances of this island, which are being ignored by the current reality. The barrier that is the border makes no sense at all in respect of postal services.

For me, the most important part of the substantive motion is the call for a single pricing structure for mail being delivered anywhere on the island of Ireland. If An Post can offer a single pricing structure for the whole of Ireland, why can the same not be asked of all postal companies in the North? It could be done quite easily if they wanted. There are no legislative or practical impediments to such a policy decision. If it could be put in place, the only things that it would have to comply with would be the universal service obligation and the standard pricing structure for post going anywhere in Britain or anywhere in the North.

However, this debate is not primarily about postal charges; it is about the people and the organisations that rely on this vital service. I do not expect people who live in or never leave north Down to have the same appreciation of the impact of the border as the people who are faced with the adverse impact of the border on a daily basis. However, consider a couple who are planning a wedding. My brother and his fiancée are in this position. Many couples organising a wedding, particularly in border areas and when one of the two comes from the other side of the border, will have to send a considerable number of the invitations to the South. Faced with that situation, many people actually travel across the border to post the items to save on costs. The same challenges that face individuals also face businesses and countless organisations that are attempting to do business with people and groups on both sides of the border.

I raise this issue not merely to point up a problem that has existed for an awful long time but to identify a solution. We have to be honest about what is going on here. There are some in our society who are determined to exploit the border and rip customers off by imposing an unwarranted and unwanted tax on cross-border transactions. There are then those who are making the most of the opportunity to undercut the extortionate prices charged by the monopoly providers.

I think of the good work being done by Hybrid Mail in Fermanagh, which is run by Colum Courtney, who recently appeared on RTÉ's 'Dragon's Den'. I know that the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment visited Colum two years ago. Organisations such as Colum's can provide a significant saving to customers using cross-border postal services.

Many reports and research exercises have identified the disproportionate cost of posting items across the border as a significant problem over recent years. In the 'Study of Obstacles to Mobility', which was carried out by PricewaterhouseCoopers for the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) and published in November 2001, the issue of cross-border postal services was identified as a problem for businesses, organisations and individuals involved in activities on both sides of the border. The issue of cross-border postal services was again discussed at the North/South Ministerial Council plenary meeting on 21 January 2011 following the publication of InterTradeIreland's quarterly business monitor in 2010, which revealed that 27% of businesses using cross-border post were dissatisfied with the cost of it. I am unsure what progress, if any, was made at this time. I believe that a paper was taken to the NSMC institutional meeting in October 2011. I had hoped that the Minister may have indicated what progress has been made, but there is nobody here, so I doubt we are going to hear about that progress.

I am grateful to Ofcom, which recently asked respondents to its annual communications market report for their satisfaction rating with cross-border postal services. Some people were surprised by the findings. I, for one, was not, as I speak on a daily basis to people who are afflicted by such nonsensical policies. Forty-seven per cent of adults surveyed by Ofcom indicated that the price of 87p to post a standard letter from one part of this island to the other was not value for money. Since that survey took place, the price of a stamp has risen by a further 10p, so I do not think that public opinion will have improved much. The Consumer Council and, indeed, its predecessor, Consumer Focus Post, have taken an active interest in this subject matter and attempted to reflect the views of consumers by seeking a solution.

They have committed themselves to exploring the issue in the coming year, and I look forward to that work. The all-party group on postal services, of which I am a member, has also agreed to look into it this year.

In conclusion, this problem needs to be sorted out. It is one of the simpler problems that we have looked at in the Assembly. I believe that, if the political will exists to exert pressure on those involved in this exercise in extortion, a solution can be found. The motion is only the first step, and a clear message needs to be sent out that the current situation is unacceptable and must change. The issue needs to be grasped at the North/South Ministerial Council. I am disappointed that there is no Minister here to respond to the debate. The issue clearly needs political and ministerial intervention to be resolved. I appeal to Members to support the motion.

Mr McGlone: I beg to move the following amendment:

Leave out all after "small businesses;" and insert:

"expresses concern at the threat to the viability of rural post offices that direct delivery competition presents and the significant additional cost differential and time delay to deliver cross-border mail; and calls on the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to assist businesses by working in conjunction with her North/South Ministerial Council colleagues and her counterparts in the Westminster Government to ensure the long-term viability of a universal postal service that incorporates a value-for-money cross-border service."

Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhuíochas leis an Chomhalta Philip Flanagan as ucht an rún a chur os ár gcomhair. I thank Mr Philip Flanagan for bringing the motion before us today. The issue is rather more than just the motion, and that is why I am grateful that the amendment was accepted. I welcome the motion, although I have to say that, of all the barriers to greater North/South economic development, the cost of posting a letter across the border appears to be one of the lesser obstacles to be overturned. Nevertheless, Mr Flanagan and his party have decided that the Assembly should focus on that issue today.

It is certainly true that the significant additional cost differential and time delay in delivering cross-border mail is a hindrance to business, particularly micro and small businesses, as well as a constant source of irritation to the public. However, the original motion may be somewhat flawed in that it engages in the politics of appealing to the better nature of all companies and agencies involved in postal delivery to introduce a single pricing structure for

mail being delivered anywhere on the island of Ireland. What if they do not? Apparently the North/South Ministerial Council should "exert maximum pressure" on those companies to comply with the edict. At some stage during the debate, which is an important one, we will perhaps hear what pressure people think should be imposed on those companies and what the Ministerial Council can actually exert on them.

The postal delivery service across Britain and Ireland is regulated by legislation set in London and Dublin. That is where the long-term viability of a universal postal service will be secured and where our efforts need to be focused — on a north, south, east and west universal postal service. The original motion would, in effect, break the existing universal postal charge that applies in the UK and the North, and our local businesses could suffer as a consequence. Indeed, the motion fails to acknowledge that there is already a threat to the existing universal postal charge here.

Our amendment seeks a meaningful debate on addressing the very real threat to the viability of our rural post offices, as well as addressing the significant additional cost differential and time delay in delivering cross-border mail. I have written to Ofcom about that very issue, and I realise that it is monitoring the situation. Royal Mail delivers a significant amount of mail at the moment. However, TNT Post UK is able to cherry-pick and operates only in urban areas. They can use the post office and have access to the services of Royal Mail to deliver on their behalf. Where TNT Post UK or any other postal operator is asking Royal Mail to deliver a greater portion of letters to more expensive-to-serve areas such as, for example, rural areas, Royal Mail has the regulatory flexibility to charge a fair price and make a fair return based on the cost of delivering those letters. That practice is known as zonal pricing and allows Royal Mail to charge more for delivering access mail in areas where it may potentially incur higher costs. That is a good part of the rationale in our amendment.

The threat follows that particular threat. That additional cost differential and time delay in delivering cross-border mail follows the privatisation of Royal Mail and the introduction of direct competition for delivery of the post. As a result of that privatisation, the current six-days-a-week, one-price-goes-anywhere universal postal service across the UK and the North is at severe risk of becoming unsustainable. Royal Mail continues to be required by law to deliver to all postcodes six days a week at a uniform price, but other postal operators are free to cherry-pick the more profitable densely populated urban areas for mail deliveries, which is a point that I touched on earlier.

As a result of its legal obligation as the sole universal service provider, Royal Mail is now unfairly at a competitive disadvantage to other postal operators. The volume of letters being delivered has been in decline for some time and is expected to drop even further. Only by using the profits from the easier-to-serve urban areas can a UK- and North-wide network be maintained. The current model undermines the sustainability of those universal services.

In our rural constituencies, the universal postal service is at greater risk than elsewhere. The rural post offices and rural postpeople who serve those communities will be the first to bear the brunt in the pursuit of a viable, or what is referred to as viable, postal service.

Ofcom has stated that it will conduct a review of the impact of direct delivery competition by the end of 2015 if certain conditions are met. Not only have those thresholds already been passed, but it may be too late by the end of 2015. Securing a viable future for the universal postal service will require the implementation of regulatory changes. The Minister or Ministers should be urging Ofcom to act now and to conduct an immediate review of the impact of direct delivery competition on the universal service in preparation for those changes.

We should also use this opportunity to expand the universal service charge to incorporate a value-for-money, cross-border service through regulatory changes North and South. Only by working in conjunction with her — I presume that the Minister responsible for that is a "her" — North/South Ministerial Council colleagues and her counterparts in the Westminster Government will the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment be able to properly assist businesses on this island. The way to do that is to ensure the long-term viability of a universal postal service that incorporates a value-for-money, cross-border service.

Mr Dunne: I also welcome the opportunity to speak on the motion. As the motion states, we fully recognise:

"the importance of a reliable, affordable and effective postal delivery service"

for all customers and business users. Our constituents quite rightly deserve a cost-effective and efficient postal delivery service, and it is vital for our businesses in these tough economic conditions that competitive postal services are available to all users to meet their postal needs.

Despite the digital revolution, we are still reliant on our postal service, and the post remains a very important form of communication for many customers. Indeed, with the ever-increasing use of online retail, the issue of postal charges is timely. We must also recognise the importance of cross-border business between Northern Ireland and the Republic. One of our main export bases is the Republic, so it is important that we ensure that we maximise every opportunity for further business growth and development.

The 2010 Consumer Focus Post report stated that over two thirds — 68% — of businesses here post to the Republic regularly, with a further 45% of those stating that the cross-border post is:

"an essential service for their business".

There is no doubt that Royal Mail is highly regarded in Northern Ireland by both domestic users and local businesses; the statistics back that up. Consider the Ofcom report of 2014, which stated that nine out of 10 people in Northern Ireland — 89% — are satisfied with Royal Mail, compared with 86% across the UK. During the Ofcom consultation, responses were sought regarding satisfaction with specific aspects of Royal Mail's service across six categories, and the Northern Ireland figures were above the UK average in every category. It is worth pointing out that, unlike Royal Mail, An Post does not deliver on Saturdays, so there is room for improvement across the sector and not just by Royal Mail.

1.45 pm

We have seen an increase in competition from alternative courier and delivery services in recent years. That competition is very welcome in the business community; it is healthy and should be further encouraged. People accuse Royal Mail of taking 2·14 working days to deliver a letter from Belfast to Dublin, yet there is next-day delivery from Belfast to London. We need to remember that next-day delivery is not just dependent on distance and that two factors come into play. When a letter leaves the UK and goes into the Republic, it ceases to be under the jurisdiction of Royal Mail and transfers to An Post.

Mr Douglas: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dunne: Will do.

Mr Douglas: The motion calls on the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to raise the matter at a forthcoming meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council when it meets in trade and business sectoral format. Does the Member agree that postal services are a reserved matter for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills at Westminster?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr Dunne: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is my clear understanding that it is a reserved matter and is not the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr Flanagan: I thank the Member for North Down for giving way. I appreciate that this is not a transferred matter and that it is a matter for the Westminster Government. However, given that it was previously discussed at an NSMC meeting, does the Member not accept that there is a precedent for the North/South institutions to take an active interest in the subject?

Mr Dunne: It may be the subject of further discussion at such a meeting.

As two organisations are involved, that leads to added time. However, there is room for improvement, and there should be greater collaboration between the two companies to streamline the process, to form a more strategic alliance and, ultimately, to deliver a better service for all users. It is worth reminding the House of the greater economic benefits that local businesses have as a result of being within the United Kingdom. Royal Mail provides a six-day service at a uniform price across the UK, which greatly assists many people here and is something that I am sure all Members of the House will fully agree with. Under regulations, Royal Mail must provide at least one standard international postal service at a uniform tariff within the UK. That means that, whether a letter is posted from Larne to Limerick or Cornwall to Cork, it has to be charged at the same uniform price.

The 2014 Ofcom report stated that almost half — 47% — of adults in Northern Ireland perceived the pricing structure to the Republic as offering poor value for money. Therefore, there is certainly room for improvement. In the best interests of local businesses and residents, we need to do all that we can —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Dunne: — to ensure delivery for the people of Northern Ireland and to encourage greater economic development for all of us here.

Mr Elliott: I was going to say that I welcomed the opportunity to take part in the debate, but I am somewhat reluctant to do so, given the ongoing serious issues in the Assembly and the Executive. I and possibly others feel that we could be debating more important issues as opposed to debating a reserved matter. However, I am willing to take part in the discussion.

The proposer of the motion indicated — I am paraphrasing him as I cannot remember his exact words — that people were determined to use the border to exploit others, but surely that has gone on for decades. We have heard of the smugglers of many years ago, and we have heard about the murders that went on for 30 years. People exploited the border in those times. People still exploit the border with fuel smuggling and fuel laundering. I hope that the Member is not putting those issues into the same category as the price of a postage stamp, because those other matters are much more serious.

I have to say, though, that, in today's society, many of the means by which people communicate with each other have become electronic. Whether by computer, email, tablet or iPhone, much more business and communication are carried out by that method, as opposed to by letter. However, it is still very important to have that sector in place. I always say that you cannot email a parcel to your friend; sending it by post is the only way. So, clearly, it is still a very important factor and one that we need to preserve. I am not so sure how you deal with the cross-border pricing difference, because I do not think that you can have a single pricing structure for the island of Ireland. No matter how you relate it, we in Northern Ireland are still part of the United Kingdom and will remain so.

It is interesting to note the changes in the cost of postage over the last three years in Northern Ireland. The cost of a second-class stamp has risen by 47% over the three-year period. I think that, by anybody's calculation, that is huge and significant, especially for those who use the service quite a lot. I read that businesses normally use second-class post as opposed to first class, so that is a 47% increase in the cost of that aspect of their business. I think it important that we put it into that context.

To me, a more vital element of the debate is the protection of rural services through post offices. That is really important to rural communities and, indeed, to those in urban areas. I would not want to exclude them, because the post office, to be fair, is a central and focal point in many communities, whether urban or rural. Post offices provide a significant service that I do not want to be lost, especially for the most vulnerable. Those people need to be protected, and the post office is one of the services that, I think, is important in helping them to live a normal life in our community. No matter what people say about the person who delivers the post, he or she performs an important service to the community. That person does not just deliver the post; he or she makes sure that individuals are OK. How many people have been found, maybe unconscious or with an illness, by the local postman or postwoman? I think it right that we try to protect those services. The initial proposal in the debate focused much too much on the cost of cross-border postage. To be fair to the proposer, he said that it was not just about the cost but

about people and communities. I would have liked a much greater focus on communities than on the cost of a stamp.

Mr Lunn: My party supports the amendment, and, if that does not pass, will happily support the motion. They are both very worthy, and, even if what is being demanded may be very difficult to achieve, it is still well worthwhile having a go. I understand the irritation of MLAs and constituents who live along the border and cannot see the justification for having to pay the same price to post a letter to somewhere only a couple of miles away as it costs to post a letter to the Orkneys. However, that is, unfortunately, the way it is at the moment.

I will deal with the motion first. Rightly, it expresses concern about the current system. A letter going from North to South requires a European stamp costing 97p, which contrasts with a cost of 68 cents, currently about 55p, for the same letter going from the South to the North. I wonder why there is such a price differential for the same service, even though there is a border. It is an amazing difference. I am told that, in Germany, for instance, sending a letter anywhere in the EU is the same price. It is the same price to any one of 27 countries. If you exclude the Scandinavian countries, the UK has the most expensive postage in Europe. The comparison gets even starker when a letter is A4 in size: the price for sending that from North to South rises to £3.20, compared with €1.20, about £1, for one South to North. It is not helped by An Post's poor record of delivery times, but I noted that Mr Flanagan pointed out that those letters have to go from here to GB first and then on to the Republic, so I imagine that it is not entirely the An Post's fault. However, one does wonder in passing whether the system in the Republic is underfunded. An Post could certainly make a case for extra investment to modernise the operation and provide a more efficient service, but that, of course, is a matter for it and not for us.

The motion calls for the Minister to raise the matter at an NSMC meeting. I have written in my notes that I look forward to hearing her comments at the end of the debate, but it does not look as though there will be any. I imagine that, as it is a reserved matter, she does not have to respond, but I note that there has been previous discussion of the matter at NSMC meetings.

The issue is complex. Royal Mail has been privatised and is free to set its prices, subject only to certain caps on second-class services and a commitment to universal service to any part of the UK. It is hard to see how such a pricing gap as currently exists can be bridged, but, by all means, let us ask the question and keep at the topic. I imagine that the NSMC is a good starting point for somewhere to raise it.

To return to the amendment, the viability of our rural post offices is a major issue. It did not particularly need to be connected to the motion, because it goes well beyond just postal services. As Mr Elliott rightly said, our rural post offices are community hubs. They are a point of contact, particularly for older people, and we should do what we can to protect them. However, I am not sure whether direct-delivery competition is the biggest threat to their existence. Others have pointed out that electronic mail, social media and the Internet's speedy services have hit the Post Office and will probably continue to do so.

At the moment, there is nothing specifically to hinder private operators offering a cross-border service for letters as well as parcels. In a normal way, I would encourage competition as a means — indeed, the only effective means — of reducing prices, but the final part of the amendment calls on the Minister to work through the NSMC and Westminster to:

“ensure the long-term viability of a universal postal service that incorporates a value-for-money cross-border service.”

For now, I think that the best thing that we can do is to keep the pressure on and hope that we can come up with something that is satisfactory for everybody. I cannot quite see how we can do that at present, but that is not to say that we should not try.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Question Time begins at 2:00 pm, so I suggest that Members take their ease until then. The debate will continue after Question Time, when the next Member to speak will be Megan Fearon.

The debate stood suspended.

2.00 pm

(*Mr Principal Deputy Speaker*
(*Mr Mitchel McLaughlin*) in the Chair)

Oral Answers to Questions

Justice

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Question 9 has been withdrawn.

Animal Cruelty: Appeals

1. **Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Justice what consideration has been given to including animal cruelty cases in the schedule of cases that can be appealed by the Public Prosecution Service. (AQO 6681/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Following a court case earlier this year, I was contacted by Naomi Long MP and a number of other public representatives. I decided to include offences under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 in a review of the legislation governing the referral of a sentence by the Director of Public Prosecutions to the Court of Appeal, on the grounds of undue leniency. That review is under way. Any proposals for change arising out of the review will be subject to public consultation, following the Justice Committee's consideration.

Mr Agnew: I am delighted that the Minister is minded to include animal cruelty offences in the schedule to allow them to be appealed if they are deemed to be overtly lenient. The Minister will be well aware of the public horror not only at the acts of cruelty that were committed in the case to which he referred but at what appeared to be a very lenient sentence. The Minister will be aware of other cases in the system that may be coming down the line. Will the timescale for implementing such a change impact on those cases?

Mr Ford: Mr Agnew is a bit enthusiastic when he asks me to give a timescale for implementation. I hope that we will have the consultation document ready by the end of this year for the Justice Committee's consideration. However, as Mr Agnew and others know, the timescale for implementation of legislation is not entirely in my hands.

Mr Elliott: Is the Minister considering adding any other particular cases or aspects to the schedules of cases that could be appealed to the courts by the Public Prosecution Service?

Mr Ford: Mr Elliott highlights, correctly, that there is an issue about exactly what would be done. In reality, there have been a fairly limited number of referral cases up to now. If nothing else, this will ensure that, when court decisions are taken, offenders know, by and large, what the penalty is. However, it is clear that there is concern about the animal cruelty and other issues. The consultation will be fairly open-ended. If any Member wishes to highlight specific issues, I will happily hear any particular points they may wish to make. The position is that we cannot have everything referable, but it is important that we ensure that there is confidence in the

law by allowing appropriate sentences in as many cases as we can manage through this process.

Criminal Activity: Dissident Republicans

2. **Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the current level of criminal activity by dissident republican groups. (AQO 6682/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is clear that dissident republicans and dissident unionists are continuing to carry out criminal activity. This is conducted to fundraise and for personal gain, and to exert control over communities in which they operate. The activity includes drug supply; robbery, including armed robbery; extortion; operating in counterfeit goods; smuggling tobacco; and fuel laundering. It is also clear that, despite claims of public opposition to criminality and the perpetration of assaults and shootings against those allegedly involved in antisocial and criminal behaviour, dissident republicans depend on a wide range of criminal enterprises to fund their terrorist activity.

Mr Weir: I thank the Minister for his reply, although I was little bemused by some of the wording. I am not quite sure whether Jim Allister is going to be flung in jail later on today as a dissident unionist. We all welcome the efforts by all agencies to combat the criminal activities of dissident republicans. What assurance can the Minister give that the efforts brought to bear outside jail will be matched by the efforts in jail and, in particular, that dissident republicans will not get their way in the demands that they are making in the prison system?

Mr Ford: I congratulate Mr Weir on his inventiveness regarding the supplementary. I, as, I think, the House is well aware, commissioned a review of the operation of the 2010 agreement by the independent assessors some time ago. That review is now completed, and it will be considered by me and the Prison Service over the coming weeks. I can certainly give the House a guarantee that the situation as it prevails in Roe House and Bush House is very definitely not that which pertained years ago in the Maze prison and that, as long as I am Minister of Justice, it will not be. There are issues about ensuring the best possible use of staffing and a good regime for all prisoners, but the safety and security of prisoners and prison staff is paramount in the work that is being done.

Mr A Maginness: Will the Minister indicate what level of contact there is between himself and his counterpart in Dublin, in the Irish Republic, in relation to monitoring and taking action against dissident republicans?

Mr Ford: I assure Mr Maginness that there is very good contact between my Department and the Department of Justice and Equality and between me and Minister Frances Fitzgerald. Some of the issues that he is hinting at are more operational issues for the PSNI and an Garda Síochána and the good work that is being done by the two prison services in cooperation. You may hear a little bit more about the fight against organised crime and terrorism later this week.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Ross Hussey, who can stay seated.

Mr Hussey: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. In relation to dissident activity, will the Minister advise the House of whether he has any knowledge of weaponry with Provisional IRA history that was used by these republican

terror groups? Will he also confirm that he condemns unreservedly attacks on Orange halls, which are being masterminded at times by dissident republicans?

Mr Ford: Mr Hussey cleverly managed to ask two questions. I will leave entirely the operational aspect of weapons and what history they may have to those charged with operational responsibility.

I have condemned all acts of terrorism in the House on many occasions before I became Minister and since. I am happy, if he wishes, to add my condemnation of the attack on the Orange hall at Keady to the list of condemnations that I have made in the past. No such attack has any place in a modern civilised society. Such attacks should be resisted by all of us. Anybody who has any information that could help to catch the perpetrators has a duty to pass that information to the PSNI, an Garda Síochána, or through Crimestoppers if they prefer.

Mr Allister: Perhaps the Minister would like to explain his reference to dissident unionism in the context of terrorism. In terms of the Minister being able to give a definitive and reliable assessment of the terrorist threat, will he tell us whether he, as a devolved Minister, is privy to security service briefings on these matters?

Mr Ford: The position is quite clear. Matters of national security are matters for the Secretary of State. In certain respects, the PSNI and the Prison Service have responsibilities to the Secretary of State rather to me in any way. In a general sense, I receive occasional briefings from the security service alongside the briefings I receive from the PSNI about the state of organised crime and terrorist activity.

Alcohol Abuse: Costs

3. **Mr McKinney** asked the Minister of Justice, given a recently published report from Addiction NI that estimates the cost of alcohol abuse to the criminal justice system to be £340m annually, to outline the action he is taking to tackle this problem. (AQO 6683/11-15)

Mr Ford: Alcohol abuse contributes to a wide range of significant social problems, including criminal behaviour. I welcome the joint report from Addiction NI and the Forum for Action on Substance Abuse (FASA) that highlights the significant cost to the justice system of dealing with this issue. The actions being taken by my Department are set out in the community safety strategy and the overarching strategic framework for reducing offending. My Department is also a key contributor to the Executive's new strategic direction on alcohol and drugs, which is led by DHSSPS.

The range of actions my Department delivers includes the Alcohol and Drugs: Empowering People Through Therapy (AD:EPT) programme, which provides psychological and educational drug and alcohol programmes for offenders. Young people admitted to Woodlands Juvenile Justice Centre are assessed for drug and alcohol misuse, and the appropriate services are put in place to support them. At a local level, policing and community safety partnerships (PCSPs) deliver alcohol-related initiatives, including through engagement with local drug and alcohol coordination teams.

Most recently, PCSPs played an active role in the promotion of the No Boozing on Board campaign,

highlighting that it is illegal to drink alcohol on board a bus in Northern Ireland.

My Department has also been working with health colleagues on a joint health-care and criminal justice strategy, covering the health and social care needs of significant numbers of people who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Mr McKinney: The figures are huge, and, as the Minister quite rightly points out, they affect the health budget to the tune of £900 million. In terms of priority, and given that this is a historical problem, would it not be appropriate for an Executive task force to, once and for all, begin to tackle it head-on?

Mr Ford: If Mr McKinney saw what I sometimes see at meetings of the Executive, he would not put so much faith in an Executive task force. Quite seriously, there is good, close working between officials from Health and Justice, which are the two key Departments in this area. As he highlights, there are significant costs to the health-care system, as well as to the justice system, from alcohol.

Alongside other Departments, as appropriate, the important thing is to see that the strategic direction on alcohol and drugs has effect across a range of Departments and that all contribute where they can. That work is ongoing, but clearly, as we all know from the scale of the problem, there is much still to do.

Mr Swann: Considering the link between alcohol abuse and the misuse of legal highs, is the Minister considering bringing forward any legislation to tackle legal highs? Has he had any conversations with his Westminster counterpart in regard to that?

Mr Ford: I am not sure that there is that close a link between legal highs — new psychoactive substances — and alcohol. As most Members are aware, the specific issue of legal highs is a reserved matter. I have been in correspondence with the Home Office about that recently. The Home Office has a report that is due for publication in the near future, and we await its proposals.

One of the issues that is also relevant is the work that has been done in the Republic in recent years, and some of the work that we have done, making use of consumer protection legislation, has had benefits when it comes to protecting the public in Belfast, Omagh and Larne.

So, there are matters that can be used within our legislative framework, but clearly we will be interested to see what further the Home Office proposes.

Mr Givan: I appreciate that it is not for the Minister to take this forward, but given the impact of alcohol on the criminal justice system, would he support the minimum pricing of alcohol, so that, in some instances, water and soft drinks are much cheaper than a substance that causes such devastation? Would he support that proposal if it were brought to the Executive?

Mr Ford: I am glad that Mr Givan added that final rider: I was going to say that I am not sure that, as Minister of Justice, I have a remit specifically to concentrate on minimum pricing. I am on record as personally supporting minimum pricing. So, if he is asking whether I would support such a proposal were it to come to the Executive, the answer is that, if the argument in favour was as cogent

as that of Mr Givan and his colleagues, it would be highly likely.

Mr Lyttle: Given that over 50% of recorded domestic violence this year has had an alcohol-related element, will the Minister reassure the House that he is working with all the relevant agencies to ensure that that particular type of violent abuse is eradicated?

Mr Ford: That is a very significant issue. The latest statistics that I saw showed that something like 57% of domestic and sexual violence was alcohol-related, which is a huge issue for this society. It is one of the key issues that will come through in the joint strategy between the Health and Justice Departments on stopping domestic and sexual violence, as we seek to put together the work that was done in two separate strategies.

One of the key issues where there has been direct action on this has been very noticeable. The pilot, where police officers in G district, in and around Derry, have been wearing body cameras, has produced specific results relating to a domestic violence incident. I hope that that is something on which we will see further work being done across Northern Ireland.

PSNI: Recruitment Procedures

4. **Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of whether all procedures in the recent recruitment of the Deputy Chief Constable were properly adhered to. (AQO 6684/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am content that the procedures developed by the Northern Ireland Policing Board in relation to the recent recruitment of the Deputy Chief Constable were properly adhered to. While the board is responsible for developing the process and running the competition, I have a role, in legislation, to approve the proposed appointment of senior officers.

In light of concerns raised by a panel member, I sought assurances from the board's chair and chief executive in relation to the appointment process. I also met the panel member concerned and consulted the independent adviser from HM Inspectorate of Constabulary.

On the basis of the assurances received regarding the integrity of the process, I was content that there had been extensive oversight and scrutiny, and I approved the panel's recommendation.

2.15 pm

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. Ba mhaith liom an méid seo a fhiafraí de. Would the Minister agree with me that those who questioned the integrity of the process — that that questioning does not help the acceptance of the Police Service in Northern Ireland?

Mr Ford: The position was that I became aware that one member of the panel had withdrawn from the process on the day of second interviews and expressed concerns about the procedures. I felt that it was appropriate, given my role of ensuring that the procedures were carried out properly, to request that member to come to a meeting. At the same time, I had a number of meetings with the chair and chief executive and, as I said, with the independent

adviser. On the strength of the assurances that I was given, I am assured that the process was carried out properly. Although one member expressed concern, I believe that the other eight were unanimous in the recommendation that they made. I believe that that was an adequate basis on which to accept the recommendation.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Príomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. In a sense, he answered most of my question. However, could he confirm that concerns were raised directly with him by Caitríona Ruane in regard to serious flaws and anomalies in the process prior to your appointment of a new Deputy Chief Constable?

Mr Ford: The correct timescale is that serious concerns were raised in the media by Ms Ruane. Subsequent to receiving a recommendation but being made aware of the concerns that she had raised, from the media and the chair and chief executive of the board, I deemed it appropriate to request her to meet me to explain the concerns that she had put publicly. On the basis of the concerns that she expressed, and discussions I had with others, I believed that the appointment was made properly and that is why I confirmed it.

Mr Hussey: I declare an interest as a member of the Policing Board and of the aforementioned panel. The fact that a Member of this House made public representations whilst the committee was meeting and the interviews taking place was, in my opinion, an attempt to politically interfere with the appointment process. Would you agree with me that that was the case?

Mr Ford: I am not in a position to attribute motivation to any Member of this House — heaven spare me if I did — but it appeared to me that the concerns that were raised were not valid and on that basis I took the view of the majority of those who had been present in the room.

National Crime Agency

5. **Mrs Cameron** asked the Minister of Justice what progress has been made in his discussions with the SDLP and Sinn Féin in relation to fully extending the powers of the National Crime Agency to Northern Ireland. (AQO 6685/11-15)

8. **Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Justice to outline the consequences of the failure to extend the powers of the National Crime Agency to Northern Ireland, specifically in relation to border crime such as fuel laundering and cigarette smuggling. (AQO 6688/11-15)

Mr Ford: With permission, Principal Deputy Speaker, I will take questions five and eight together.

Members need to be aware that there is now clear evidence of a major gap in our ability to tackle serious and organised crime groups. That is why, on 8 September, I circulated a further paper to, amongst others, the main political parties, the Justice Committee and the Northern Ireland Policing Board, setting out proposals on the accountability of the National Crime Agency (NCA), which should enable us to achieve the full operation of the agency here. It is a comprehensive proposal that will create clear, transparent and significant local accountability and is the result of extensive work between my Department, the NCA, the PSNI and the Home Office

and has the full commitment of all those bodies to make it work.

I am in the process of meeting the main political parties. The meetings to date have been positive in tone, and I am hopeful that we can achieve a resolution. I have made it clear that this is the last attempt to do so in the foreseeable future. The current state of limbo has existed for too long. If we cannot achieve agreement now on the proposal, we must accept that it will not be possible to do so and start to work to plug, as far as possible, the gaps in our law enforcement efforts that this has caused.

The consequences of a failure to reach agreement on the operation of the NCA in Northern Ireland have already been felt across law enforcement. I urge all Members to support the current proposals so that our law enforcement agencies and our people can benefit from the skill, expertise and resources of the National Crime Agency.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for his answer. Given the real concerns throughout the community about fuel laundering, sex crime, illicit drugs and alcohol, human trafficking and dissident activity, does he believe that this situation is acceptable? Are the people of Northern Ireland being left vulnerable?

Mr Ford: No, it is not acceptable, and people are clearly vulnerable in a number of areas. We need to be clear that some issues, including some that Mrs Cameron highlighted, are covered by reserved matters and that the NCA is operational. However, as I highlighted to Mr Weir, we also know that a large number of those carrying out organised crime do not check the legislative book before deciding whether they will do reserved or devolved crime. Therefore, there can be problems in taking action against criminal gangs if part of their work is in the so-called devolved criminal area.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as an fhreagra sin. I thank the Minister for his answers to date. Even today, he said nothing to explain why he believes that all members of the NCA should not be subject to the exact same accountability mechanisms as all members of the PSNI.

Mr Ford: The reality is that all members of the NCA cannot be subject to exactly the same mechanisms as the PSNI, but, in the paper that has most recently been prepared, the accountability mechanisms for NCA activities go significantly beyond any other part of the UK and are as near as can be the same. The role given to the Chief Constable in approving the actions of the NCA and the role of the Police Ombudsman, who will have responsibilities for, amongst other things, civil recovery and the actions of NCA officers operating in the reserved and devolved sphere, are all significant advances on what would have been the case. That takes them very much into the same region as PSNI accountability.

Mr Easton: Does the Minister agree that crime around the border would be tackled much more easily if the National Crime Agency were devolved to Northern Ireland? Does he agree that the failure of Sinn Féin and the SDLP to have the National Crime Agency is helping to allow criminals to get away with crime around the border?

Mr Ford: I am not sure whether Mr Easton should simply highlight crime around the border, because it is clear that

a lot of organised crime is not related only to the border. Indeed, some issues on the border are reserved matters, so the NCA can operate. However, there is no doubt that we are losing out at present.

I could give the House any number of examples of where we are losing out, but that would take rather longer than the two minutes that I have. That includes investigations into child abuse cases, including online child abuse, and the work of Operation Notarise, which was UK-wide but had to be carried through by the PSNI whereas NCA expertise was used in England, Wales and Scotland. There was a recent example of money laundering, when the root offence involved cannabis growing, but it could not be considered by the NCA because cannabis cultivation is a devolved issue. There are cases of drug importation into the UK in which the PSNI was asked to take action on behalf of the NCA, but officers had to be diverted to another serious crime, so there was a potential loss.

They are all examples. With civil recovery figures, we can see clearly that, as of 30 June this year, there were only eight Northern Ireland cases under investigation compared with 19 a year earlier, with gross assets being considered of £9.8 million this year as opposed to £19.2 million last year. That is a sign of work being cut back on civil recovery because we can no longer deploy the NCA into that area of work. There are very significant issues that all need to be addressed, whether they are close to the border, in north Down or in any other part of Northern Ireland.

Magilligan Prison: New Build

6. **Ms Sugden** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the submission of an outline business case by the Northern Ireland Prison Service for the new build proposal for Magilligan prison. (AQO 6686/11-15)

Mr Ford: The outline business case for the redevelopment of Magilligan prison was submitted to DOJ financial services division for scrutiny in August this year. My officials are assessing its content, and Prison Service officials have been working closely with them to address some of the finer details. Once the financial services division officials confirm that they are content with the outline business case, they will submit it to the Department of Finance for approval.

Ms Sugden: I thank the Minister for his answer. Is it realistic to assume that there is funding available for an outline business case for the redevelopment of Magilligan prison?

Mr Ford: I am tempted to say that Ms Sugden should take that question to the Minister of Finance, but I shall try to answer it seriously. It is not clear at this stage what finance will be available. The timeline that we are looking at is for a phased redevelopment that would allow the prison to remain in operation while building work is done, which could take until 2022-23. On that basis, the capital sums required in any one year are relatively modest and within what we anticipate being the Department of Justice's capital budget, but, clearly, there is competition for priorities — no doubt, at some point soon, other Members will jump up and refer to Hydebank Wood and Maghaberry as well as any other DOJ responsibility. I believe that it is realistic, given the planned phasing, but we will have to see how things develop in the next CSR period.

Mr Campbell: The Minister will be aware of the long-running interest that my constituency colleagues and I have in the issue. I welcome his reference to a phased development. When the business case returns and he makes representations to the Department of Finance and the Minister thereof, will he ensure that the case is pressed very vigorously so that the phased development that he referred to can begin as quickly as possible?

Mr Ford: Mr Campbell really is asking me to put my neck in the noose with people from other constituencies as well. I believe that we have a realistic programme. Clearly, some areas in Magilligan are of higher priority than others. Some accommodation is fundamentally not fit for purpose: some of the cellular blocks need replacement as a very urgent priority. On the other hand, some of the other facilities for learning and skills workshops, although far from ideal, do not require replacement on the same basis. I am sure that the Minister of Finance, with his customary pleasant look at the needs of the Department of Justice, will take account of that, especially if one of his party colleagues, the Member of Parliament for the aforementioned constituency, lobbies him with me.

Mr Dallat: For the Minister to appreciate the absolute priority that this should be, would he be prepared to spend a night in Magilligan prison to experience the conditions under which the staff and inmates exist? Indeed, I would have no objection if he spent several nights in it. *[Laughter.]*

Mr Ford: That is quite interesting because I remember that, on one occasion, members of a local council invited me to visit a Department of Justice courthouse. They felt that they were inviting me to their courthouse, whereas, in fact, it was mine. I am not quite sure whether, technically, Mr Dallat has the right to invite me to spend the night in one of my prisons. I am also not sure that there are enough free cells, as I cannot imagine that anybody would want to share a cell with me.

On a serious note, I was in Magilligan for a detailed visit in the early part of the summer and am well aware of the inadequacies of the physical accommodation. Certainly, the H-blocks and some of the facilities in Foyleview, the open unit outside the prison, are of a decidedly third- or fourth-rate nature, yet some exceptionally good work is being done. On the day I was there, over half of the prisoners in Foyleview were out doing some constructive work for the benefit of local charities, community groups and churches, which is clearly the kind of rehabilitation work that is needed, but we need to get the buildings fit for the purpose of many of the programmes delivered in them. So, I might not go and stay the night, but I assure Mr Dallat that I will continue to visit it by day.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: We are getting very close to time.

PCSP/DPCSP: Independent Members

7. **Mrs McKeivitt** asked the Minister of Justice what steps have been included in the review of the code of practice on the appointment of independent members to policing and community safety partnerships (PCSPs) and district policing and community safety partnerships (DPCSPs) to ensure that members of proscribed and illegal organisations will not be appointed as independent members of either PCSPs or DPCSPs. *(AQO 6687/11-15)*

2.30 pm

Mr Ford: The code of practice on the appointment of independent members to PCSPs and DPCSPs contains provisions to disqualify a person from appointment on the grounds of a criminal conviction and requires applicants to sign a declaration against terrorism.

Following appointment, the Policing Board may remove a member if, in the case of independent members, the member fails to disclose a conviction or have demonstrably acted in breach of the terms of the declaration against terrorism, or if he or she convicted of a criminal offence.

A revised draft version of the code of conduct was issued for public consultation last March. Responses were received on a range of issues from a wide range of individuals and organisations. None of those who responded raised concerns about the effectiveness of those aspects of the existing provisions. Although suggestions have been made about strengthening the declaration against terrorism, it is the same declaration that applies to candidates in council elections. The relevant provisions of the code of practice, therefore, remain unchanged.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for listed questions. We now move on to 15 minutes of topical questions.

Justice: Budget Cuts

1. **Mr Lunn** asked the Minister of Justice whether he knows how much he will have to reduce his budget by during the current financial year, let alone next year, and to give an assessment of the services that might be under threat. *(AQT 1501/11-15)*

Mr Ford: I am not in a position to give Members a firm answer to that question. The likelihood is that we will be looking at in the region of a 6% cut in this financial year, which, given that we are nearly halfway through it, is a very significant in-year cut that will potentially have very serious consequences.

In addition to that cut, some spending areas across the Department will have to make larger cuts because of issues such as the cost of legal aid, with which there are real challenges. Furthermore, we have yet to get Assembly agreement on some of the changes that I have been proposing for some time. So, the reality is that we will potentially see cuts of 12% or 13% in some of the Department's core services.

As the Chief Constable said, we are also likely to see an end to police officer recruitment this year. We have already seen the Probation Board lay off temporary probation officers, thereby increasing concerns about the supervision of offenders in the community. It is highly likely that we will see some prisoners locked up for longer, despite the Prison Service's good work on rehabilitation, about which I was just talking to Mr Dallat. So, all of those are almost inevitable consequences, even though we do not yet have a firm figure.

Mr Lunn: I thank the Minister for his answer. Does he agree that the longer that it takes the Executive to make decisions on those issues, the harder that it will be to make the savings required? On the back of that, does he also agree that this matter requires urgent Executive attention and

that the First Minister and the deputy First Minister might profitably use their time on addressing such issues rather than swanning around Gleneagles at the Ryder Cup?

Mr Ford: I could not agree more with my colleague about the necessity of the Executive as a whole to address those issues. Those who read the 'Belfast Telegraph' on Friday will have seen a graphic that illustrated information given from a very senior level in the Civil Service, and it showed that every day's delay is costing the Northern Ireland Executive £1 million. As the Minister responsible for the third-largest spending Department, I see a large part of that impacting on the Department of Justice. Given the significant cuts that have been made in the current CSR period, because of the link to the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, it is absolutely clear that we are now at the point at which this can no longer be done by cutting the back office. If we cannot get the matter resolved very quickly, there will be real impacts on front line public services, on community safety and on the issues of concern to our community. Indeed, it is now almost inevitable that there will be those significant impacts however quickly decisions are taken. So, I agree entirely about the necessity of addressing this. Indeed, I proposed last week that the Executive should clear diaries and concentrate on the issues.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Question 2 has been withdrawn.

Justice: Budget Cuts

3. **Mr McMullan** asked the Minister of Justice to explain why, although they are vital in building confidence in policing and the criminal justice system, he has imposed severe budget cuts in the Office of the Police Ombudsman and the Policing Board. (AQT 1503/11-15)

Mr Ford: I believe that every part of the justice system is equally vital. The reality is that the cuts are being apportioned as fairly as they can be, taking account of the range of pressures that exist. To suggest that we should somehow keep the ombudsman's office or the Historical Enquiries Team going at full pelt whilst not protecting the public today would be, I believe, a dereliction of my duty, which is to police the present, to provide a justice system for the present and to provide probation and prison officers for the present. It is the reality that until all parties agree on dealing with the past, we cannot allow the justice budget to be completely hidebound by the problems of the past to the expense of the present and the future.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat. Would the Minister agree that the accountability and oversight mechanisms, by their nature, should be exempt from any cuts?

Mr Ford: I cannot agree that anything should be exempt from cuts. We have made good efforts to protect those mechanisms and the front line for the past four years, but the failure of other Executive Ministers now means that those cuts are inevitable.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Mr William Irwin is not in his place, so we will move on.

Pregnancy: Abortion Guidelines

5. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Justice what discussions and cooperation he has had with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

to update the legislation and guidance governing the termination of pregnancy to minimise the risks that exist to mothers' lives and well-being, given that pregnant women continue to approach health service professionals who advise them that their child cannot survive. (AQT 1505/11-15)

Mr Ford: Mr Beggs raises a very serious issue. I believe that a number of different aspects of abortion legislation need to be considered. One which has been raised is the specific issue of the premises in which lawful abortions may be performed. That is a matter purely for the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in its regulation aspect, although it may request assistance from the Department of Justice. The others relate to termination either on grounds of fatal foetal abnormality or sexual crime.

I have a document that is close to publication, which I hope to share with the Committee for Justice very shortly. It will then be published for consultation to deal with those two aspects, which are the responsibilities of the Department of Justice. Indeed, just a couple of weeks ago, I had a further communication from a young woman who found herself in exactly the position that Mr Beggs describes. I do believe that the House will have to face up to the difficult issue of how we resolve the concerns of such women, many of whom would not previously have described themselves as pro-choice, but who, faced with the fact that they are carrying a foetus that is not viable, have to consider the dreadful question of how that affects them and the lives of their families and how they will respond in the future. I hope that we will get the opportunity to hear the voices of those women within a fairly short period.

Mr Beggs: Could the Minister outline the attitude of the Health Minister — either the previous Minister, Mr Poots, or Minister Wells? Is he satisfied that there has been reasonable engagement to try to resolve this matter?

Mr Ford: The position in a public statement from the previous Minister, when I had written to him suggesting that we do a joint consultation on all aspects of abortion, was that he believed it would be confusing to put the health aspects in the same consultation paper as the justice aspects. On that basis, it is his responsibility to consider the health aspects and, as I have said to the House, I have a paper that I trust will be out for public consultation before the end of October, which will put forward proposals on the justice aspects.

RUC Special Branch: Inquests

6. **Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Justice to outline why, given their history of collusion in state murders, former members of RUC Special Branch are involved in vetting information for controversial inquests. (AQT 1506/11-15)

Mr Ford: The reality is that this is an issue that is of direct relevance operationally to the police in how they carry that through and to inquests that are in process. In neither circumstance would it be appropriate for me to comment on it.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin: Go raibh maith agat. I note the Minister's response, but surely he has an opinion on how this process would actually contribute to confidence-building on policing in the nationalist community?

Mr Ford: I repeat: there may be issues of public confidence, but, as Minister, I cannot interfere in a process that is not mine, whether at the coroner's level or the policing level.

PSNI: Efficiencies

7. **Mr McQuillan** asked the Minister of Justice what efficiencies he is asking the Chief Constable of the PSNI to make this year. (AQT 1507/11-15)

Mr Ford: Technically, I do not ask the Chief Constable to make any efficiencies. That is an issue for the Chief Constable to consider in conjunction with the Policing Board on the basis of the budget allocation that is being made. As I said earlier, it is difficult to be clear. I told Mr Lunn that we were looking at efficiencies probably in the region of 6%, but it is not yet clear what the position is. We badly need to know more certainly. However, at a level of something like 6%, it is almost certain that police recruitment would stop this year, a significant number of civilian staff on short-term contracts would be replaced by police officers and the good work that was done by Matt Baggott — taking police officers from behind desks and putting them onto the streets — might well have to be reversed in a way that would be detrimental to public safety.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Question 8 — sorry, I call Mr McQuillan for a supplementary.

Mr McQuillan: Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker. What about the police officers who are investigating historical crimes? Is there any chance that they will be taken off those and put to front line services to make up for those we will lose from the front line?

Mr Ford: Again, Mr McQuillan tempts me to go too far into an operational area, but I understand that the Chief Constable's expectation is that he would have to prioritise the needs of today in a way that would result in some officers being removed from some of the historical work that is being done. There are specific areas, whether it be the HET, other historical work or issues arising from the Saville inquiry, that will potentially see a reduction of staffing because of the need to put officers onto front line duties today.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Question 8 has been withdrawn.

Drugs: South Belfast

9. **Mr McGimpsey** asked the Minister of Justice whether he is satisfied that the police in South Belfast are winning the battle against drugs or does he believe that we need further investment and more resources, given that, in South Belfast, as in other constituencies, we have had a series of issues with drugs, including the discovery of cannabis factories; a drug supplier — so-called "Andre" — riding his bicycle around, which has been well-documented in the 'Sunday World'; and deaths as a consequence of legal highs. (AQT 1509/11-15)

Mr Ford: I could agree with all the points that we might make in the Chamber about more resources, but the reality is that, because of the current behaviour in the Executive and the general budget pressures, there will be no more resources.

There is no doubt that a drug problem is arising across western Europe, if not further afield, that affects Northern Ireland as well. That is why we are attempting to enlist the support of the wider community. For example, a number of social landlords were involved in the launch of the scratch-and-sniff card that alerts people to the smell of cannabis as well as giving them information about the signs of cannabis growing. The industrial-scale growing of cannabis is a significant issue and, on average, there are two discoveries a week of such processes. All those are issues that, frankly, cannot be left to the police. We need the support of the public, and we need a joined-up partnership.

Mr McGimpsey: I thank the Minister for his answer. Of course it is not simply a police issue, and we are aware of that; it is a societal issue. However, one very strong arm against the drugs trade is the courts. Is the Minister satisfied and comfortable with the punishments being meted out by the courts when cases are brought before the law, or does he consider that an increase in the tariffs would now be appropriate? Will he look at the options for stiffer penalties through the courts for those found to be peddling what are, effectively, instruments of death?

Mr Ford: Our penalties in Northern Ireland are basically comparable to the penalties that exist in the other two jurisdictions across the UK. I am not sure whether it is the legislative penalty that is the issue so much as what some Members might feel about the penalties that are actually imposed by judges in individual cases. Of course, that is something that I referred to earlier when talking about potentially looking at the issue of referability.

2.45 pm

PSNI: Recruitment

10. **Ms Ruane** asked the Minister of Justice whether he is aware that and to explain why, in recent fair employment monitoring, in one of the first times that it has provided a breakdown, Grafton Recruitment outlined that, for associate staff for the PSNI, 9.6% were Catholic male or female and 84% were from the Protestant community. (AQT 1510/11-15)

Mr Ford: I talked earlier about what my responsibilities were, but to be asked to explain the actions of a private sector company is beyond even the wildest dreams that I would have of what my remit might be.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I am afraid that we are out of time. [Interruption.] Order. Time is up. We must move on to questions to the Minister for Employment and Learning.

Employment and Learning

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Questions 1 and 9 have been withdrawn.

Manufacturing and Engineering: Action Plan

2. **Ms McGahan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the advanced manufacturing and engineering services action plan. (AQO 6696/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):

In 2013, I established an advanced manufacturing and engineering services working group, with membership from employers, colleges, universities and government, to identify and address the skills challenges faced by employers in the sector.

In April 2014, I launched an action plan agreed by the group, and, since then, a number of initiatives have been taken forward. For example, a computing and engineering scholarship programme has been developed, offering funding support to assist twenty employers offering work placements to undergraduate students taking the relevant degree courses that meet employer needs in computing and engineering. Also, a computer numerical control machining conversion course is being delivered and funded by my Department's Assured Skills programme. That will upskill 12 Magellan Aerospace staff. It is due to complete in October, at which point it will be evaluated, with a view to rolling it out within the sector. Furthermore, a higher-level apprenticeship in engineering commenced in November 2013, with 15 apprentices from companies such as Terex, Kiverco and the Quinn Group. The apprentices will do a foundation degree on a part-time basis with the South West College.

Another key action that is being taken forward is the development and implementation of a careers attractiveness strategy. It will inform young people and their key influencers about the wide range of career opportunities available in the sector.

The aim of the action plan is to upskill the existing workforce across the sector to meet the exact needs of local employers and to ensure that there is a pipeline of highly skilled young people keen to embark on a career in this exciting industry.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for his response. As you know, in my constituency of South Tyrone, there is the promotion of engineering as a realistic and long-term career option. Can you ensure that people will be trained up in the appropriate skills to ensure the long-term sustainability of this vital industry?

Dr Farry: I am happy to assure the Member that it is something that we are working on. She is lucky that she has the South West College in her area, which is very proactive in working with local employers. That goes for all the colleges right across Northern Ireland. We are very much guided by the needs of employers. It is important that we hear about not just the very general skills that employers need but the very specific skills shortages that they may be experiencing, so that we can ensure that the education and training system responds. The working group gives us the structures around which we can provide a forum in which we do that efficiently and effectively.

Mr Dallat: Given that there have been serious job losses in the sector since the action plan was devised, when the Minister evaluates it, will he look at a more broadly based plan that caters better for the geographical spread of job losses, which are not just confined to one area?

Dr Farry: I certainly recognise that we have seen some job losses in the sector, but it is worth stressing that we have also seen new jobs being created. For example, we have had the expansion of Caterpillar and new jobs being undertaken through that company. Equally, there is a host of other companies that are going from strength

to strength. We have very clear indications that the aerospace, defence and space sectors in Northern Ireland have a very bright future, and they are keen to ensure that they have a steady flow of people coming through.

It is also important that people are prepared to be a little more mobile in looking for work. We cannot always direct the work to where people live, and, to an extent, there has to be a focus on good labour mobility. However, it is worth stressing that we have a broad range of engineering strength in the Northern Ireland economy and there are clusters in different parts of Northern Ireland. They each have their individual strengths, and we are happy to work with them all.

Mr Nesbitt: The Minister will be aware that one of the actions from the action plan was for employers to attend careers service regional unit meetings. How many such meetings have been held since the plan was published, and what percentage have seen that recommendation actioned?

Dr Farry: I do not have the precise figures to hand, but I can say to the Member that actions have been taken forward in relation to careers. He will be aware that a joint review of careers is being undertaken along with the Department of Education. That is being taken forward by a panel chaired by Brian Ambrose from George Best Belfast City Airport. We have also placed careers staff directly with employers so that they have a better understanding of their needs. Rather than employers necessarily having to come to us, we have been even more proactive in sending careers staff to be embedded in the business community, including the engineering sector, so that they are better able to articulate the needs of that sector to potential workers of the future.

Mr Dickson: I thank the Minister. A great deal of work has been done by the Minister and his Department to develop apprenticeships in engineering. What further work is he doing to develop apprenticeships and to demonstrate to young people particularly that apprenticeships are of a high value equivalent to degrees?

Dr Farry: The Member and, indeed, the entire Assembly will be aware that we released a new strategy for apprenticeships in Northern Ireland in June this year. This is a radical departure from the previous situation with apprenticeships, and we hope to see a considerable expansion of the range of occupations and the skill levels to which they are being applied.

One of the key areas that we seek to do differently is to ensure a much stronger voice for employers in relation to apprenticeships. We are working to develop sectoral partnerships that will focus on the needs of particular sectors, and I am confident that engineering will be one of the first that we will seek to develop. Last week, I met employers in the ICT sector with a view to setting up a sectoral partnership. The meeting went very well, and I am due to meet the action group on 14 October. One of the items on the agenda for that meeting will be the creation of a sectoral partnership in the engineering sector to develop more opportunities for apprenticeships.

Leisure Centre: Craigavon

3. **Mr Moutray** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what contact has been made with Craigavon

Borough Council to ensure that the new Southern Regional College can utilise the proposed new leisure centre in Craigavon. (AQO 6697/11-15)

Dr Farry: While plans for the new Craigavon campus that is due to replace the current Lurgan and Portadown facilities are at an early stage, the potential for the college to utilise the new leisure facilities is actively being considered. Southern Regional College has confirmed that it is fully aware of the proposal for new district council leisure facilities and, consequently, does not intend to build a sports hall, a swimming pool or football or other sports pitches as part of the new campus in Craigavon. The college is in regular communication with the district council and will continue this engagement with a view to establishing formal arrangements whereby the college can utilise the new leisure facilities. The Member will appreciate that the discussions have been at a strategic level, given that the locations for the new leisure facilities and the college campus have yet to be identified.

I fully recognise the mutual benefits that can be obtained from the use of shared services. My Department's successful capital bid to the Together: Building a United Community programme to fund the Craigavon campus project demonstrates the focus on integration across the further education estate. At a time of increased pressures on funding, there is a heightened awareness of and attention on the importance of maximising the use of resources through developing shared facilities.

Mr Moutray: I welcome the Minister's answer. The potential for the two bodies to work together is enormous. Is he confident that this vital project will proceed, given the wrecking tactics of Sinn Féin in relation to welfare reform?

Dr Farry: Some degree of assurance can be given, in that this is a capital programme. Indeed, the first tranche of money has been secured as part of the Together: Building a United Community funding programme. That gives a degree of certainty in relation to this. There will be a need for further capital bids to be made around the balance of money required to make this happen.

At present, most of the pressures in the budgets are in the revenue area. The Member is right to express alarm: what is already a difficult situation is set to deteriorate rapidly over coming years. I see a difficulty arising if we end up having to make cuts in the further education sector. We will end up building colleges of a world-class standard but without the resource to equip them properly or to ensure that we invest in the students who will take advantage of them.

Mrs D Kelly: Minister, I note that permission has been given to go ahead with the development proposal, and I think that the work is to conclude some time in the new year. How much of a guarantee can you give us that there will be the money to deliver the project within the next three to four years?

Dr Farry: Maybe I will ask the Member to give us a guarantee that her party will see sense on Budget issues and ensure that we have sustainable finances in Northern Ireland. In that, we will have the answer to her question.

Students: North/South Mobility

4. **Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on his efforts to remove barriers to North/South mobility at undergraduate level. (AQO 6698/11-15)

Dr Farry: In implementing Graduating to Success, my Department has established a project group to facilitate cross-border cooperation and student mobility. A key part of that project is addressing the relevant recommendations from the Irish Business and Employers Confederation and the CBI joint business council study of obstacles to cross-border undergraduate education. In particular, my Department's Careers Service continues to build the knowledge of its advisers to ensure that students are fully informed about opportunities in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. An anomaly on student finance has been resolved, and, since 2013, students from Northern Ireland studying in the Republic of Ireland have had access to a repayable student contribution loan and other financial support.

The Department of Education is in the lead regarding A-level and leaving certificate equivalences. However, a number of individual universities have introduced interim measures to attract students from here. My officials are working with officials in the Department of Education and Skills to research and analyse cross-border student flows. A joint report that will inform policy development is scheduled for completion in the autumn.

I met Minister Quinn of the Department in April 2014 to discuss matters of mutual interest. I have also written to his successor, Minister Jan O'Sullivan, and will discuss matters with her at the North/South Ministerial Council meeting this Friday.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I thank the Minister for his answer. Given that we are nearly at the end of the autumn, even though you would not think it with the weather, does he have any indication of what will be in the report that he is teasing us with?

Dr Farry: I am not sure what the weather is like in Fermanagh, but, in my mind, the autumn extends to the end of November at least, so there is still time for the report to come through. As I have said on a number of occasions, there is no lack of willingness in this jurisdiction in the Department of Education or my Department to address the issues and the barriers to student flows on the island of Ireland. Most of the obstacles lie in the policies and practices of the Government in the Irish Republic, and at times we have to question their willingness to be proactive in addressing some of these points. If the Member has any influence, I encourage him to use it, alongside the influence of others, to see how we can address the issues.

Mr Campbell: The Minister will know that my constituency extends from four miles from the border to 50 miles from the border and, while a very small number of people might want to extend their mobility to take advantage of classes in the Irish Republic, the vast majority do not. Will he give the House an assurance that whatever resource he deploys will not be at the expense of promoting mobility for students within Northern Ireland who are trying to avail themselves of classes that they will require to get themselves into full-time employment in this country?

Dr Farry: It is important that we look at mobility in a range of ways. As the Member says, we have mobility within Northern Ireland, but some students may wish to study in Great Britain, and others may wish to study in the Republic of Ireland. It is not only geographical proximity that will influence decisions but the availability of courses. While I want a very broad range of courses to be provided in Northern Ireland, there may be areas in which certain specialisms are more effectively taught elsewhere in these islands — I stress that in the broadest sense — and it is important that we facilitate mobility. It is also the case that, when we have to invest in specialist equipment or specialist teaching, neither jurisdiction on the island has the resources to invest in that alone, so there may be opportunities for joint initiatives.

So it is important that we do not just see mobility on the island as just a cross-border issue; it may well be about ensuring choice right across the island and, indeed, these islands.

3.00 pm

Mr Rogers: I thank the Minister for his answers thus far. Minister, some universities in the South have put in place interim measures. What steps are you taking to ensure that students who want to do high-quality courses that are available in the South but not here have good opportunities to do so?

Dr Farry: Most of the courses available in the Republic of Ireland are offered in Northern Ireland. There are a very small number of exceptions. Veterinary science is one example, and there are also opportunities in Great Britain, notably Scotland, in that regard. It is important that, first, we signpost people so that they are aware of the opportunities. The number of students from Northern Ireland going to the South is remarkably small, given that we share an island, and has been quite small for the last number of years. There is a greater flow of students northwards. The issue that we have is multifaceted but considerably unbalanced. A lot of work has to be done to redress the balance so that we have a natural flow, based on informed choice, in both directions on the island.

Mrs Overend: Following the Scottish referendum, has the Minister had any conversations with his counterpart in Scotland about support for students from Northern Ireland who travel to Scotland for undergraduate study?

Dr Farry: I have not had the opportunity to have any discussions in the past week or so since the referendum. However, the situation remains largely unchanged on the back of the outcome. The Member will be aware of the fees that students from here are charged. There was a lot of speculation before the referendum about what would be the situation in the event that Scotland opted for independence. In that context, all the legal advice, and the Scottish Government's advice, was that students from Northern Ireland or anywhere else in the European Union would have to be treated the same as Scottish students.

Work Placements: North Down

5. **Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the number of work placements in the North Down area that are available to students at the South Eastern Regional College. (AQO 6699/11-15)

Dr Farry: According to the college, 1,141 students and trainees participated in work placements in the 2013-14 academic year as part of their programme of learning. In addition, the college has extremely good working relationships with employers in its area and engages with over 5,000 employers to obtain relevant work placements as close to students' homes as possible. The process of obtaining, monitoring and evaluating work placements takes significant effort from the college but is a key element of the student experience and an integral part of their study.

I can also advise that the college has developed bespoke software called business engagement and student tracking to monitor placements. Research emphasises the importance of work placements. In particular, learners benefit from experience of the work environment to complement their studies. It is also a very effective way for learners to acquire the all-important employability skills required by employers.

My Department's reviews of further education and youth training are considering how work placements can be included in the most effective way in individual students' programmes of learning. The youth employment scheme is a voluntary scheme designed to help young people to develop the skills needed to get a job. It also recognises that employability skills are more readily obtained by active participation in a work setting with an employer or a voluntary organisation.

Mr Easton: I thank the Minister for his answer. I am sure that the Minister is aware of the excellent work that Charter NI does in training and providing education courses for young people, especially those from a Protestant working-class background. The only problem is trying to get work placements. Is there anything more that the Minister, through his Department, could do to help Charter NI to get work placements?

Dr Farry: First, I stress that any contracts that Charter NI provides on behalf of the Department and with public money are open to all sections of the community. It is important that that is made extremely clear. The Member may be conscious of particular issues for one section of the community, but it is important that we have a neutral approach in the provision of resources.

The Member is right to stress the importance of engaging with employers to source placements. This is an ongoing challenge and one that we have experienced with the current Training for Success programme and other schemes that we have been working with.

We can take some encouragement from the experience with the youth employment scheme, where a considerable number of employers came forward. That was largely driven by very good, proactive engagement with employers directly and the various business organisations. It is also important to get the message out that employers want to have surety that they will have a strong pipeline of young people coming through, and the only way in which they can ensure that they have the right technical skills and the employability skills is to offer work placements to young people so that they can begin the task of investing in those skills. I am pleased to say that more and more employers are recognising that.

Teacher Education: Review

6. **Mr Buchanan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when he will bring forward proposals on the review of teacher education infrastructure. (AQO 6700/11-15)

15. **Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when a decision will be made on the future of St Mary's University College. (AQO 6709/11-15)

Dr Farry: With your permission, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, I will group questions 6 and 15. I wish to request an additional minute for the answer.

Members are aware from my statement of 1 July that the international panel completed its review and delivered its report 'Aspiring to Excellence' on the initial teacher education infrastructure in Northern Ireland. The report has proposed four options for future structures: a collaborative partnership; a two-centre model with a Belfast institute of education and the second centre based in the north-west; a Northern Ireland teacher education federation; and a Northern Ireland institute of education. I do not regard those options as being mutually exclusive or as the totality of the range of possibilities before us. Rather, they serve as a very useful guide, shaping discussions as we go forward.

In my statement, I asked the sector to use the summer months to consider the content of the report and the options. I also committed to engaging with the initial teacher education sector in the autumn to discuss the review panel's report. As a first step, earlier this month, I met the four initial teacher education providers — Queen's, Stranmillis, St Mary's and the University of Ulster — to hear each institution's views and discuss how best to find a way forward. The meetings have been constructive, and engagement will continue as we consider how best to align the views put forward by each of the institutions with the options suggested by the panel. However, I remind Members that both the international panel and the stage one report on the cost of teacher education training and the financial sustainability of the university colleges agree that the status quo is not an option because of the quality of initial teacher education provided and financial reasons. My main aim in the process continues to be how we can best structure a system that can deliver world-class standards of teacher education, is financially sustainable, promotes greater sharing and integration, and is in the best interests of our young people.

Mr Buchanan: I thank the Minister for his response. He obviously agrees that the status quo is no longer an option. Can he advise the House how he proposes to take the issue forward, given that St Mary's, unlike the other colleges, has refused any of the four options that are on the table?

Dr Farry: I am still considering the best way forward, and we are not taking any fixed approach. At present, we are working through bilateral discussions with the institutions. I can say that I have had some very constructive discussions with St Mary's in the past week, and we have made a commitment to have further discussions. While the Member is correct to report that St Mary's does not favour any of the four options on the table, it is nonetheless willing to consider what is the best way forward for the institution and, indeed, the system. It is fair to say that St Mary's itself

recognises that the status quo is not an option. Obviously, the Member and others in the House, perhaps even including me, will have more ambitious views on how we can take forward reform, but, at this stage, I will say that all the institutions are willing to engage in further discussions with me and the Department.

Mr Sheehan: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a fhreagra. Will the Minister give the international expert panel time to examine a proposal on shared education that was put forward by Peter Finn from St Mary's University College before he brings forward his own proposals on the review?

Dr Farry: No further pieces of work are excluded from current discussions. The panel has formally discharged its commitment to the Department and, indeed, has given evidence to the Employment and Learning Committee in recent days. What the Member set out can take place at any stage and, indeed, could have taken place at any stage in the past. There is no doubt that there will be issues that we will wish to reflect on when considering any potential for progress.

Mr Attwood: Whilst you are not ruling anything in or out, what is your view on the previous proposal from Queen's University, which was essentially a land grab of the Stranmillis site and more to do with development and less with education? What is your view of the comments made by the board of governors of Stranmillis to the Employment and Learning Committee in this place a couple of weeks ago, when they said that they had proposals with St Mary's? Many of the staff at Stranmillis College have said that they know nothing about those proposals.

Dr Farry: There were quite a lot of issues in the question, which I will try to work through as best I can. As to my view of the way forward, I am not sure that it would be terribly productive for me to stake a claim and say that this is the way forward and the only way forward. It is important that we have a proper discussion amongst all the providers. I have made clear the direction of travel that I want to see in that regard, but it is important to recognise that a variety of different institutional formats could fall within those parameters.

The only thing that I would say is that the status quo is not sustainable. We need to encourage more sharing and integration in teacher education. We also have to ensure that it is of world-class standard and, in particular, that it has greater interaction with research excellence. We also have to ensure that we have a financially sustainable system. Those are the key principles as we move forward.

While Mr Attwood may wish to ascribe certain ambitions, or perspectives, behind the approach of Queen's University, let me be very clear that the three principles I have outlined are the basis of my approach to the issue. It is about ensuring that we have a world-class system of teacher education in Northern Ireland — nothing more and nothing less.

With respect to Stranmillis, we will obviously wish to take the views of staff on board, but, constitutionally, the Department deals with the board of governors. The board and its chair are appointed by me, and we will officially receive the views of the college directly from them.

Mr McGimpsey: Listening to the Minister's answer to Mr Attwood, it appears that we are very clearly hearing his

view, and the concern of course is that his view is the one that the review will come up with in the end. Will he be satisfied with a review finding that is at variance with his viewpoint and with that of his party? Will he ensure that there is proper consultation within the various colleges so that no one feels that they are being disenfranchised in what appears to be a very long and convoluted process?

Dr Farry: I would say two things to the Member. First, on the point about fixed viewpoints, his party, through my predecessor Mr Kennedy, issued a consultation document before the last Assembly election that quite clearly endorsed a merger between Queen's University and Stranmillis as the way forward. That was a fixed view, and it is down on paper as part of the formal record.

Secondly, in response to Mr Attwood, I set out the three broad principles that will guide the approach that I am taking forward in this regard, and I have said that a range of different institutional formats could fall within the parameters of those three guiding principles. I do not see the potential for any outcome emerging, that will find favour across the board and with my personal opinion, being difficult to establish. I think that it is important that everyone works constructively so that we can achieve that. If everyone shares the ambition around those principles and a desire to see a world-class system, we will find an answer.

Youth Unemployment

7. **Mr McElduff** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the current rate of youth unemployment and the impact it is having on net migration. (AQO 6701/11-15)

Dr Farry: Youth unemployment remains a major challenge in Northern Ireland, in common with other parts of these islands and elsewhere in Europe. Almost one third of those who are unemployed fall within the 18- to 24-year-old age group. The challenge is being proactively addressed by my Department and the wider Executive. Responses include the youth employment scheme and the Pathways to Success strategy. Wider reforms including the review of careers, the new strategy on apprenticeships and the forthcoming new youth training system will all help to reduce the incidences of youth unemployment in the future.

3.15 pm

The situation around youth unemployment no doubt causes young people to reflect upon their future opportunities. The statistics collected do not fully capture the internal and external movements of young people. Figures produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency give an indication around long-term migration flows. In 2012-13, 7,700 18- to 24-year-olds left Northern Ireland and 5,900 came in — a net outward migration of 1,800 or 1% of that age group. In 2000-01 when youth unemployment was much lower, 5,700 18- to 24-year-olds left Northern Ireland and 4,000 came in — a net outward migration of 1,700 individuals or, again, around 1% of that age group.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That is the end of the time for listed questions. We now move on to topical questions.

Further Education: Non-academic

1. **Mrs Cameron** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps his Department has taken to encourage non-academic-based further education for school-leavers. (AQT 1511/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Member is probably aware that we are in the process of doing a major review of youth training, which is very much geared around those young people who would be leaving school at the age of 16 or 17 and who have the potential to engage in the world of work. An expert panel from a range of stakeholders is in place to advise us on the development of the strategy. It is envisaged that there will be two different strands — an employed strand through what you could term a traineeship and an unemployed strand that is, nevertheless, still linked to work placements. That builds on the comments that I made to Mr Easton earlier. We hope to have a draft consultation paper ready within the next few weeks and to go out to public consultation towards the end of the autumn with a view to having agreement on a new strategy in the spring of 2015.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for his answer and for the information that he has given the House today. He may not be able to answer my next question, but I ask him to look into it and find out why funding has been removed from the Michael Hughes academy BTEC diploma in sport development, coaching and fitness at the Newtownabbey campus of the Northern Regional College. This has ended four weeks after the commencement of the course.

Dr Farry: I am happy to assure the Member that she will be provided with a full answer. Obviously, the college is responsible for the courses that it provides and how it manages its budget. It is only speculation on my part, but, given the time of year, it may be based on the enrolment figures.

Skills Training: West Tyrone

2. **Mr McAleer** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an assessment of how his Department is working with other organisations in the Omagh and wider west Tyrone area to ensure that adequate skills training is in place to enable people to take up prospective employment opportunities. (AQT 1512/11-15)

Dr Farry: We have a number of different interventions. First, we have the excellent resource of the South West College. As the Member knows, our further education system in Northern Ireland is recognised as being the best in these islands and, within that, the South West College has been recognised as being one of the very best colleges in these islands. Therefore, that is a very good resource to draw on. We also have the local jobs and benefits offices and the Careers Service, all of which are vehicles to engage with the local community.

The Member will also be aware that we officially launched the next tranche of the European social fund in the past week. We are keen to ensure that there is a more even geographical drawdown of funds and that we have better engagement with local communities, particularly through the new council structure, to work with us around the various proposals that will come forward. Hopefully, the Member will see the fruits of that over the coming months.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat. Is the Minister concerned that an increasing number of very highly skilled

and trained people are being forced to take up jobs that are considered to be low skilled, thereby minimising or not making full use of their repertoire of skills and training?

Dr Farry: Absolutely. As Minister for Employment and Learning, my overriding objective is to ensure that we have proper efficiency of supply and demand in the labour market and that we address our skills needs.

Overall, it is clear that we will have a much higher demand for higher-level skills over the coming years and, in particular, in STEM subjects. Even within higher-level skills, there can sometimes be a skills mismatch, and that is why it is important that we have proper careers advice and encourage people to take up opportunities in some of the high-growth sectors in the economy. The Member is quite right: when that goes wrong, we have a situation of underemployment, in terms of either the number of hours that people work or the areas in which they are employed, where they are overqualified. That can have knock-on consequences elsewhere, in displacing other people's opportunities. Through what we are doing in careers, apprenticeships and investing in further education and higher education, we are trying to drive that situation out of our economy. We all stand to benefit if we get it right.

Student Hardship Funds

3. **Mr Buchanan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, given the debate on student hardship funds, to advise what impact the lack of agreement by Sinn Féin and the SDLP on welfare reform could have on the future of that funding. (AQT 1513/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am glad that the Member stressed the words "could have". At this stage, the current budget uncertainty has not impacted on that particular intervention around FE awards and hardship funds. There has been a little bit of confusion around the fact that we have identified underspends in student finance as one of the areas through which we are seeking to manage the current in-year pressures. That is a reflection of the fact that we have to set a budget allocation based on an estimate of demand, and our projection is that demand will come in below the budget, allowing us to have what is, in effect, a reduced requirement that can be moved elsewhere within the system.

Members will be aware that we are looking at cuts of 4.5%-plus on an in-year situation. The current speculation is that, next year, there will be cuts well in excess of 10% and that that will continue into future years. That will have a massive impact, right across the board, on what my Department does.

More immediately, I make the point that, while I am nonetheless seeking to act strategically and to protect the most vulnerable in society from the cuts, we have a certain inequity in the approach that has been taken to date with the protection given to the Department of Education. That means that the 16- to 19-year-olds who are in school will benefit from that protection, whereas the 40% of 16- to 19-year-olds who are in further education and training are not given protection. The fact that we have sought to protect them is due to our own actions, not the strategic decisions taken by the Executive. That is an inequity, and it becomes doubly so when you consider the different socio-economic backgrounds of the two cohorts that we are talking about.

Mr Buchanan: I thank the Minister for his response. Obviously, the protection of those front line services will have a knock-on effect on other programmes. Will the Minister advise what other programmes in his Department will suffer as a result of the protection of the youth services and the continual reduction of funding in his Department?

Dr Farry: We have explained to the Committee how we have approached the situation in-year. Our books are balanced, so far as the 4.5% that has been announced so far is concerned. What we do beyond that has still to be determined. We have some options in that regard. While I have sought to act strategically and to protect those who are most vulnerable, when we are in a situation where we face cuts in excess of 10% or 15%, all bets are off, and it becomes next to impossible to give any guarantees of protecting any particular area of activity in the Department. If we were to try to do that, we would massively skew commitments elsewhere. The only thing I can say to the Member is that going down this route is really not sustainable. We cannot simply keep cutting and cutting budgets in order to put off taking a difficult decision. It is not the way that any mature Government goes about its business.

Apprenticeships

4. **Dr McDonnell** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an estimate of how long it will take to have an effective apprenticeship programme that works for young people and creates decent employment opportunities, given that one of the biggest aspects of the economic crisis is that hundreds, if not thousands, of our bright young people are forced to emigrate because of a lack of employment opportunities. (AQT 1514/11-15)

Dr Farry: The timescale for the full implementation of the new strategy is September 2016, so, to give the Member a very direct answer, that is the timescale. Between now and then, a lot of work will take place around the implementation of the strategy. Already, we have had pilots of higher-level apprenticeships, and we are working to create the first of our sectoral partnerships, which gives employers a direct voice.

I also stress to the Member that a lot of work is being done to create jobs in Northern Ireland both by local companies and through attracting inward investment. The Member will be aware that Invest NI has had a very successful year; indeed, its most successful year ever. That is strongly supported by my Department's Assured Skills programme, whereby we can give guarantees to investing companies that they will have the skills base locally to take up the jobs that they create.

We are being successful in creating jobs locally, and, while outward migration is still, sadly, a factor for Northern Ireland, I expect that it will decrease over coming years. Also, a number of people who have left Northern Ireland may seek to return, given the job opportunities that are now being created.

Dr McDonnell: I thank the Minister for his full and direct answer. He will be aware that, due to various liabilities that have arisen in recent times such as insurance demands, public liability, insuring the apprentice and so on, it is increasingly difficult for a business or trade to take on an apprentice. Can we build a mechanism into the system that would take care of such insurance liabilities for the

company and cover the individual apprentice from any damage that might happen to him or be done by him or her? That seems to me to be the biggest obstacle for many tradesmen taking on apprentices.

Dr Farry: I suspect that the issue that Dr McDonnell raises is more of an issue around work placements, where the person in question is not the employee of the company as such. In an apprenticeship, the apprentice is an employee of the sponsoring company and would be covered by the existing insurance policies that the company has.

In a wider sense, it is also worth highlighting that we are developing a central service, which, again, is a new departure for Northern Ireland. That will be run by my Department and will work with employers directly in advertising vacancies to a portal that will encourage young people to apply for apprenticeships and deal with a lot of the bureaucracy.

One issue that we are trying to address is the barriers that SMEs experience around apprenticeships. Around the world, we see a pattern that apprenticeships are more readily provided through larger companies and less so through SMEs. Even in countries such as Switzerland or Germany, that is the case. It is important that government seeks to put incentives and assistance in place, as far as we can, to try to break the barrier that discourages SMEs from engaging. Some of the issues that the Member touches on beyond insurance are the type of issues that we will explore through that mechanism.

Sign Language Classes

5. **Mr McMullan** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to confirm that people with hearing loss have to pay for sign language classes at further education colleges. (AQT 1515/11-15)

Dr Farry: That depends on the particular circumstances that prevail. We had a useful debate this morning on student finance, and we have stressed that, in a large number of situations, there is access to support through disability student allowances as well as access to the additional support funds that allow a lot of mechanisms to be introduced to help students with a range of disabilities. It depends on the individual circumstances and cases that arise.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat. Does the Minister agree that, under equality legislation, those classes should be free to deaf people in order for them to be able to participate in all aspects of their life as fully as possible?

Dr Farry: I go back to what I said. If there are any inequalities in the system, I am committed to driving them out. A range of support already exists, and our colleges are bound to abide by equality legislation in all its forms. If something is not quite right, I am happy to look at that on the Member's behalf, and it will be remedied.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Time is up. That concludes Question Time. I invite the House to take its ease while we change the top Table.

3.30 pm

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Private Members' Business

Postal Charges

Debate resumed on amendment to motion:

That this Assembly expresses concern at the continuing existence of barriers to greater North/South economic development; fully recognises the importance of a reliable, affordable and effective postal delivery service, particularly to micro and small businesses; further recognises the findings in the recent Ofcom communications market report whereby 47% of people questioned felt that the current costs of posting a letter across the border represented poor value for money; further expresses concern at the significant additional cost differential and time delay to deliver post intended for across the border; calls for all companies and agencies involved in postal delivery to introduce a single pricing structure for mail being delivered anywhere on the island of Ireland; and further calls for the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to raise this matter at a forthcoming meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) when it meets in trade and business sectoral format and to use the NSMC to exert maximum pressure on the above companies and agencies. — [Mr Flanagan.]

Which amendment was:

Leave out all after "small businesses;" and insert: "expresses concern at the threat to the viability of rural post offices that direct delivery competition presents and the significant additional cost differential and time delay to deliver cross-border mail; and calls on the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to assist businesses by working in conjunction with her North/South Ministerial Council colleagues and her counterparts in the Westminster Government to ensure the long-term viability of a universal postal service that incorporates a value-for-money cross-border service." — [Mr McGlone.]

Ms Fearon: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I am delighted to see such massive interest in the Chamber for our motion on cross-border postal services. At the outset, I express my disappointment that the Minister has not seen fit to be with us to respond and comment on the issues raised throughout the debate. I do not think that we have been given a reason why or been notified that she was not going to be here. So, that is disappointing.

The motion refers to the —

Mr Douglas: Will the Member give way?

Ms Fearon: Yes.

Mr Douglas: I will respond to the Member's point. I spoke to the Minister this morning, and she said that, because it is a reserved matter, she felt that she did not need to be here in that it is not her Department's responsibility.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Ms Fearon: I am sure that she does not need to be here, but there is a precedent for the issues raised to be discussed.

The motion refers to the barriers to cross-border economic development, and I know only too well the barriers that local people who live along the border and businesses face. I have lived there my whole life and worked on both sides of the border. Citizens are not well served by the border in the provision of health, education, environmental protections, jobs, banking charges, business costs, mobile phone charges and the cost of postal services. The border area is largely rural, and, while this is probably a discussion for another day, there are still huge black spots in the provision of rural broadband, which can create huge difficulties for local businesses. Increased connectivity along the border would eventually reduce reliance on the postal service.

It also has to be welcomed that the Ofcom report mentioned in the motion shows high levels of satisfaction with our postal services in the North. However, there are problems and issues with cross-border services. Despite the geographical proximity of Ireland, North and South, consumers face an average delivery time of two to three days when posting or receiving mail from the South of Ireland. To address that, we require an integrated approach to postal services across the island. In 2010, Consumer Focus Post called on the main postal service providers, Royal Mail and An Post, and their respective regulators, Postcomm and ComReg, to work together to provide a faster, more consumer-driven service that reflects the demands of consumers and the importance of a more effective postal service in developing the island economy through cross-border trade. Four years on, however, we have not seen any improvement; if we have, it is very little.

The same report also showed that 68% of businesses in the North send post to the South, while 85% stated that it was fairly important, and almost half said that it was absolutely essential to their business. The Ofcom report also showed that 47% of people are unsatisfied with the cost of posting a standard letter, and that does not include larger documents or parcels. So, the motion calls for the introduction of a single pricing structure for mail anywhere on the island of Ireland, which is a perfectly reasonable suggestion. We need a common-sense approach to issues pertaining to the border. It is ridiculous that Royal Mail expects people to pay almost 90p to post a letter from Newry to Dundalk, when the same thing can be sent anywhere in England, Scotland or Wales for less than half that.

Differential postal rates are also used in other areas of the EU — the Czech Republic and Slovakia are an example — so we should seek to adopt the same kind of approach here. Alongside the cost are the unnecessary delays in having items delivered. However, the good thing is that no issues were raised about reliability. Satisfaction rates are high, but it is hard not to argue that there are certain inefficiencies that could be addressed.

The postal service is a basic infrastructure that underpins trade and commerce. While it is good that most businesses are satisfied with the quality and reliability of the service, it is worrying that as many businesses are concerned about the cost differential in posting between the North and the South and to Britain. Any steps that can be taken, however marginal, to improve the speed,

reliability and cost-effectiveness of the cross-border service could make a significant contribution to the ease with which business is carried out across the island. We need to focus on our economy and creating jobs. The success of our private sector and our economy are dependent on having an efficient, affordable and reliable island-wide postal service. Many companies and organisations depend on it as an essential element of business. Growing the success of island-wide trade is essential to consolidating and building our economy. At present, we in the North receive the largest return from the island economy, and that would only increase with greater harmonisation and reduced transaction costs, of which postal charges are only a small example.

We need to work together to ensure that we provide the best climate for business development and the best services for our citizens at the same time as addressing the costs of duplication on the island. Health provides a good example of how a better service can be developed by using an all-island approach. The new joint cancer centre in Derry will provide services for patients from throughout the north-west. Patients from Donegal and Derry will no longer have to go to Belfast or Dublin for treatments. There are opportunities in a new integrated island-wide structure to reconfigure how we deliver health services across the island. The total spend per person in the current regressive health system in the South of Ireland is less than it is in the North or in Britain.

The same island-wide approach must be adopted for our economy. Addressing inefficiencies and the high costs of cross-border post is only one aspect of that. Greater cooperation and integration make sense and would benefit all our people. Cooperation is not a threat to any identity.

Mr Dallat: The history of postal services in Ireland is fascinating. They really swung into top gear with the introduction of the penny stamp in the 1840s, which is when the mail coaches began rushing up, down and across the country. Just for the record, sending a letter from Belfast to Dublin took a few hours then; today, it takes up to five days, and the cost is prohibitive. It seems a bit strange that, 170 years ago, a mail coach, pulled by four black horses on roads that had yet to experience tarmac, could do the job better. That is despite the fact that, today, we have modern motorways.

One of the dangers of the 1840s was the highwayman, who was a great tradition in Ireland and often relieved passengers of their gold bullion. That was described by the poet Alfred Noyes in recording the activities of the period in the poem, 'The Highwayman'. I will quote a few lines from it to give you a taste of what it must have been like:

*"The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
And the highwayman came riding — riding — riding".*

Often, the old inn, referred to in the next line, was the staging post for the mail coach. That is where the horses were changed and passengers sometimes lost their gold and silver. Nothing deterred the post office of the day from delivering the mail, come hail or high water. Today, if I post a letter in Derry for Muff, which is just five miles down the

road, it takes a week to deliver it. It goes to Athlone, is sent back up to Lifford and, eventually, drops on the carpet of my friend in Muff. That is partition gone daft.

What happened to the mail coach of the 1840s, when that letter would have been delivered the next day, highwayman or no highwayman? What happened to the true grit of the Post Office and the brave people who risked their lives day and daily to provide a decent postal service that was fit for purpose? We know what happened: foolish people sold off part of the Post Office. They flogged it for the silver — perhaps the same silver as the highwayman was stealing — and they seriously damaged the universal principles of the postal service. Today, the lucrative pieces of the Post Office are farmed out to private enterprise. They take the spoils and leave the rest for the poor Royal Mail of today to deliver. Of course, that has caused to stagnate any serious attempt to re-establish a universal postal service that is fit for purpose.

I do not want to make this controversial, but I am here long enough to remember good debates in the Assembly on the Post Office and mail delivery. Those debates were effective, and I know that there is an all-party group on the mail service. Therefore, without wishing to criticise the Minister, the weight of the debate has been devalued by her absence. I am genuinely sorry that she was not here to give her strength to it.

Sometimes, when I am crossing the great Glenshane Pass, I tend to dream about better times — perhaps times when politicians were more effective. I can see those stagecoaches coming down the Glenshane Pass at high speed and stopping off at the Ponderosa to change the horses. Today, we are debating an issue that should not need to be debated. Yes, there is political partition: we know that.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Dallat: But, really, it has gone mad.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Tá mé buíoch as an deis cainte ins an díospóireacht seo faoi chostais poist. Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to wind on the SDLP amendment. During the debate, we have seen a picture emerge that clearly illustrates the anomalies and inconsistencies that have arisen in the current system. One must ask why people here face higher costs to send mail within one island than to send mail across the water. That is all the more frustrating when their friends, relatives and business contacts in the South are subject to An Post's single standard tariff.

We have heard that almost half of our adult population have expressed their dissatisfaction with the cost differential and the snail's pace of cross-border delivery times. In my area, it takes almost a week to deliver a letter from Newry to Dundalk, a mere 12 miles. One wonders what circuitous route that letter travels in order to cover that short distance.

The taxpayer in this case is denied value for money. However, the same cannot be said of the big corporations who benefited from the privatisation of Royal Mail, with one valuation estimating that it was undersold by £6 billion. I do not want to revert to references to highwaymen, but the conclusion to come to there is clear: the public were

robbed once again. As usual, the ordinary citizen is left to deal with rising prices and the threat that direct delivery services pose to the universal postal service.

The digital revolution has certainly made a permanent and, for the most part, positive impact on our communication technology, but it has not made the postal service obsolete. I am sure that there are many who would like to complete the transition to digital, but, for the foreseeable future, that will not be the case. There are many individuals and businesses here that continue to rely on courier services, and their needs cannot be dismissed. Take, for example, the majority of UK-based banking customers, who still value being able to determine for themselves whether they prefer online banking or paper statements. According to the Keep Me Posted campaign, that amounts to 81%.

The postal service continues to play a vital role in our community and in the business world. We must ensure that it provides the best value for money and the most efficient and reliable service possible. The Consumer Council has stated:

"The Post Office network is important because of the vital services that it provides consumers across its unparalleled network, especially to vulnerable customers such as the elderly and disabled."

The council has published a number of useful statistics that give evidence to that.

3.45 pm

A reliable and affordable postal service is particularly critical for our small and medium-sized businesses. A massive two thirds of our businesses regularly send post to the South, and it has been deemed an essential service by almost half of them. Such cross-border trade is a vital component in our economy, yet nearly one fifth of businesses here that trade with the Republic have had to travel across the border to post mail destined for Southern addresses to avail themselves of the superior postal service there. It would be comical if it were not so ridiculous. It is absurd that businesses here have to resort to that.

A Consumer Focus Post report stated:

"The success of many Northern Ireland businesses, and indeed the Northern Ireland economy, depends to a considerable extent on an efficient and reliable cross-border postal service."

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr D Bradley: The speeches by all contributors point clearly to support for the motion as amended by the SDLP.

Mr Boylan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liom labhairt i bhfabhar an rúin agus i bhfabhar an leasaithe. Ba mhaith liom cúpla focal a rá. I would like to speak in favour of the motion and the amendment. First and foremost, being a former postal worker, I pay tribute to the men and women who day and daily provide an excellent service, particularly to people in rural areas. It is important that those people are facilitated.

There have been good contributions to the debate. It is important to recognise that having an affordable and effective postal service cannot be overestimated or

overstated. It is a key service that many citizens continue to rely on heavily in their day-to-day affairs. That is especially so of people in rural areas, who do not have the same access to adequate broadband or Internet facilities.

The postal service is also especially relevant to small businesses, many of which continue to rely on it as a key component of their needs. In increasingly competitive markets, it is incumbent on us to find efficiencies that can help those businesses to develop and succeed. We need to look constantly at ways to help local businesses overcome the barriers and obstacles to trade that have resulted from the artificial partition and division of this small island economy.

Additional and unnecessary business costs quickly add up, especially for small and micro companies. Trimming those costs where possible can make a huge difference to the competitiveness of those companies. With that in mind, we must look at anomalies that can severely impact on those businesses' needs and, indeed, the value-for-money service that is provided to domestic and business customers alike.

For the purposes of Royal Mail costing, the Republic of Ireland is treated as a European destination in the same bracket as Kazakhstan, Greenland or Turkmenistan. That is utterly nonsensical and absurd. It costs someone from my home town of Keady £8.05p to send a 1kg package to Clontibret, nine miles away — the same price as somewhere in Azerbaijan. That is absolutely absurd. In comparison, it would cost only £3.20p to send the same package 550 miles to Margate in the south of England. Whilst I recognise that there are financial considerations for deliveries from England, Scotland and Wales, which require air and sea transport, here the extent of those additional costs cannot be justified and should not be inflicted on customers. This is an obvious and significant obstacle to local trade and services in the border areas and, indeed, the whole of the region. It is high time that this matter was addressed properly and adequately by the stakeholders. I support my colleagues in calling for a fair single pricing structure for deliveries on this island, one that removes all obstacles for trade and provides a good value-for-money service for our citizens.

I want to turn to some of the comments made by some of the contributors. My colleague Mr Flanagan opened up by talking about a family member who was going down South to post invitations. The cost up here compared with the cost down there is an absolute disgrace. It is disgraceful that that happens in these times. To be fair to him, he also highlighted the opportunities for business. I know that Mr Flanagan talks to local businesses daily and that he fights and campaigns for the people in the west. For me, it is sad that the major issue from Mr Flanagan's contribution was the fact that he and my colleague Megan Fearon have put this together and the Minister did not see fit to be here to listen to it. That is very sad. I know that he is on the all-party working group, which is trying to assist on delivering for his area and other areas. The Minister was not here to listen to the debate.

Mr McGlone talked about the threat to universal service obligation, and I have shared that with him. We certainly try to fight a strong argument on that. I do not think that it is the intention of my colleagues who tabled the motion today to cause any issues in relation to the universal service obligation.

Mr Dunne opened up —

Mr Flanagan: I thank the Member for giving way. It might be useful to point out during Mr Boylan's emotive speech that I did not raise many of those issues because there is a motion on the no-day-named list from the all-party group on postal services that will deal with many of those issues.

Mr Boylan: I thank the Member for the intervention. No doubt, we will take the opportunity to debate those issues when that comes to the Floor.

Mr Dunne said that, despite the digital revolution, we were still reliant on the postal service, and he is correct. As a former postal worker, I still talk to my former colleagues. The service is growing, and, as I said, it is very important in rural areas that this service continue. On the intervention that his colleague made about this being a reserved matter, regardless of that we as a devolved Government need to do all that we can to work this through and reduce fares. Some of the contributors to the debate highlighted that.

Mr Elliott said that there were other matters that we could be discussing. There are other matters that we could discuss, but I think that this matter is just as important to people out there as any other. It is vital that we discuss this because it would not have been brought to the Chamber unless the matters had been raised by my colleagues or other Members who have made contributions today. It is important that we take the opportunity to discuss that. He talked about the 47% increase in the price of second-class stamps and the number of people who now use them. That has risen, I think, over the last three years, so it is a big increase.

Megan Fearon, my colleague, outlined a lot of the issues from the environmental side of things right through to banking and the challenge that people face. She lives in the border region, as I do, and she understands well. She alluded to the fact that it has been four years since some reports and there still has been nothing done. I hope that the motion will put something in train, along with the motion that is coming forward from the all-party group in the future, and that it will lead to some success.

Mr Dallat gave us a very entertaining contribution, going back to the horse and cart. I was just waiting for him to mention Dick Turpin, but he did not take the opportunity to do that. He talked about over 100 and whatever number of years — I did not catch the exact number of years — and said that it took only two days then and takes five days now. Mr Bradley also said that it took five days to send a letter 12 miles.

I will wind up on that. I support the motion and thank my colleagues for bringing it to the Chamber today.

Question, That the amendment be made, put and agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly expresses concern at the continuing existence of barriers to greater North/South economic development; fully recognises the importance of a reliable, affordable and effective postal delivery service, particularly to micro and small businesses; expresses concern at the threat to the viability of rural post offices that direct delivery competition presents and the significant additional

cost differential and time delay to deliver cross-border mail; and calls on the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to assist businesses by working in conjunction with her North/South Ministerial Council colleagues and her counterparts in the Westminster Government to ensure the long-term viability of a universal postal service, which incorporates a value for money cross-border service.

Mr Flanagan: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Will you clarify what the convention is if a motion is tabled asking a Minister to take some form of action and the Minister decides not to come? How is it communicated to those who tabled the motion or to other Assembly Members that there will be no ministerial response?

Mr Deputy Speaker: The attendance of a Minister in the Chamber is a matter for the Minister and the Executive.

Adjourned at 3.57 pm.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 30 September 2014

The Assembly met at 10.30 am (Mr Principal Deputy Speaker [Mr Mitchel McLaughlin] in the Chair).

Members observed two minutes' silence.

Executive Committee Business

Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill: Further Consideration Stage

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I call the Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford, to move the Further Consideration Stage of the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill.

Moved. — [Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice).]

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: Members will have a copy of the Marshalled List of amendments detailing the order for consideration. The amendments have been grouped for debate in the provisional grouping of amendments selected list. There are two amendments, which will be debated in a single group. The amendments set out to require specific selection arrangements for the person who is to be designated director of legal aid casework and to provide that the director must comply with directions from the Department about the carrying out of the director's functions, which have a specific basis in statute.

I remind Members intending to speak that, during the debate, they should address both amendments. Once the debate is completed, the second amendment will be moved formally, and the Question will be put without any further debate. If that is clear, we shall proceed.

We now come to the amendments for debate. With amendment No 1, it will be convenient to debate amendment No 2. I call Mr Tom Elliott to move amendment No 1 and to address the other amendment in the group.

Clause 2 (Designation of Director of Legal Aid Casework)

Mr Elliott: I beg to move amendment No 1: In page 2, line 18, at end insert

"(2) The selection of the person to be so designated must be on the basis of merit through fair and open public competition."

The following amendment stood on the Marshalled List:

No 2: In clause 3, page 2, line 27, after "directions" insert

“, issued under this section or under any other statutory provision.”.— [Mr Elliott.]

Mr Elliott: I will speak on amendment Nos 1 and 2. Obviously, we are back here just two weeks after the last debate. I think that the Minister was quite pleased that I provided a little more debate and discussion around the legislation. He did not ask me to bring these amendments

forward again, but I think that he is quite sympathetic to them — at least I hope that he is.

It was quite interesting the last day that Mr Allister described the amendments that I brought forward as modest. Most parties, with the exception of Alliance, appeared to support the principle behind them but did not appear to have the will, the courage or whatever to vote for them.

What were modest amendments the last day are even more modest today. Therefore, I hope that Members will see fit to support them. They are pretty simple. I have simplified them as much as possible.

The first amendment obviously deals with the appointment of the director. I did attempt to amend it so that the matter of being a civil servant would be taken out of it. That has now remained in. I accept that situation. However, what I am doing at this stage is proposing an amendment that will result in an open, transparent competition for the appointment of the director. I do not see how anybody can actually object to that. I thought that most parties and Members of this House supported open competition for senior positions. I hope that Members will see that.

I know that the last day, the Minister indicated to us, as the officials did when they were at Committee, that there are a number of options for how the director may be appointed, but there is no guarantee that it will be by open public competition. That is the difficulty. Indeed, at the Committee, the senior official indicated that there were three methods that could be used. Only one of them was open competition. If we are genuine about moving the appointment process in the Senior Civil Service towards more open competition, why is this not a good place to start? The last day, there was an acceptance in the House and in the Committee that, indeed, some senior positions in the Civil Service are filled by open competition. Why are we not saying that this should be? That is all that I ask: that it gives people in the wider public the opportunity to get into a position that may be suited to them. I think that it would be hugely helpful to the Civil Service in general. It would be hugely helpful to this new position if there were open competition. That does not preclude or exclude a senior civil servant from applying. It does not exclude a senior civil servant from getting the position, but it leaves the option for the wider public to apply — maybe someone who is well suited to it.

The last day, the Minister said about my amendments:

"I fear that they would create a degree of uncertainty and confusion that would have to be addressed elsewhere and which would run contrary to the normal procedures for appointing civil servants." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 97, p116, col 1].

I do not think that my amendment this time either adds any confusion or, indeed, runs contrary to the appointment of civil servants because we have already been told that this open process is being used for the appointment of other senior civil servants, including the recent appointment of a permanent secretary. That is what we are told. That is not coming from me; it is coming from the Minister and the Department. That is my first amendment on the appointment process.

My second amendment is on the directions that can be given by the Minister or the Department to the director. Again, it was described the last day by some Members as a "power grab" that allowed the Minister to actually direct the director to comply with his directions. All that I am indicating in the amendment is actually what the senior officials have told us at Committee, which is that any directions that are given to the director must be issued under statutory provision — in other words, within legislation. They have already indicated in Committee that that will be what they have to do. Therefore, why not include it in the legislation?

In the last debate at Consideration Stage, I noted that the Minister gave an example of when that power of direction might be used. However, the example that he gave was either about individual cases, in which he cannot give direction anyway, or about a class of case, which was raised in that debate by Mr Maginness and Mr Allister and was not included in my last amendments or in this one. I do not believe that the Minister has addressed the issue of when he can use that direction to the director. If we heard some good examples of when he could use that direction, maybe it would satisfy me and other Members. However, at this stage, we have not. That is why I am keen to bring this amendment forward: to limit the times when the Minister and the Department can give direction to the director. That is all that I am asking: that there is not a power grab by the Department or the Minister, as was indicated in a recent debate.

I hope that Members will see fit to accept both amendments. The first amendment would make the competition for the director open to the public; I do not see what anybody has to fear from open competition for the director's position. The second amendment would limit when direction can be given to the director by the Minister or the Department.

Mr Givan (The Chairperson of the Committee for Justice): As I outlined during Consideration Stage, the Committee considered in some detail the requirement in the Bill for the Department of Justice to designate a civil servant in the Department as the director of legal aid casework and how, in practical terms, the recruitment and appointment of the director would take place. The Committee explored the issues raised in relation to the matter in the written and oral evidence with Department of Justice officials when they appeared before the Committee. At Committee Stage, the Department did make it clear that, as the Bill was drafted, the post of director could be filled in a number of ways, such as direct recruitment, competition among the existing grades of staff across the Senior Civil Service in all Departments, or the more managed move of a particular person in the Department or, more generally, across the Senior Civil Service. They also indicated that the Department had no plans to hold an external competition and stated

that consideration needed to be given to the current chief executive of the Legal Services Commission and the potential for retaining the expertise over a transition period, then considering how to fill the post in future. When considering clause 2, some Committee members were of the view that it could be better worded to ensure that there is not a perception that a person in the Department must be appointed to the post of director of legal aid casework. Other members, however, noted that it did not preclude the recruitment of someone from outside, who would then become a civil servant.

Mr Elliott, when addressing his amendments at Consideration Stage, said that he was seeking assurance that there would be an open competition for the director's post and that the Bill needed to be future-proofed to ensure that such appointments are not made on the basis of moving senior civil servants around, either in a Department or between Departments. In response, the Minister explained that the recruitment process at senior grades in the Civil Service is already widening, generally by generic competitions rather than the expense of running individual competitions. He stated that, each time the post falls vacant, consideration will be given to the best way to fill it. He clarified that there can be an open recruitment competition, which would be open to people internally as well as externally under the provisions in the Bill.

Amendment No1, which we are debating today, aims to ensure that the director is appointed by open public competition. The Minister expressed concerns regarding Mr Elliott's previous amendments, indicating that, if accepted, they had the potential to cause some confusion and uncertainty regarding the appointment process. I wait with interest to hear the Minister's further comments on this particular amendment.

Before moving on to amendment No 2, I will speak in my capacity as a Member. Obviously we are keen to hear what the Minister has to say. We remain to be convinced that we need to explicitly put in legislation the need for such a competition. However, I want to hear from the Minister an assurance that he would consider a public competition before we take what I regard as an unusual step to explicitly put such an appointment in legislation. We remain to be convinced otherwise.

I turn now to amendment No 2, which deals with directions given by the Department and the need to protect and ensure the independence of decisions by the director of legal aid casework on individual cases and the granting of civil legal aid.

The safeguards in the Bill include a requirement that the Department cannot give direction or guidance in relation to an individual case; that directions and guidance must be published; the establishment of an independent appeals process; and imposing a duty on the Department to ensure that the director acts independently of it when applying any guidance or direction to an individual case.

10.45 am

During Committee Stage, the Department indicated that any direction or guidance could not override the provisions of the relevant primary or secondary legislation and may be challenged in the courts, as can any funding decision by the director of legal aid casework by way of an application for judicial review. It also emphasised that,

under the proposed new arrangements, the independence of the director's decision-making in any individual case would be no less than the independence of the Legal Services Commission's decision-making under the current arrangements.

When considering clause 3, some Committee members noted that the requirement to follow directions and guidance issued by the Minister already exists and were satisfied that any direction could not override the provisions of the relevant primary or secondary legislation. Individual decisions by the director will be made on the basis of the statutory tests. Other members expressed reservations about the proposed framework to ensure the independence of the director in relation to decisions in individual cases and whether adequate safeguards were in place.

During the Consideration Stage debate, the Minister reiterated the primacy of relevant primary or secondary legislation over any directions issued by him or his Department and, by way of assurance, highlighted the fact that regulations to amend schedule 2 of the 2003 Order to add new services or omit or vary any services that the director of legal aid casework may not fund as civil legal services are subject to the draft affirmative procedure in the Assembly.

As I indicated, the Justice Committee is clear that the independence of individual decisions on the grant of civil legal aid by the director must be protected. I listened to Mr Elliott's rationale for the amendment, and I look forward to clarification from the Minister on its likely effect and whether it will strengthen the safeguards already in the Bill.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. I will take the amendments as they are listed. We are sympathetic to the intent of the amendments, and, throughout Committee Stage, the issue of how the process would go forward and how the person would be selected was raised. At Consideration Stage, Tom Elliott outlined that, and when the Minister responded, we were satisfied that the competition would be based on merit and be open and fair. The appointment process as laid out covers that, but, as outlined by the Chair, we are interested to hear what the Minister says about Tom Elliott's points this morning. We are satisfied with the explanation given at Consideration Stage, but we are open to Tom Elliott's points this morning.

Similarly, with amendment No 2, at Consideration Stage, Alban Maginness raised a number of concerns about the power of direction and the Minister's ability to provide direction — Tom Elliott described it this morning as a power grab — which will go across a category of cases that we feel should be protected and not be in the gift of the Minister to change. The statutory provision in the legislation is clear that the Minister cannot change the categories, so unless we hear a different explanation this morning, we are wholly satisfied.

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I am grateful to the Member for giving way. The term "power grab" has been used and will doubtless hit the headlines tomorrow. Does the Member agree, given what he has just said, that this is the reverse of a power grab? This gives away power that the Minister currently has.

Mr McCartney: I hope that I will not add to the headline of saying that it is a power grab. The issue was raised at Committee Stage, and Tom Elliott and Alban Maginness

made the point at Consideration Stage, and there is a concern. I am sure, however, that the Minister will want to be protected from the suggestion that perhaps a Minister could interfere to deny a particular category.

Alban Maginness referred to inquests, whereby a Minister could say that there will be no legal aid for all inquests. We feel that that would be inappropriate but that the statutory provision laid out in the legislation would protect us from that situation and prevent any future Minister from allowing that situation to occur. We await the Minister's contribution.

Mr A Maginness: I, too, am very sympathetic to amendment No 1, which Mr Elliott has brought to the Floor of the Assembly.

It highlights the collective wish of the Justice Committee and many Members to see open competition for the ultimate appointment of the director of legal aid casework. That is a reasonable objective and I support it, as does my party. The question is this: how do we achieve it? Of course, the two previous contributors, leaving aside Mr Elliott, have indicated that they await the Minister's comments on the matter.

If I were to anticipate what the Minister is going to say — I do not know what he is going to say — and if he said that he was in favour of open competition but could not guarantee it in the circumstances of the situation, then I am not certain that that would fully satisfy my party, which wants to see wider open competition for senior positions in the Civil Service, not just for this position but for permanent secretaries, their deputies and so forth. That is a proper aim on our part as a political party, and other Members would agree with that. I cannot see inside the Minister's mind — he will reveal that in due course — but if he says he is sympathetic but cannot guarantee this, that falls short of what the House, my party and the Justice Committee wants. In those circumstances, I would be thrown back to the position where I would give sympathy and support to Mr Elliott's amendment. So, a lot hangs on what the Minister will say on this matter.

Amendment No 2 has been brought forward by Mr Elliott with very good intentions, and, again, I am sympathetic to it. It is a belt and braces exercise, which is worthy of support. It merits support because the issue raised last time by me and other colleagues was about trying to limit the power of the Department to interfere with the grant of legal aid for certain categories of cases. We are very concerned about that, and if this helps to achieve the objective of limiting the Department's power to do that — the Minister has indicated that the Department could not do it — I still think that as this is intended to reinforce that point of view it is not only a well-intentioned amendment but an effective one, as well as being a belt and braces amendment. It is worthy of our support, but, again, I wait to see what the Minister is going to say about that.

I would not even dare to anticipate what the Minister is going to say on this point, but, in any event, the House is very concerned about the matter. The example I gave last time was in relation to judicial reviews. If, for example, the Department was of the view that we should limit legal aid and not permit it to support judicial reviews, that would have a profoundly negative effect. It is something that we should be wary and protective of and should try to prevent it happening. If amendment No 2 helps to do that, and reinforces the point, I think that we should support it.

Mr Ford: Mr Elliott said that, at Consideration Stage, everyone but the Alliance Party — I think that that was his precise quote — appeared to be sympathetic to the principle of opening up the Civil Service. Let me be absolutely clear: I expressed my commitment, and I believe that Stewart Dickson made a similar commitment, to the general aims in the amendments that Mr Elliott had at Consideration Stage. The difficulty that we had was with whether the amendments, as proposed then, and, indeed, as proposed today, would succeed in achieving the aim that he set out. It seems to me that the amendment that talks about putting in place an open competition after a civil servant has been designated as director does not make sense. There are real problems in putting that level of explicit provision in a Bill as an appropriate way of delivering on the objective of opening up the Senior Civil Service to wider competition.

I made it clear at Consideration Stage a fortnight ago that the Bill as drafted allows for that open competition if that is the best way in which to fill the post of director at any time. If it is the right approach, it can happen. In fact, I made the case that that is what happened when the chief executive of the Youth Justice Agency was appointed. There was a specific open competition for that post. I assure Members that if that is the case, that will apply again. In fact, the most recent competition, which produced the current list of those eligible for appointment at grade 5 in the Senior Civil Service — the grading that the post of director has — has produced a list of those suitable for appointment from internal and external candidates. So, there is clearly already an open list of those who have proved their merit, and that includes people from outside the Civil Service. That is the reality, and that process is ongoing. Recently, we heard about it in the context of a permanent secretary position and other senior posts. The Civil Service is being opened up. I do not think that we need to fix that open competition in the Bill for one particular post, when that is the principle of what is already happening. The real danger of putting it in the Bill is that it would remove any options that might be appropriate in other circumstances. One key example —

Mr Allister: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ford: I will give way.

Mr Allister: Does the Minister not agree that, by failing to put it in the Bill, he is relying on a non-statutory exhortation towards openness, which, he says, is generally spreading throughout the Civil Service, but that there is no statutory basis for the imposition of openness in competition throughout the Civil Service? It may be a policy direction, but amendment No 1 would give it a statutory focus for this specific post, which is the only post that we are talking about in the Bill. So, what is he scared of?

Mr Ford: As I was saying, the key point is that there would be a complete lack of flexibility in any circumstances. Suppose that we had a number of changes of director over a short time, for whatever reason. We would potentially have to run a costly and, worse, time-consuming open competition. We would hope that that would not be the case, but you cannot be sure that health issues, job opportunities or changes in personal circumstances would not lead to that happening. Given the difficulties that we have had in managing legal aid, the last thing that we would need is a lengthy series of vacancies for the post of director.

The danger is that the approach that is put forward in the amendment would remove any flexibility. We could tie it down if we passed this amendment, but doing so would potentially rob us of the benefits of having continuity at this particularly difficult time of transition, because my understanding is that it would remove the ability to nominate the current chief executive of the Legal Services Commission (LSC) as the director of legal aid casework. That is a point that was raised by a number of Members at Consideration Stage. Mr Givan referred to it today, and, I think, Mr Maginness referred to it last time.

11.00 am

Mr A Maginness: I thank the Minister for giving way. On that point, taking the present incumbent and moving them over on a temporary basis would not be prohibited by this amendment because, by its very nature, it would be a temporary appointment, which is in keeping with what everybody seems to want in relation to this position. Surely, a temporary appointment could not be prohibited by this particular amendment.

Mr Ford: It is certainly my understanding that a temporary appointment, given the specific powers vested in the director of legal aid casework, would fall under the provisions of this amendment. This is not somebody temporarily acting up from one post to another; there are very specific legal duties, including, as we will be talking about later, the duty of individual decision-making, that are attached to this post. I find it difficult to see that even a temporary appointment would not fall foul, because it would be the formal designation of a post holder who would have to carry out those duties.

We are not talking about a simple acting-up mechanism for people operating within a mainstream policy area. That is another point where we would have difficulty if we were to fix open competition into the Bill. It is unnecessary because we have the openness already coming through. It would create difficulties if we had particular needs to make appointments speedily, and it would have particular difficulties on the transition. If it is made even internally, the reality is that, the way things are changing, there would almost certainly be somebody bringing experience from outside the Civil Service as they fill the post.

So, I do believe that there are significant problems with the wording of the amendment. Whilst I think that I have outlined, a fortnight ago and today, my willingness to look at the opening up of competition for posts in the Senior Civil Service, there are difficulties in specifying in a Bill that, right from the introduction of the post, it would have to be somebody external and that an internal candidate could not apply whatever the circumstances. I hope that, on the basis of what Members said when we discussed it at Consideration Stage and what has been said today, Mr Elliott will think of those points and accept that there is a broad understanding around the Chamber of his intent and a willingness to work on that but will not move the amendment, because I believe that it is unhelpful. If he does move it, I ask the House to reject it.

On amendment No 2 —

Mr McCartney: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ford: Yes.

Mr McCartney: On the issue of flexibility, would a reserve list not satisfy the need for a smooth transition if someone were to leave for health or career reasons?

Mr Ford: As I understand the principles of reserve lists, they would only apply for up to a year. So, if the post were to fall vacant at 53 weeks, you would potentially be going through a very long process to make an open appointment with a complete gap at that stage. I am not sure that we would be able to maintain a reserve list for any longer than the one year. Indeed, in those circumstances, if there were effectively a list of those who were already on the grade 5 approved list, that would be the appropriate point to go to, not to go to public competition to get a speedy filling of the vacancy.

Mr Allister: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ford: Again?

Mr Allister: Yes. Surely, it is not unfamiliar in public appointments to have a situation where there is an acting up for a period while a post is filled. In recent years, we have seen the post of chief executive of the Housing Executive filled a number of times, and he or she, of course, is the accounting officer of the Housing Executive with specific functions under the Act that only they can operate. In each of those circumstances, there has been an acting up while the process has run its course. So, where is the difficulty in having that same principle apply here? As for the suggestion that someone in-house could not be appointed, of course they could be appointed if they applied in the open competition. There would be no barrier to them applying in an open competition, would there?

Mr Ford: I think that Mr Allister has just made the point that I was making. We have a list at the moment of those eligible for grade 5 appointments, some of whom are internal and some of whom are external. That is where the openness has come through. So, he makes the point that I was making about the existence of that list.

I will turn to amendment No 2. I am simply not sure whether it achieves any effect. It merely restates the requirement to comply with directions that appear elsewhere in legislation. It is not clear to me why only the power of direction in clause 3(1)(a) is singled out and not the other references to directions. I am not sure whether, in that way, it makes sense as drafted.

If the amendment does have any effect, it is to interfere with the set of safeguards on the power of giving directions, which are designed to work together to provide the appropriate level of assurance that the House has been seeking. Those safeguards have been extensively aired by the Committee, as the Chair said, and during Consideration Stage, and, frankly, I do not think I need to repeat them all today. We have a carefully constructed set of arrangements, and amendments could potentially result in meddling and lead to unintended consequences.

The key point is that, under the Bill as it was originally drafted and as it proceeded through Committee Stage, all applications for civil legal services will be dealt with individually. The decisions will be taken by the director on the merits of the case and not influenced by political considerations. As well as being published, any direction or guidance issued by me or my Department cannot override the provisions of the relevant legislation, whether primary or secondary.

There may have been some confusion over the reference to the Departments (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 during Consideration Stage. That refers to the power of Ministers to direct. The 1999 Order states that all functions of a Department shall be exercised subject to the direction and control of the Minister, but it does not mean that I or any other Minister can use the 1999 Order to give directions to the director on individual cases. Article 4(6) of that Order prevents that by making it clear that:

"Nothing in this Order affects the operation of any statutory provision or rule of law which authorises or requires any functions of a department to be exercised in a particular manner or by particular persons."

That means that the assurances in clause 3(2)(a) of the Bill that the Department must not give direction or guidance about an individual are simply not affected by the 1999 Order.

There may also be confusion about whether anything in the Bill, the 1999 Order or other statute allows me or the Department to give directions in relation to classes of cases, as has just been highlighted by Mr Maginness on the issue of judicial review. I must say that, from discussions that have happened around the Executive table, I think that I am probably more favourable to judicial reviews being allowed than a number of other Ministers are. Article 12(5) of the 2003 Order prescribes, in schedule 2, the services that the director of legal aid casework may not fund as civil legal services. Article 12(6) provides:

"Regulations may amend Schedule 2 by adding new services or omitting or varying any services".

That may be the point of concern, but article 46(5) of the Order, as I highlighted previously, provides that any regulations made under article 12(6) are subject to Assembly control by draft affirmative procedure. Mr Givan made that point today. So, it would simply not be possible for the Department to give the kind of direction or guidance reflecting the scope of cases, never mind the individual cases, that may be funded without the approval of the Assembly. I trust that that reassures Members who have expressed concern about that.

The term "power grab", as I highlighted to Mr McCartney, who is about to intervene again —

Mr McCartney: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Ford: I will give way.

Mr McCartney: It is in terms of clarity. Tom Elliott's amendment only makes it clear that there is statutory provision that prohibits a Minister from interfering in the classification of cases. It only makes it clear.

Mr Ford: I do not accept that it makes it clearer, because it only applies in one small part. It is only inserted into one subsection of one clause where there are references to directions. The point is that the overarching issues that appear in the 2003 Order and the references to the schedule 2 powers are clearly covered quite explicitly there. There is no need to tinker around the edges and make a reference to one piece of legislation only. It is not assisting with or adding anything, and the powers and the limitations of powers on the Minister are absolutely explicit elsewhere in statute in a much more coherent and joined-up way than appears by tinkering with just one subsection of one clause of this Bill.

There was a reference to a power grab, but the reality is that, as I highlighted a fortnight ago, I have already given away, as a matter of administrative practice, any power that I had to determine continuing funding in inquest cases. Representation for next of kin in inquest cases currently has to be approved by the Minister, but I have given away the responsibility for continuing assessments of further applications to the chief executive of the LSC because I do not believe that it is appropriate for the Minister to carry out those functions. We will move this forward in a way that ensures that those powers formally pass in statute.

The suggestion that I am engaged in a power grab is an utter nonsense, when the reality is that the power is being taken as far away as possible from political influence and being given as much as possible to the director of legal aid casework. That is being done under the guidance and duties that exist to ensure that only the Assembly can change classes of case and only the individual director can decide individual cases.

On that basis, I do not believe that the amendment contributes anything. It merely clouds the issue by referring to one or two points. If that amendment is moved, I trust that the House will reject it also.

Mr Elliott: I welcome and thank all those who participated in the debate to make it a little more exciting than it could have been. I am a wee bit surprised that the Minister has been so difficult about the issue of a power grab. I only referred to a comment made during the debate at Consideration Stage, but it seems to have gathered some legs, with Mr McCartney referring to it and the Minister taking up the issue. Mr Maginness referred to limiting the power of the Department, which is maybe a little softer. I am quite happy to use whatever term people are comfortable with.

I welcome the Chairman of the Committee's overview of the situation, particularly on amendment No 1. He said that there is no guarantee of an open public competition for the position, and that was referred to on several occasions during the debate. It has been accepted by the Department and the Minister that there is no guarantee of an open public competition. I totally accept that it is one of the options, but there is no guarantee, and even the Minister has accepted that position.

Mr McCartney and Mr Maginness said that they were sympathetic to my amendments. My late father used to say, "My pockets are full of sympathy, but it does not do a great lot for me." *[Laughter.]* I am looking for much more than sympathy; I am looking for a clear line on where Members and their parties are on this.

Mr McCartney also referred to the power of direction and the power grab. I probably want to remove that term. I do not think that it is reasonable, and I was referring to something said during the debate at Consideration Stage.

Mr Maginness said that his party wants a wider competition for senior civil servants' positions, so he also accepts my premise and position on that. He went on to say that he wants to hear more from the Minister than that he is sympathetic to open competition; he wants him to guarantee it. Mr Maginness, if you heard that today, I would like to know where, because it was not from the Minister, and there is no guarantee of an open public competition. I assume that you will, therefore, support my amendment.

I am pleased that the Minister has not indicated that my two amendments cannot be accepted and would not fit into the Bill. I did not hear the Minister —

Mr Ford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Elliott: I will in a moment. I did not hear the Minister say that they would be detrimental to the Bill, and he did not give any examples of where either would diminish it. In fact, I think that the opposite was indicated. I give way to the Minister.

Mr Ford: I am grateful to the Member for giving way, but, if he did not hear what I said, I am really concerned. I made a very specific point that his amendment would prevent the current chief executive of the LSC becoming the director of legal aid casework as we seek to make these changes. If that is not a pretty fundamental objection to his first amendment, I am not sure what it is.

I also made a point about the confusion around his second amendment. I said that it applied only to one subsection of one clause in a way that did nothing to deal with the concerns about the powers of direction, which are well covered by the limitations on any individual case and the limitations that I highlighted with the Assembly's role via affirmative resolution on classes of case. So, if Mr Elliott did not hear me objecting to both his amendments, I fear that he was not listening terribly well to what I said.

11.15 am

Mr Elliott: I thank the Minister for that clarification. While I do not know who the current director or chief executive of the Legal Services Commission is, if opposing my amendment is about the protection of the position of one individual, I have to say that it is a very weak case for objecting. I do not think that legislation should be refined to address any one individual; it should be much broader than that. I do not see that as a reasonable or valid objection to that amendment.

Mr McCartney: Will the Member give way?

Mr Elliott: I am happy to give way.

Mr McCartney: In relation to amendment No 2 and the points that the Minister made, during the previous stage, we were satisfied that there was a statutory provision that would prevent interference in the classification of cases. Your amendment does not add to that. I think that Alban Maginness referred to this as a belt and braces exercise, so, in some sense, it is not necessary. Do you agree with that, given what we have heard again this morning?

Mr Elliott: I will come to that in a wee moment, if that is OK, Mr McCartney.

I will finish my point about the side move of the chief executive of the Legal Services Commission. I understand why the Minister and Department would want to do it because it brings some consistency, and I accept that; however, I do not think that the legislation can be bound by just that one issue. I think that would be totally unfair to the wider public. It would be unfair to people who may have the expertise to go into that position and, therefore, I think that is a very weak reason for the Minister to want to stop it.

Mr Ford: Will the Member give way?

Mr Elliott: OK, I will give way on that point.

Mr Ford: I am not sure whether Mr Elliott wants me to repeat my entire speech. I merely gave one specific example, but I made a number of references as to why the dangers of confining the appointment of the director of the legal aid casework in the way he has suggested could create difficulties in short-term changes as well as in transformation. As a member of the Committee, he is surely well aware of the problems that we have in managing legal aid at the moment and the vital need to get a handle on that.

I also gave significant examples of the current open practice that exists across the Senior Civil Service and, indeed, the open list, which includes both internal and external applicants who would be available, for example, if we were seeking to draw from it at the present time. Let us not have him highlight one particular point I made as if I am seeking to protect an individual rather than trying to ensure that, in the difficult financial circumstances that we are in at present, we get a handle on the cost of legal aid.

Mr Elliott: I certainly hope that the Minister is not trying to defend his position by saying that the process that we are currently using to administer legal aid has been a huge success and that we want to continue with it, because I do not think that many in the community would accept that. I notice that Mr Wells, the new Health Minister, is not in his place, but he was very critical of that matter in Committee. I hope that the Minister is not trying to use that issue as a defence, because I think that he is on the wrong tack there.

In relation to Mr McCartney's point on amendment No 2, I accept his position that it does not do anything around that class of case. I am trying to reiterate the position that any directions given must be part of legislation, therefore, it is, to some extent, repeating legislation. However, the point is that, once it gives direction in the Bill at all, that is repeating legislation, because we heard during Consideration Stage that the Minister and the Department already have powers to direct their civil servants. That is a repeat of the legislation. All that I am trying to do is refine it and curtail the powers that the Minister and Department have to the legislative base. I hope that you accept that, Mr McCartney. I accept that particular point.

The Minister indicated that amendment No 2 may have unintended consequences. However, he did not give us an example of what those unintended consequences may be. We have not heard any good reason as to why either amendment cannot be accepted.

Therefore, I am happy to move forward with the two amendments and, hopefully, I will get more support than sympathy from Members.

Question put, That amendment No 1 be made.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 46; Noes 33.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Allister, Mr Attwood, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mr Dallat, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr McCallister, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mrs McKeivitt, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness,

Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Nesbitt, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs Overend, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Elliott and Mr Nesbitt.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Ms P Bradley, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Ms Lo, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Poots, Mr P Robinson, Mr Spratt, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mrs Cochrane and Mr McCarthy.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 3 (Exercise of functions by Director)

Amendment No 2 proposed: In page 2, line 27, after "directions" insert

“, issued under this section or under any other statutory provision.”— [Mr Elliott.]

Question put, That amendment No 2 be made.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: I have been advised by the Whips that in accordance with Standing Order 27(1A) (b) there is agreement that we can dispense with the three minutes and move straight to a Division.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 21; Noes 61.

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Allister, Mr Attwood, Mr Beggs, Mr D Bradley, Mr Byrne, Mr Dallat, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Mrs D Kelly, Mr McCallister, Dr McDonnell, Mr McGlone, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr A Maginness, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Elliott and Mr Nesbitt.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms P Bradley, Mr Brady, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Ms McCorley, Mr I McCrea, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Newton, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr P Robinson, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Spratt, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mrs Cochrane and Mr McCarthy.

Question accordingly negated.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: That concludes Further Consideration Stage of the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill. The Bill stands referred to the Speaker.

Private Members' Business

Kincora Boys' Home: Investigation of Allegations of Abuse

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow up to one hour and 30 minutes for the debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who are called to speak will have five minutes.

Mrs Cochrane: I beg to move

That this Assembly notes with deep concern the allegations of sexual abuse that took place in Kincora Boys' Home during the 1970s and 1980s; further notes allegations that senior politicians, military personnel, paramilitary figures and businessmen from Northern Ireland and Great Britain were involved in the commissioning and subsequent cover-up of the abuse, as well as allegations that members of the intelligence service were complicit in a cover-up of this scandal; believes that the nature and seriousness of the allegations, especially that MI5 was involved in a cover-up, means that this cannot be adequately considered in any way other than a Westminster Government-led inquiry; and urges the Home Secretary to include Kincora Boys' Home in the inquiry by Fiona Woolf as the most appropriate means of achieving truth and justice.

Thank you, Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to raise this important issue today. Child abuse is a devastating crime that traumatises people at an early age, and the consequences stay with them for the rest of their life. Perpetrators need to be stopped and brought to justice, yet, so often, our systems have failed young victims by not hearing or believing them when they cried out for help or by failing to protect them from those who sought to harm them.

Recently, we have been made aware of particularly troubling cases of abuse involving powerful people and celebrities and a growing belief that some of those people did not act alone but were part of a network of abusers who were too well connected to be touched. It is partly the fact that some of the rumours have turned out to be true that has reignited interest in Kincora in east Belfast, as well as the fact that Kincora is one of a number of children's homes currently subject to investigation by the historical institutional abuse inquiry.

We know that three senior care staff from Kincora were jailed in 1981 on 23 counts of abusing 11 boys. However, there are concerns that there were more victims and more abusers during the period between 1960 and when the home was closed in 1980. There have been allegations that senior politicians, military personnel, paramilitary figures and businessmen from Northern Ireland and Great Britain were involved in both the commissioning of abuse and the subsequent cover-up. Perhaps even more disturbing are the allegations that members of the intelligence services were also complicit in covering up the scandal. Indeed, there are specific allegations that the secret services, over an extended number of years, used their knowledge about a paedophile ring at the boys' home for the purposes of intelligence gathering while actively

blocking police investigations that could have ended the abuse.

The motion is designed to shine a light on the magnitude of the allegations concerning Kincora.

It also echoes the repeated calls of my colleague Naomi Long MP to the Home Office to ensure that present investigations comprehensively assess what took place at Kincora, as it is clear that none of the previous probes had the power that they needed.

I said that the Kincora Boys' Home is one of a number of children's homes subject to investigation by the historical institutional abuse (HIA) inquiry, which was established by the Assembly and began public hearings in January. Whilst I appreciate that investigating abuse should, in normal circumstances, be the responsibility of the devolved Administrations, we do not believe that that alone is appropriate in this case. What differentiates Kincora from other cases are the allegations that persist that the Government and their agencies, such as MI5, had full knowledge of the allegations at the time and acted to prevent appropriate investigation taking place. There is further suspicion that MI5 and the security agencies were complicit in the abuse in order to collect information that could be used to blackmail those in positions of power. It is also thought that the abuse that took place in Northern Ireland did not only involve victims and perpetrators from Northern Ireland, and there have been suggestions that children were moved between different locations where abuse took place. Indeed, a former army captain said that he was aware of boys being brought from different children's homes to be abused in Kincora.

The current Northern Ireland inquiry, as it stands, is limited in its terms of reference and its statutory powers to summon witnesses. The head of the inquiry, Sir Anthony Hart, recently spoke out to confirm that he does not have the power to compel MI5 and military intelligence witnesses to give evidence or Whitehall Departments to release files. That fact was also highlighted by Amnesty International and my colleague Naomi Long when they called for Kincora to be included in the overarching UK inquiry. That view has been echoed not only by other politicians from various parties but by former army captain Colin Wallace, who was discredited and jailed for his efforts to expose the abuse back in the 1970s and then finally cleared.

Whilst we do not want to hinder progress for those victims who have seen the HIA process as a step forward, given the allegations of the senior level of visitors to Kincora, we believe that the Home Office's inquiry would be a better vehicle by which truth could be established and where a more thorough and substantive investigation of allegations can take place. I understand that the Woolf inquiry will look into how child abuse allegations against senior public figures were handled by the Government, and I believe that there are parallels with, and a potential connection to, the circumstances surrounding Kincora. These are extremely serious allegations and need urgent attention. Only the inquiry that is about to take place at Westminster would have the powers to examine the necessary material and to call the witnesses required to uncover the truth about the abuse and any subsequent cover-up at the home.

A number of former military intelligence officers have recently come forward to indicate publicly that they possess information that would be of interest to an inquiry with regard to Kincora and also their willingness to give evidence, including on the alleged blocking of police and army investigations by secret services. At least one of them has also indicated that he was unable to disclose some information to an earlier inquiry because it would have been deemed a breach of his obligations under the Official Secrets Act. It is therefore imperative that the UK Government authorise disclosure of all relevant information held in order to examine and fully address the persistent allegations surrounding Kincora and other such homes. It would be extremely concerning if any limitations, including the use of the Official Secrets Act, were allowed to restrict the effectiveness or undermine the credibility of this inquiry.

The victims and survivors of Kincora deserve justice but, to date, they have been left as outsiders. If the correct powers are granted to it by the Home Office regarding witnesses testifying who are subject to the Official Secrets Act, the Woolf inquiry is the way to properly consider the allegations and help the victims put their nightmares to rest. I believe that today we can send a strong message to the UK Government to encourage them to take the correct decisions, with regard to the inclusion of Kincora in the Woolf inquiry and ensuring that the inquiry is empowered to access all files and witnesses required to uncover the truth, which many feel has been hidden for so long.

I hope that there will be full support for this motion.

Mr Douglas: I support the motion, and I thank the Member for bringing this important debate to the Chamber. I hope that, after today, this will not just be about raising the issues, many of which have been raised before, but about action, and that, at long last, we will get to the heart of this scandal, which has shamed Northern Ireland, given the extent of the abuse that went on and the fact that it affected so many innocent young people.

I live one and a half miles from the former Kincora Boys' Home in east Belfast. Every time that I pass that area, it is like a trigger, in that I am reminded of the rumours, the allegations, the discussions with people, the real anger and the suspicions, which have persisted through the years, that child abuse at the home was indeed known by a huge range of people, including politicians, civil servants and members of the security forces and military intelligence. The most serious allegation is that investigations were blocked by the authorities.

I read an old copy of the 'Belfast Telegraph' last night in which our First Minister said:

"In some cases it goes beyond rumours. Again, you get down to what might be regarded as circumstantial evidence, but people did take their lives after being questioned by police on these issues."

He also said:

"at the bottom of all this ... we're talking about young boys who were put into the care of the state and we are now being told that there were agencies of the state who were aware of it and did nothing. That is the most serious allegation that can be made, particularly when you see just how much it has ruined the lives of so many people."

I have met some of the individuals concerned. Last year, a man who was at the home came to see me. He told me of his own nightmare and his experiences while he was at the home, but also when he was taken from the home. He was taken to big fancy houses where he was abused by, as he said, the top echelons of our society. He was a man in his sixties. He went to the police and informed them of his allegations, but he was frustrated after all these years. The man was traumatised in his own being, and, unfortunately, he died within the last year. He had a record of his allegations of the abuse that he experienced during those years, which he handed to the police.

There are specific allegations that the secret services, over an extended number of years, used their knowledge about a paedophile ring at the boys' home for the purposes of intelligence-gathering while actively blocking police investigations that could have ended the abuse. Shocking. Those allegations, with some substantiating evidence, have been documented in a series of media investigations and books published from 1990 onwards.

Kincora Boys' Home is one of a number of children's homes subject to investigation by the historical institutional abuse inquiry established by the Assembly, which began public hearings in January. While we welcome the Northern Ireland inquiry, let us be honest: it has only limited powers and is unable to compel the release of files from either Whitehall Departments or the intelligence agencies.

On 1 August this year, our First Minister, Peter Robinson, said that child sex abuse at Kincora Boys' Home is a "national scandal" that needs to be fully investigated. The First Minister wrote to the Prime Minister to urge that the east Belfast home be included in the ongoing Westminster child sex abuse inquiry. I agree with the First Minister: we should seek nothing less than a full investigation of Kincora. We must be able to have access to all the relevant files and witnesses required to uncover the truth about abuse and any subsequent cover-up at the home. That should include the UK Government granting requests for the authorised disclosure of relevant information by current or former state employees with relevant knowledge of the alleged child abuse and its alleged cover-up, as permitted under the Official Secrets Act 1989.

As Mr Robinson said, any investigation would require full access to information from intelligence agencies. I think that there has to be complete freedom on the part of those who want to give evidence to be able to do so. I do not think that anybody is asking them to divulge national secrets, but this is a national scandal that needs to be dealt with, and I trust that whatever steps are taken will ensure that the truth will eventually come out.

12.00 noon

Ms Ruane: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Alliance as an rún seo. Tá an díospóireacht seo an-tábhachtach ar fad, agus tá mé sásta go bhfuil gach páirtí ag tabhairt tacaíochta don rún. I would like to thank the Alliance Party for bringing forward this very important motion. It is good to see that, so far, there is all-party support for it. I absolutely agree with both of the Members who spoke previously that a thorough investigation is required into the allegations about what happened in Kincora Boys' Home in east Belfast.

The issue is different from abuse that occurred in other institutions in one important area, which is that of the role of the British security services, who are accused of actively colluding in the ongoing abuse of young children for decades. We know that senior staff at Kincora were jailed for abusing boys in the home, but, as Judith Cochrane said, that is only the tip of the iceberg. There are concerns that there are potentially more victims from a later period who have not come forward yet. Continuing allegations have been made on the specific role of the British security services, senior politicians and civil servants. It is alleged that, due to the high-level nature of those involved, investigations were blocked and thwarted by the authorities. That is absolutely shameful and scandalous.

We know that, when the Westminster inquiry was announced, a number of former members of the British security services came forward to reveal that they had information that would relate to the inquiry and specifically to Kincora. The historical institutional abuse inquiry, which began its public hearings in January, will examine the allegations of abuse at Kincora. However, Judge Hart has made it clear that the scope and terms of reference of his inquiry are inadequate to deal with the shocking nature of the allegations in that instance. He is unable to force the release of files that are in the possession of the British Government or the secret services; he cannot compel the British security services to give evidence to his inquiry; nor does his remit stretch to allegations or links to Westminster politicians and British establishment figures.

There are proposals for a further inquiry at Westminster into some of those issues. My party has great concerns about the British political establishment investigating itself. We feel that there needs to be an independent investigation that has the powers and remit to access the files and information that is held at the highest level. I know that my colleague junior Minister Jennifer McCann has met some of the victim-survivors of the abuse at Kincora Boys' Home. They feel abandoned by the state. They are worried that, due to the scale of who was involved in their abuse and suffering, it will be swept under the carpet. Those survivors need our help.

What we need to see today is a united voice from the Assembly calling for a strong independent investigation into what happened at Kincora, particularly the role of the British security services and establishment. We also need to send a clear message that, in the past, those survivors may have been failed, but we will leave no stone unturned to ensure that they get justice even at this stage in their lives. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Attwood: I, too, welcome the tabling of the motion by Mrs Cochrane and her colleagues as well as their work, with that of many other politicians, to raise this issue in all appropriate places. In doing so, I also want to acknowledge, first and foremost, the victims and survivors, individually and through organisations like Survivors and Victims of Institutional Abuse (SAVIA), Amnesty International and others, which continue to campaign for truth, accountability and acknowledgement because, in this phase of our history, the measure of our democracy and the standard of our Government should be the primacy of the needs of victims and survivors of institutional abuse, abuse outside institutions or the history of this part of the world.

In opening my remarks, I want to make three comments. It is remiss of us, in a debate like this, not to name the other issues that need to be addressed by our Government.

Those issues are: compensation for victims and survivors where there continues to be uncertainty; how there shall be an inquiry into victims of clerical abuse outside institutions and whether that does or does not fall within the Hart inquiry; and the other victims in our society who were abused by organisations not of the state but of the paramilitaries and who must be acknowledged and have their needs addressed.

The SDLP endorses the proposal in the motion, which is that, given the limitations that Judge Hart has named in relation to his inquiry, the appropriate vehicle for inquiry into what happened in Kincora should be the Home Secretary's inquiry in London. We endorse the need for full accountability and disclosure with all appropriate powers to compel witnesses and documents in respect of the inquiry. While I note and welcome what the Home Secretary said about the Woolf inquiry — that there would be access to all government papers and that the inquiry could become a full public inquiry in the fullness of time if necessary — I put down a word of caution due to what we know from this jurisdiction. Only last week, a case in the High Court confirmed that important papers that were meant to be released to an ongoing inquest were destroyed. Here we have an example where a court in this part of these islands was to have access to important state documents, yet those state documents were destroyed in advance of them being released to the inquest. So, when it comes to the inquiry in London, whilst we welcome the words of the Home Secretary in respect of what might or might not be made available to it, we put down a word of caution, because we have had our own bitter experience in the last number of days, never mind over a long number of years, of the state, when it comes to issues of national security, denying people access to all information on all the individuals in a way that standards of due process require. However, subject to that caveat, we in the SDLP believe, as it appears all other Members do, that the right place for the Kincora issues to be interrogated in all their scale is through the inquiry being convened by Justice Woolf in London. In that regard, we welcome the motion.

Mr Nesbitt: Mr Principal Deputy Speaker, if you and I were to take a lunchtime stroll down the Upper Newtownards Road, we would soon pass Kincora. We would find a large, double-fronted building. It is the sort of large, double-fronted building that you see on arterial routes in east Belfast, north Belfast, south Belfast and west Belfast; nothing intimidating or threatening about it. As a young man, I walked and cycled past Kincora daily; as an older man, I drive past it daily. Only in recent years has it come to light that it was a double-fronted building living a double life.

I feel this personally because there but for the grace of God go any of us in the Chamber. I feel it politically because it is to do with how we have treated the most vulnerable in our society. Once again, victims have been doubly abused. First, there was the physical and mental abuse, and that is proven: three people who worked in that care home were convicted on 23 counts. Secondly, there was the failure to rally round and do what was right when the abuse was discovered. That did not happen. Worse than that, there was, allegedly, a cover-up. Worse even than that, allegedly, it was not just a cover-up but the

children were exploited. The children who we already knew had been mentally and physically abused were then used as fodder and bait to entrap people. They were used to help the authorities to engage in some form of blackmail.

So, there remain key questions, despite all the inquiries to date. When did the abuse begin? Who was responsible for it? Who knew about it? When did they know about it? Why was it not discovered sooner? Was there a cover-up? If there was, in whose interests did it suit people to cover up what was happening? What was the nature and extent of any involvement or knowledge of unionists, the Orange Order, the business community, military people and senior civil servants, including the secret services?

For decades now, there has been speculation that senior politicians were involved, including members of the Ulster Unionist Party. If the Ulster Unionist Party is implicated through individuals or corporately, I stand here to say that I will accept that guilt. The time has come to find out what really happened.

In a previous life, I worked with journalists, including Chris Moore, who has dedicated himself to exposing the abuse at Kincora as well as the Father Brendan Smyth case. I have been very critical of the Catholic Church and the way that it covered up members who abused children. I have been critical of political parties in the House whose senior members and family members were involved in abuse, and they did not do the right thing. So, if it is our turn as the Ulster Unionist Party, so be it. If any of our members were guilty, let us expose that, and I will acknowledge our guilt. There should be no hiding place because, if this is true, it is a national scandal. If it had happened in Birmingham, Swansea or Glasgow, it would be a national scandal. If it happened here in Belfast, it is a national scandal. Therefore, it needs a national investigation.

I understand that the historical institutional abuse inquiry will look at certain aspects of what happened at Kincora, but even the chairman has made it known publicly that he does not have the power to compel Whitehall Departments or the security services, so something else is needed. That is why we support the motion calling on the investigation to be passed over to Fiona Woolf's UK-wide inquiry, but it is critical that she is given the powers to look into the darkest corners of government in London. Otherwise, she will fail, as many other inquiries have failed to date. The most recent was undertaken in 1984 by Judge Hughes. I understand that Chris Moore and the BBC 'Spotlight' team are about to challenge some of the recommendations and conclusions of that report. I wish him well in that, and I wish Fiona Woolf well in her investigations.

It may be historical abuse, but those boys are now men. They are still hurting, and we owe them a debt. Perhaps supporting the motion is a small down payment.

Mr McCausland: The abuse that took place at Kincora and at a number of other homes in the Province is, I believe, a stain and shame on our society. Yesterday, the news focused on what happened at Rubane House, the De La Salle boys' home in Kircubbin. Today, in the Chamber, the focus is on Kincora.

All those examples of abuse are equally vile, but the story of Kincora is somewhat different, in that there are more dimensions and layers to it. That was very clear even back in 1980 when the story was first exposed in the 'Irish Independent'.

12.15 pm

Three homosexual predators were appointed to one home; that is the starting point of it. The first of them arrived in 1958, the second in 1964 and the third in 1971. Many people have asked how it was that the staff — I suppose the entire staff at one point — of that home were appointed to that home and all of them were homosexual predators. The Belfast welfare authority, which made those appointments over that period, was part of the old Belfast Corporation. Clearly, the chief welfare officer of the Belfast welfare committee had a role in making those appointments. Many people asked themselves how it was possible for this particular and unique situation to arise. The Hughes report of 1985 looked at recruitment processes, but it is interesting to pick out as one example the fact that one staff member gave a reference for a friend to enable him to be appointed. There are big questions about recruitment that need to be looked into in more detail.

Then, of course, in 1973, the Belfast welfare authority gave way to the health boards. The question arises as to how it was that over time, under the old corporation welfare authority and then under the boards, none of these things were uncovered. Previous investigations were partial and limited in their remit and their powers. Therefore, the fullest and strongest possible inquiry with adequate powers in relation to this matter is what is required. As has been pointed out, it is something that nearly all the political parties in the Chamber have called for. We need the fullest and strongest inquiry possible.

The focus has also been on the fact that there were suggestions, allegations and now clear first-hand testimony of the awareness in the British security services and military intelligence of what was happening in Kincora. Questions were raised all those years ago about the fact that the third person to be appointed to Kincora was appointed in August 1971 at the very point when internment was introduced in Northern Ireland and when, in many ways, Northern Ireland exploded. It had started in August 1969, but the introduction of internment in August 1971 changed the scene here politically, and that was the point when the third member of staff was appointed.

Soon after the initial article in the 'Irish Independent' in January 1980, stories began to emerge in newspapers and journals about other allegations of involvements, many of which were traced back to Colin Wallace and the book written about him by Paul Foot. Many people would have raised questions about the credibility of some of it because they would have seen Paul Foot as coming with a particular agenda because of his background. However, we now have very different and very compelling evidence that is solid and substantial.

Mr A Maginness: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCausland: Yes.

Mr A Maginness: The Member referred to Paul Foot's book 'Who Framed Colin Wallace?'. If one now reflects on that book, one realises that what Mr Foot was in fact revealing was the depth of the intelligence service's involvement in trying to suppress the truth that Colin Wallace had tried to reveal.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McCausland: The point I was making — I do not have time to go into it in full detail — was particularly around the fact that there were other aspects of Wallace's narrative that people may wonder about. As regards the core story, which was the issue around Kincora, there is not a question nor a doubt that it was correct. Chris Moore's book about Kincora, which has also been mentioned, was much more focused on Kincora and is a much superior piece of work because he had access to a lot more information and sources when he put that book together. It is an excellent book that highlights the issues. Clearly, because of all this, we now need something that is very different from what is on offer. We need the most extensive, thorough and empowered research and inquiry into this.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member's time is up.

Mr McCausland: I trust that, as a result of today's discussion and all of the other pressures that are being exerted and the demands that are being made, that will be forthcoming.

Ms J McCann: I thank the proposer of the motion and hope that today's debate will shine a light on a very grave injustice that saw young children left to the mercy of a paedophile network. That was all in spite of it being known and, indeed, covered up by the British security services. At the outset, I express my admiration for the victims and survivors of Kincora and, indeed, any victims and survivors of this type of abuse. The way in which they have come forward to try to highlight their case is admirable. I also pay particular tribute to the proposer's colleague Naomi Long MP, who has raised this issue on several occasions.

I too voice my support for the motion for Kincora to be included in the Westminster inquiry, but I also want to express some concerns that have already been expressed about the state investigating itself. I feel that an independent investigation would be better, but, that said, I support the motion.

As Members have said, we hear on a daily basis from the historical institutional abuse inquiry in Banbridge details of horrendous and horrific abuse and sexual exploitation of children. The testimony that is being given by witnesses is clearly saying that those children, who were in the care of the state, had no one to turn to. Even when they tried to speak out about the abuse, they were often not believed and were sent away. In the case of Kincora, there have been persistent claims of a cover-up of what happened and claim after claim that members of the British security services, high-profile politicians and civil servants, among others, were involved in the abuse and sexual exploitation of young boys who were in the home. Indeed, some individuals have gone even further and gone on public record claiming that they reported the abuse while it was happening but investigations by the authorities at the time were deliberately blocked. That has to be a concern for us all. To date, only three members of staff at Kincora have been charged and sentenced, and at least one of them is alleged to have been an agent for British intelligence.

I reiterate: all forms of abuse against children are wrong and should be condemned, no matter who was responsible or where the abuse took place. The abuse of children in care is an attack on our most vulnerable children, as they have no one to protect them or to speak out on their behalf. Even more startling in respect of Kincora are the

reports that the intelligence services not only knew it was going on at the time but chose to allow it to happen and to deliberately block any investigation, as they were using the knowledge of a paedophile network operating there as a means of gathering intelligence and protecting informers. It is difficult to imagine anything worse than a paedophile network knowing that it could get away with whatever it wanted to do to abuse vulnerable young children because it was being protected by the security services at the time. That shameful practice illustrates the need for a proper independent investigation that has the powers and the remit to access the files and information held by the British security services that allowed the abuse to happen. We cannot allow the Official Secrets Act or any national interest certificates to be used to hide the truth or to prevent the disclosure of any evidence, as that will only result in another cover-up.

The victims and survivors of Kincora were let down by the state as children, and we cannot allow them to be let down now as adults. They have the right to truth; they have the right to a thorough investigation of the crimes that were perpetrated against them. I hope that all parties will stand united and be their voice today and come out to support the motion. Go raibh maith agat.

Mr Newton: I rise to support the motion. Kincora is a scandal; it is a stain in east Belfast. It was a house of horrors, and every day the house sits as a permanent reminder of its very dark past. Those walking around the area today who have a connection with Kincora and are regarded as respectable people and pillars of society are a total and utter disgrace. They have a conscience seared with a hot iron for what they did to young boys in Kincora.

They are people who abused youngsters, destroyed their lives and left them with mental problems that they carried with them for all of their days. My colleague Sammy Douglas referred to the fact that he had met victims from Kincora. I have also met them and you cannot really understand what they have suffered all of their lives.

Kincora was established as a house of refuge, a safe haven and a shelter, and, for many, it turned out to be a horrifying and nightmarish place to spend their days. Vulnerable young boys were preyed upon, and, allegedly, the security forces allowed the abuse to take place. It has been referred to that purportedly prominent people frequented Kincora. Those are people who have been referred to as politicians, businessmen, military men, church men and people who held high positions. Also, there is evidence to suggest that the children were, as we would call it today, trafficked away from the home and, indeed, across the border for similar abuse in other places.

Caitriona Ruane called for a united front on this, and I agree with her on that. However, if this House is really concerned, there has to be a united front on how we tackle the child abuse that is happening today. The way that we can do that, in the memory of those who were abused in Kincora, is for all of the political parties here to sign up to the legislation that will allow the National Crime Agency to tackle this problem in Northern Ireland as it does in other parts of the UK. I am certain that those who were the victims of Kincora would plead for that to happen today.

Reference has been made to Kincora being a part of the UK-wide inquiry. The First Minister has written on that. I hope that that decision can be made by Theresa May,

but what happens if she decides that it cannot be? What happens if Judge Hart is unable to investigate fully, as he said he cannot do? This House needs to ensure that Judge Hart has the remit, the resources, the finance and the expertise that will allow him to take a step forward on this issue. If we get a negative decision from Theresa May and we do not allow Judge Hart to do it, we are failing the victims of Kincora.

None of us who have had a loving, supportive family environment could understand what many of the victims of Kincora went through for years, and we will probably never know how many went through the abuse in Kincora. However, through supporting this motion and other actions in terms of the National Crime Agency and adjusting Judge Hart's remit in the case of a negative response from the Home Secretary, we can in fact take this matter forward and continue to keep it in the headlines. We can be supportive of all of those who were abused in Kincora.

Mr McCartney: Go raibh maith agat, a Phríomh-LeasCheann Comhairle. Beidh mé ag tabhairt tacaíochta don rún seo sa Tionól inniu. I also will be speaking in support of the motion. Indeed, I welcome the motion. I think that, whatever we say or do or whatever results as this inquiry is taken forward, we should always be very mindful that at the core of this are the young people who were abused. I think that it was referred to today that the needs of the victims and survivors should be very much on our minds.

12.30 pm

There is absolutely no doubt that there is a wide acceptance that what happened in Kincora Boys' Home should be the subject of scrutiny. I do not think that anyone has anything but the belief that there was a cover-up on a massive scale, and that is one of the reasons why I have some concern around how this will unfold. I do not think that anyone can doubt the integrity of or the need for the inquiry that has been laid out by Fiona Woolf, but I think that the powers that she has might be limited and, in that case, we will not get to the full truth around these matters.

In my opinion, the best vehicle to carry this forward would have been an inquiry under the 1921 Act because that has the power to compel not only papers but witnesses. From reading some of the documentation around the Woolf inquiry, it seems that she will have access to papers, but there will be no power to compel witnesses. Most people know that, in this type of situation, open proceedings and cross-examination provides better details and a better insight into what has happened. I know that there is reference to the fact that it will be similar to the Hillsborough panel, which I believe carried out an excellent piece of work. It had full access to papers and resulted in bringing the next stage of justice for the Hillsborough victims —

Mr A Maginness: Will the Member give way?

Mr McCartney: I will indeed, yes.

Mr A Maginness: There is one other technical difficulty and that is that anybody who is called to give evidence could claim that they cannot give evidence because of the Official Secrets Act. That aspect of the inquiry also needs to be addressed, because it restricts the amount of information that a person can give.

Mr McCartney: I agree.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Member has an extra minute.

Mr McCartney: Whereas the 1921 Act is not the perfect vehicle to get round the Official Secrets Act, we saw, in some other instances, particularly the Saville inquiry, how at least some of the rush to try to prevent evidence coming forward was tackled. That is why I make the point about the Hillsborough panel. Despite the cover-up that resulted from Hillsborough, there was no role for the British secret services, which have a long history of not only not wanting to come into the public domain in these type of cases but of suppressing and destroying evidence. Alex Attwood spoke about the most recent example where evidence has been destroyed as an inquiry was just about to take place.

I also agreed with Mike Nesbitt when he spoke about what the inquiry should do. At its core, yes, it has to be about the abuse that was carried out, but there are important questions to be asked about who knew, when they knew, who should have been responsible for ensuring that it did not continue and who failed in their responsibilities at the time, because it is on public record that the RUC said that an appropriate and thorough investigation was carried out and that there were no issues apart from the fact that three people were charged. We have to try to resolve that.

In this inquiry, many allegations have been made about who was entrapped and what responsibilities they had in wider society, and there may be implications around that because there may be suggestions that other people's lives could have been disrupted. Indeed, there are other suggestions that people's lives were manipulated in a particular way, and all of that must come out as well. Being mindful that the abuse that was visited upon the people in Kincora has to be at the core of the inquiry, there are other implications that will not do a service unless they are all resolved. That is why this motion is a good one.

The truth around Kincora has to be exposed, but that truth will have many, many layers, and unless we get the proper vehicle to do it, we will be back saying that there is a need for another inquiry into Kincora Boys' Home.

Mr Principal Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has arranged to meet immediately after the lunchtime suspension. I propose, therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2.00 pm. The first item of business when we return will be Question Time.

The debate stood suspended.

The sitting was suspended at 12.33 pm.

On resuming (Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair) —

2.00 pm

Oral Answers to Questions

Social Development

Mr Deputy Speaker: Before we begin, I would like to welcome the new Minister to his first Question Time and wish him well. We will start with listed questions. Questions 5 and 12 have been withdrawn.

Social Housing

1. **Mr McMullan** asked the Minister for Social Development, given that Newtownabbey Borough Council has not met the deadline to acquire the former PSNI barracks site in Glengormley, whether the Housing Executive will acquire this land for social housing as per its expression of interest. (AQO 6710/11-15)

Mr Storey (The Minister for Social Development): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your kind words. I certainly look forward to the challenge that has been presented in rising to fulfil my roles and responsibilities as Minister for Social Development.

I understand that, at a meeting yesterday, the PSNI gave the council an extension until 31 December to firm up proposals for purchasing the land. Both Newtownabbey Borough Council and the Housing Executive have expressed an interest. The Housing Executive expressed its interest on behalf of the housing associations, which would, in due course, have been responsible for buying the site and providing the housing. The Housing Executive itself would not have acquired the land.

The council's interest involves a concept plan for the wider area, including the PSNI site. The plan will focus on attracting private sector investment, including commercial, leisure and recreation activity. In that context, the Housing Executive decided to suspend its interest until the concept planning process was complete. The Housing Executive is still supportive of housing on the site and awaits the outcome of the PSNI decision-making process.

Mr McMullan: Before I ask my supplementary, I congratulate Mr Storey on his elevation. Will the Minister outline other sites in the Glengormley area that his Department is examining to meet the need for social housing in north Belfast?

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for his words of congratulation. He specifically asked how many other sites there are in the area. There are a number of different projects. I do not have all the details of the individual sites, but I will write to the Member with those.

Mr McCausland: I also congratulate the Minister on his appointment. Is he aware of the significant housing need in the Glengormley area of north Belfast, especially in unionist estates such as Queens Park? Is he also aware of the failure of the Housing Executive over many years to meet that need in those communities, with no family homes built in almost 40 years? Will he undertake to engage with the Housing Executive and local

representatives to see how it can provide new housing in appropriate locations for those communities?

Mr Storey: The answers to those questions are yes; and I will endeavour to do that. It is unacceptable and regrettable that no family housing has been built in that area in the last 15 years. In fact, the last social housing of any type was built in 1999 and was a supported housing scheme for clients suffering from mental illness. There is a need for us to look seriously at the issue, and I undertake to have the matter addressed.

Housing Executive Land: South Belfast

2. **Mr McGimpsey** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the status of the land owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive between Hope Street and Wellwood Street, Belfast. (AQO 6711/11-15)

Mr McGimpsey: I also congratulate Mr Storey on his promotion. I have no doubt that his elevation will come as a great relief to the Minister of Education.

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for his kind words. I will pass no comment in reference to what the feelings of the Education Minister have been.

The Housing Executive has advised me that final land transaction for Hope Street was completed on 12 September 2014 and confirmed that the majority of the site is now in Housing Executive ownership, with Roads Service and the Lincoln group each retaining a small portion. The land in Housing Executive ownership is currently vacant. The Housing Executive is in the process of arranging a meeting with the Planning Service to discuss future usage of the site, both in the interim and in the longer term. It is considering progressing an outline planning application on this site.

As someone who knows the area, and for anyone who passes through it, it is clear that there is an urgency in addressing that need. I find it somewhat ironic that we are talking about Hope Street. In that location, very little hope has been given over the last number of years and I trust that we can move in a positive way for this location.

Mr McGimpsey: I thank the Minister for that answer and what I read as a call to action as far as this vacant site is concerned. He will be aware that it is not the only vacant, derelict site in the Sandy Row area. We are now getting a proliferation of applications for housing, but not social housing; it is for student accommodation. That goes very much against the grain as far as that community is concerned. I ask the Minister to meet local representatives to discuss the way forward, because he is aware that this is a well-known arterial street, close to the city centre, and is —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The question is very, very long.

Mr McGimpsey: All right, thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. I ask that the Minister meet local representatives to discuss the issues and drive forward some development that will be acceptable to the local community.

Mr Storey: There is a short answer to that: yes. However, looking at the history of this site, we should go back as far as 1998, when the Housing Executive entered into an agreement with Lord Rana's company, Lincoln Centre Belfast Limited. There were a lot of issues and there has been a lot of discussion, which ultimately led to a court

case. I would be quite happy to meet local representatives of the area and discuss the issue as well as the wider issue of need in that community so that, as I said previously, we give that community hope.

Mr McKinney: On the back of what Mr McGimpsey said, this was once described as the “golden mile” of Belfast. Members will probably all recognise now that it is significantly tarnished. The Minister has reflected on the demand, but can he point to a resource that would answer that demand at some point?

Mr Storey: The Member is well aware of the current financial situation that we are in. Since I have come to the Department, it is abundantly clear that, not only are other Departments under huge financial strain, but that the Department for Social Development is under particular strain. Since being appointed Minister, I have been overwhelmed by how this Department impinges so much on all our lives on a day-to-day basis; on housing, welfare and regeneration. If we want to give a sense of hope to our communities, my Department has a huge responsibility to ensure that we give that hope and that leadership.

However, we have to face up to some realities. It is, unfortunately, against the backdrop of a very difficult financial situation, but I am looking at the budgets to see where allocations have been made in the past and where they will lead us in the future. Following my agreement to meet local representatives of the area, I believe that we can give a sense of hope to those communities, as we have done in other places, that the dereliction that currently prevails is not what they should live to expect or live amongst.

Social Housing: Demand

3. **Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister for Social Development whether demand is being met by the number of social homes being built. (AQO 6712/11-15)

Mr Storey: I think that good progress is being made. Not only are waiting list figures coming down, but the numbers of new homes being built are significantly up. For the first time in over a decade, planned output is in line with the Housing Executive’s assessment of need. That need has been determined at a requirement of 2,000 homes in each of the next three years and that is what the programme proposes to do.

As far as the waiting list is concerned, we have seen a drop of over 2,000 from last year. At March 2013, there were over 41,000 applicants on the waiting list. The latest figures, at June 2014, showed just over 39,000. During the same period, the numbers in housing stress dropped by almost 1,000. At the same time, we are also building increasing numbers of new homes. The Programme for Government target is to build 8,000 new social and affordable homes by 2015. Delivery has been running substantially ahead of the target for the past three years, which has, no doubt, had a positive impact on those waiting lists. Compared to the 8,000 target, I expect the final out-turn to be around 9,500.

It is also worth noting that, in social housing, Northern Ireland is outperforming the rest of the United Kingdom. In England last year, one new social house was provided for every 60 applicants on the waiting list; in Scotland, the figure was one for every 49; in Wales, it was one for every

44; but in Northern Ireland, the figure was one for every 30. In relative terms, Northern Ireland is performing at twice the level of England.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I call Mr Stewart Dickson.

Mr Nesbitt: *[Interruption.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Apologies. I would not need to do that.

Mr Nesbitt: Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thank the Minister for his answer and wish him a successful tenure in his Department. He will be aware that previous net stock models indicated that 1,900 a year was the target for builds, plus 600 to make up for shortfalls. That, I see, has changed. Can the Minister tell me why it has changed, and does he accept what his predecessor always sought to deny, which is that the Programme for Government targets are not sufficient?

Mr Storey: Look at the Programme for Government targets for 2011-15: we are committed to delivering 8,000 new social and affordable home starts. This was broken down into some 6,000 new social starts and 2,000 new affordable starts. What we have done to date is progress. I will not be complacent in believing that there is no more that needs to be done than all that we have said we will do. We always have to ensure that the figures are accurate and relevant to what is being done on the ground. However, when I look at the figures for social and affordable housing — two key component parts of the delivery of our housing programme — I believe that we need to focus on what the commitment was and how we can continue to build on that commitment. That is what I am determined to do as the new Minister for Social Development.

Mr Dickson: I welcome the Minister and congratulate him on his appointment. What hope can we have that, in the delivery of new social housing programmes in Northern Ireland, you will put sharing and integration front and centre as a policy and delivery model?

Mr Storey: You always have to remember that housing is driven by demand. It is also driven by the desire of the people who want to be part of that housing provision. Housing need, as defined in the current process, gives us a number of elements to that provision. I have already had some look at the social housing provision that we have across Northern Ireland, and I am well aware of the two projects that were transferred into the new regime — one in Londonderry and the other in Bloomfield. I have asked my officials to establish how successful they have been, what problems they have encountered and what needs to be done to change the model, if it needs changed, so that we encourage people to live in a way that reflects our society and our community and gives them, first and foremost, a good and affordable standard of housing, which I believe they all deserve.

Mr Campbell: I, of course, join in congratulating my honourable friend on his elevation. Both he and his immediate predecessor have indicated the scale of affordable and social housing that has been provided in recent years. Has he got any figures that he can supply for the immediately preceding four or five years? If not, perhaps he can write to me.

Mr Storey: I thank my colleague. From his previous ministerial roles, he knows the challenge that is before us as we take up this post.

2.15 pm

The Programme for Government commitment to deliver 8,000 new social and affordable homes was by 2015. In the past three years, 6,911 new social and affordable houses have already been delivered; a further 2,500 are due this year. That will give a total of over 9,400 new social and affordable homes against the original target of 8,000. In 2011-12, the target was to deliver 1,900 new homes; 1,400 social and 500 affordable. A total of 2,053 were delivered; 1,400 social and 643 affordable. In 2012-13, the target was to deliver 1,825; 1,325 social and 500 affordable. A total of 2,336 were delivered. I could not give you all the figures in relation to 2013-14. That gives us the overall view of the progress that has been made. I am certainly happy to make all those figures available to the Member in writing.

Mr P Ramsey: Like other Members, I wish the Minister all the best for his new appointment. May he bring to it the same passion and commitment that he brought to education.

Will the Minister look urgently at the demand for bungalow accommodation in new build programmes? It is an issue that I highlighted on the Floor to the previous Minister. Many disabled people, families and older people in our communities are being deprived of a bungalow because housing associations just will not build them for financial reasons.

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for his comments. I will miss the interaction in relation to education. I know that those whom we worked with in education, from comments that they have made recently, appreciate the efforts that we made. I trust that I will bring to the Department a sense of enthusiasm, as I endeavoured to do in education. Members, I come here with no elevated opinion of my ability. I come here as someone who is very proud of his working-class background. I was born, as most Members know, in the village of Armoy. I am extremely proud of that fact. I will not forget — the grace of God will enable me not to forget — who I am. I realise the real issues that are out there for our community.

The Member made a specific reference to the provision of particular types of dwellings for people with disabilities and others. I know, as a constituency MLA, the challenge that that is. I assure the Member that that is an issue that I will look at. I am quite happy to respond to the Member when I get an update on that particular issue. He raises a very valid point in the House. It is something that I have a concern about. Indeed, I have already had discussions with some of the providers. I plan to meet those who provide social housing; the Housing Executive. There are huge issues and big challenges in relation to the Housing Executive. I will meet the chair and the chief executive tomorrow for frank and open discussions. It is my intention to very quickly get a handle on what is happening in relation to the Housing Executive and what is being delivered in social and affordable housing. I will bring the same passion and commitment to that as I trust I did to education.

Planning Powers

4. **Ms Sugden** asked the Minister for Social Development what information is available for community and

voluntary groups preparing for the transfer of community planning powers to local government in April 2015. (AQO 6713/11-15)

Ms Sugden: Many congratulations to the Minister in his new role. I just hope that he will be mindful of his neighbouring constituency of East Londonderry when making decisions in his new office.

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for her kind words. I assure her that her colleagues in that constituency remind me constantly of what is across the Bann in East Londonderry.

Whilst preparation for community planning is a matter for the Department of the Environment and councils, I confirm that my Department, in the run-up to the transfer of agreed urban, regeneration and community development powers under the reform of local government on 1 April 2015, has worked, and continues to work, closely with the organisations that it supports through, for example, neighbourhood renewal, areas at risk and the community investment fund.

That ongoing support has proved vital to managing this period of change and has ranged from advising organisations on what the transfer of powers means for them to meeting with neighbourhood partnerships and local representatives in the area.

Ms Sugden: Thank you for your response. Do you acknowledge the growing uncertainty amongst community and voluntary groups about the transfer of community planning when there are less than six months to go?

Mr Storey: Yes, I do. I assure the Member that reference has been made to that issue in other questions before the House today.

The issue around the Regeneration and Housing Bill is of grave concern. I am not misleading anyone in the House when I say that a decision will have to be made on that very soon. I have made it very clear that a decision will be made and that those who have blocked the progress of the Regeneration and Housing Bill, and the issues that are associated with it in regard to how those powers will be transferred to councils, need to give reasons for doing so.

I am very clear that I have not seen any information that is in any way substantive or gives any degree of understanding on why concerns have been raised. I have met with some of those who have raised concerns, and I raised the issue at the Executive last Thursday. I assure you that it is a matter of importance for me, because, in relation to this, my Department is contributing to the transfer of somewhere in the region of £60 million to £65 million; it has the largest proportion of the overall budget that would transfer to local councils.

I am well aware also of the concern in the new councils about the key part that that will play in how they will be able to roll out, over the lifetime of the new councils, projects that are vital for rejuvenating and bringing new life to their areas.

Mr G Robinson: I congratulate the Minister on his elevation. I also congratulate Mr McCausland, the outgoing Minister, on a job well done. Thank you very much.

When the Minister gets an update on the Regeneration and Housing Bill, will he make sure that it comes to this House?

Mr Storey: I thank my colleague for his words and concur with what he said about my predecessor. I apologise for not doing this at the start, but I pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr Nelson McCausland, someone with whom I have worked closely down through the years, not only in this House but in other organisations. He endeavoured, when he was in the role, to ensure that the Department was focused on many of the issues that we have already discussed here this morning.

In many respects, some of the issues were addressed in my response to the previous question. When I read through the paperwork in relation to this, I saw that there had been attempts to table this legislation at the Executive on a number of occasions. We still have not had any progress on how that matter can be resolved.

However, I had a meeting with the Chair of the Social Development Committee. I plan to meet him again in relation to this issue and meet the members of the Committee, because there is a serious issue around giving confidence to the people of Northern Ireland. The confidence of the people of Northern Ireland in this institution is pretty low, and people feel that there is little need for this place to be in existence. However, let us be under no illusion: if we do not have the transfer of the powers outlined in the Regeneration and Housing Bill, local councils will also be saying that there is no need for this place to be in existence. So, it is a serious situation, and I look forward to meaningful engagement and discussions over the next few days. That is the time frame that we are dealing with in making decisions on how the issue will be progressed.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Minister's two minutes are up.

Mr Eastwood: I add my words of congratulations to the Minister. I look forward to what will, I am sure, be a fairly robust debate in the time ahead. If and when the powers are transferred, can he guarantee that each and every area will not lose budget when it comes to community development and regeneration functions?

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for his comments, and, yes, I will endeavour not to disappoint him when it comes to being robust in discussions on the issue.

The budget as it stands is always subject to what the final arrangements and agreement will be, but I have to say that I am concerned that the envelope originally envisaged — I think that the package was in the region of £90 million, and, as I said, the largest part of that was £65 million coming from the DSD budget to carry out those functions — will have to be reconsidered in the event of whatever decision is taken.

Along with my colleague Mr Wells who was also appointed a Minister, the stark reality and wake-up call has been the serious situation in which we find ourselves with the Budget. Let us not get tied up with welfare reform, which is another issue, but with the issue of the Budget and the 4% cut — or is it 6%, is it 8%, or is it, as it may be, higher than that? — to ensure that we as an Administration live within our means. It is a very serious situation, and I cannot underline enough how serious it is.

I was taken aback somewhat when I had meetings with my officials about the number of people that my Department employs. There are in the region of 7,000 people in the Department for Social Development, in over 70 locations

in Northern Ireland, and 3,000 personnel in the Housing Executive.

I have a statutory responsibility to protect social security. I will give that priority —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Minister's two minutes are up.

Mr Storey: — as is my statutory responsibility, but I assure the Member that the issue of finance is at the top of the agenda in my Department.

Housing Executive Schemes: Upper Bann

6. **Mr Moutray** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the range of Housing Executive schemes, such as window replacement, kitchen upgrades and repainting, planned for Upper Bann, including the timescale for completion. (AQO 6715/11-15)

Mr Storey: The following schemes are included in the Housing Executive's planned maintenance programme for Upper Bann in 2014-15: external cyclical maintenance (ECM) for 204 dwellings; double-glazing installation for 398 dwellings; kitchen replacements for 289 dwellings; and heating installations for 341 dwellings. The projected budget spend for 2014-15 is £3.7million.

Mr Moutray: I thank the Minister for his response. Like others, I concur with the remarks made about him and his predecessor. Is he confident that those very worthwhile schemes can be delivered on time, given the current financial circumstances?

Mr Storey: There is always a concern over how any proposal that is brought to fruition can be completed in the current financial situation. We would all do well to look at our constituency to see how those projects and programmes have been of benefit to people. Dwellings have been greatly enhanced, as has quality of life, whether as a result of external cyclical maintenance, double-glazing installation, kitchen replacements, replacement of fire doors to flats with communal access, or heating installations. In your constituency of Upper Bann in 2013-14, 464 dwellings benefited as a result of heating installations. We ought to be pleased that that has been achieved. As I said to the previous questioner, the issue of budget is at the top of the agenda for me, because I want to protect those services and deliver to the people of Northern Ireland in a meaningful way.

2.30 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. That ends the period for oral questions. We will now move on to topical questions. Question 9 has been withdrawn.

Housing Executive: External Maintenance, Ballyclare

1. **Mrs Cameron** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive external cyclical maintenance scheme in Ballyclare. (AQT 1521/11-15)

Mrs Cameron: I also join the chorus and welcome the new Minister to his very challenging role in Social Development.

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for her insight to how challenging this role is going to be. I can assure her that,

over the last week since being put into the position, I know how challenging that is.

The Housing Executive has advised me that the external cyclical maintenance scheme for Ballyclare has recently been commissioned and that the start date is currently 30 March 2015. There are 103 dwellings included in the scheme, which is at a briefing stage at the moment. None of the properties is on the stock transfer list.

Mrs Cameron: I thank the Minister for his answer. When was the last ECM scheme carried out in Ballyclare?

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for that supplementary question. As I said in relation to Glengormley, here we have another serious issue, because the last external cyclical maintenance scheme that was carried out in Ballyclare was between 2003 and 2006. I do not believe that that is in any way acceptable in how the process is carried out. On a general note, the work content and unit costs for the ECM schemes have changed a number of times in recent years in response to rising costs and competing demand of other work streams in the investment programme. Consequently, the external cyclical maintenance programme will be revised and reviewed as part of the Housing Executive's new strategic approach. I intend to raise that issue with the Housing Executive when I meet the chair and chief executive for the first time tomorrow.

As I said to other Members earlier, a huge amount of work needs to be done between my Department and the Housing Executive. The Housing Executive does much good work. Indeed, before coming to the House today, I was in east Belfast to see how the scheme in the Diamond project is delivering, through the Housing Executive, benefit to the people who live in that area. So it can be done. However, when you look at figures showing that, for this particular scheme, the last time it was carried out was between 2003 and 2006, it raises serious questions about the way in which the scheme is operated.

Magherafelt Town Centre Master Plan

2. **Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Magherafelt town centre master plan. (AQT 1522/11-15)

Mr I McCrea: I, too, would like to join the chorus of Members who have welcomed the Minister to his post, and I wish him well.

Mr Storey: I think that it might be good to note in the House that I have no hand in who asks these questions. When you look at the topical questions, you might think that I was involved in some sinister plot, Mr Deputy Speaker. However, as a good Calvinist, I believe in providence, so I was delighted when I saw that the first questions were from my colleagues.

Getting back to the issue at hand: the Member has rightly asked about the Magherafelt master plan. I have to say that I have been impressed by the variety and number of master plans, and I am very keen to get up to speed with all that they intend to deliver for the communities.

The Magherafelt master plan was launched in 2011, and the document sets out a vision for the future development of the town centre. The plan sets out 32 actions, showing their priority and potential delivery, with partners for each.

DSD is represented on the town centre forum, which comprises town councillors, Chamber of Commerce representatives and council officials who oversee the implementation of the actions contained in the master plan.

To date, my Department has also progressed and completed a number of other activities set out in the master plan. Under the heading of "Growing and Supporting the Retail/Commercial Sector", for example, my Department supported the branding and marketing strategy, Wi-Fi and the smartphone app. Also, under the heading of "Improving the Townscape Quality" and the shopfront improvements theme, my Department funded a revitalisation scheme for Queen Street.

Mr I McCrea: I thank the Minister for that update. What assurance can the Minister give that the Magherafelt master plan will be taken forward after the reform of local government?

Mr Storey: The Member raises what is, for me, an important issue. We have had some discussion about the transfer of powers, but I want to be absolutely sure that the objective of the master plan is carried out as originally envisaged. Obviously, we do not want to have a command and control situation, whereby Big Brother — my Department — oversees that. Under the reform of local government, the responsibility for the delivery of master plan initiatives will rest with the new Mid Ulster District Council. With councillors on the town centre forum, the council was fully involved in the preparation of the master plan and the current site. So my officials are working closely with the council to ensure that there is a smooth transfer and that the functions and all the related activities are carried out in a way that ensures progress and continuity.

My Department has committed funding of £90,000 to progress the scheme to detailed design and readiness for construction, and that work is due to be completed in March 2015. That is with particular reference to the Magherafelt public realm scheme, which was identified as a key regeneration initiative in the master plan.

Ministerial Credibility: Social Development

3. **Ms Lo** asked the Minister for Social Development to commit to the House that he will get his Department to fully cooperate with the Red Sky investigation so that the public will be assured that the Department has nothing to hide, given that one of the biggest challenges for him will probably be restoring the credibility of his office after several turbulent years. (AQT 1523/11-15)

Ms Lo: Like other Members, I would like to congratulate the Minister on his new appointment and welcome him to his first Question Time.

Mr Storey: I thank the Member for her question. As I said earlier, I come to the House without overly inflated views of my ability but with a determination to ensure that I carry out my responsibilities to the best of my ability. I have made that very clear to my officials and those for whom I am responsible.

The reality of being appointed to the position of a Minister in the Executive is that the buck stops here, so I have a responsibility. I will bring to the job the skills that, I trust, I endeavoured to bring to education. Others will judge whether those skills were relevant, useful or needful.

However, I have to say that I am quite open to scrutiny, discussions and debate, and, when necessary, I will be quite open to criticism. As far as I am concerned, those will be my guiding principles. I do not claim infallibility, and I do not claim to be perfect. I have weaknesses like everyone else, but I can assure the Member and the House that I will do this job to the best of my ability.

Let me say this: if one thing has — maybe “impressed” is the wrong word — challenged me, it is the need in many homes in Northern Ireland. There are needs that, I believe, my Department can meet, whether it is in regard to housing, regeneration or benefits. Those things matter to people, and we will endeavour to address them.

Ms Lo: I sincerely thank the Minister for his very comprehensive commitment to the House to do his best. Unfortunately, the credibility of the Department was damaged by more than simply the Red Sky issue. Allegations of political interference in housing allocation in north Belfast have held up much-needed housing schemes. Will you restore credibility to the Department by stepping back and taking independent advice so that the issue can be addressed transparently?

Mr Storey: I am disappointed that the Member feels it necessary to make such an allegation. The figures do not prove that that is the case. Maybe the Member sitting beside her who is giving her the information would be more prepared to ask that question, because it seems as though he has more of an interest in the issue, given his involvement in the Committee.

We had some allegations in the press just a few days ago about my Department trying to do something subversive in regard to the Ballysillan master plan. Nothing could be further from the truth. There can be no changes. For example, in regard to the issue of schools in the area, it was quite clear in the statement that was made, which included a comment from the Department of Education, that I can do nothing without a development proposal being brought to the table. There is process, and, unfortunately, process can be very slow, difficult and challenging.

I can give the Member this assurance: I will pay due regard and close diligence to process. I trust that no one in the House, from any political party, believes that, somehow, they have someone in place whom they think they can manipulate, corral and change. There is an issue of ensuring that my Department continues to deliver in a way that reflects the needs of the community that we serve: the people of Northern Ireland.

Disadvantaged Communities

4. **Mr Poots** asked the Minister for Social Development what his Department is doing to assist the many communities that need support and work in disadvantaged areas that fall outside the neighbourhood renewal zones and lots of other catch-alls, albeit that much good work is happening in those communities. (AQT 1524/11-15)

Mr Poots: Congratulations to the Minister on his appointment.

Mr Storey: The Member raises a very important issue. On a personal level, I thank him for his contribution when he was the Health Minister. I trust that I can bring the same determined focus to my Department as he did to his Department when he was the Health Minister.

The Department recognises that tackling spatial deprivation through neighbourhood renewal can leave out smaller areas, and there can be places in which there are difficulties and challenges. So, as a result, the areas-at-risk programme provides support to communities, outside the Noble 10% most disadvantaged communities, identified as being at risk of decline. The small pockets of deprivation programme was created to complement the implementation of the neighbourhood renewal strategy and to target areas with a population of under 1,000. Those area-based interventions were designed to target substantive concentrations of deprivation.

In addition, my Department provides a wide range of support to individual families, households and communities through the provision of decent and affordable housing, actions to address fuel poverty, child maintenance arrangements, comprehensive social security provisions and support for the voluntary and community sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker: I am afraid that time is up; there is not time for a supplementary.

2.45 pm

Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Deputy Speaker: Questions 6, 8 and 10 have been withdrawn.

Nitrates Directive

1. **Mr McKinney** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her proposals for farming practices in relation to the nitrates directive (91/676/EEC). (AQO 6725/11-15)

Ms O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): An action programme to implement the EU nitrates directive across the North of Ireland was first introduced in 2007. The nitrates action programme regulations are joint legislation between my Department and the Department of the Environment, and contain a wide range of measures. These measures are to prevent water pollution and to ensure that manures and chemical fertilisers are used efficiently.

The nitrates directive requires action programmes to be reviewed and, as necessary, revised every four years. A comprehensive review of the current action programme was completed by the Departments and scientists from the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) in March of this year. Subsequently, a public consultation on the proposed action programme for the next four-year period from 2015 to 2018 has been carried out.

The Departments intend to make some revisions to the proposed measures to take into account the responses to the consultation. They are also in the process of seeking European Commission agreement for the next action programme.

The proposals for the 2015-18 action programme should not require any significant changes to current farming practices. The majority of the measures in the current action programme are being carried forward. Key measures, such as the dates of the closed period for spreading slurry, remain unchanged despite pressure from

the European Commission for a longer closed period. The changes which are proposed are based on scientific evidence or technical and policy developments, or have been requested by the European Commission.

My aim is to continue to have a balanced action programme which is practical for farmers and effective for protecting water quality and meets the obligations under the nitrates directive.

Mr McKinney: I thank the Minister. There is a further step. Is she prepared to issue clear guidelines to farmers on ways to reach the targets that are set by Europe?

Mrs O'Neill: Obviously, as I said, as part of the review on the action plan both my Department and the Department of the Environment worked very hard to consult the industry to ensure that it is up to speed with what we are doing. However, absolutely, if there are any requirements on the farming industry — as I said, the reality is that, by and large, there will not be very much difference to farming practice — and any changes that impact on farmers, we will, of course, issue guidance and ensure that everybody is able to comply and is given all of the necessary information that is required.

Mr Flanagan: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire as ucht a freagra. The Minister will be aware that we have had changeable weather in September. I am interested to learn what impact these proposed changes will have on the proposed closing date for spreading slurry. As a secondary comment, I did not really know that there was that much interest in spreading slurry in South Belfast.

Mrs O'Neill: I will not comment on the second part, but I will certainly pick up on the spreading of slurry. As I said in the original answer, by and large, farming practices will remain as they are. However, one issue that was raised was the closed period for spreading slurry. The length of that closed period has been an issue for the European Commission for quite some time, not just in this review of our action plan but in previous negotiations on the action programme. Officials have successfully negotiated on that issue that there will be no changes to the current dates. The Commission did not get its way in trying to extend that. That is a positive outcome, because I know that some farmers even find the period that we have at this moment in time to be frustrating.

Farmers will continue to demonstrate good practice when they are spreading slurry and will take great care to protect water quality. As the Member rightly said, the recent dry spell of weather means that conditions are very good for slurry spreading and will allow farmers the opportunity to maximise its fertiliser value and have slurry tanks emptied before the winter housing period.

Mr Swann: The Minister mentioned good practice. Will she also include an update on safety practice? Since the nitrates directive was introduced on 1 January 2011, we have had seven slurry-related deaths due to asphyxiation or drowning. Prior to that date, there were only two such deaths, and that was back in 2005.

Mrs O'Neill: I absolutely agree with the Member's concern about the number of deaths that we have had as a result of slurry. As he will know, the Health and Safety Executive, through the Farm Safety Partnership, has been doing excellent work to try to raise awareness and promote the

Stop and Think SAFE message. It is continuing to bring forward quite a number of other areas of work, particularly with regard to farmsafenet.org. Farmers can actually go online and go through a quick course.

We have an obligation in my Department, in DETI and in other Departments with relevant responsibilities to promote the Farm SAFE message and do all that we can. One issue around slurry that is frequently raised has to do with detectors and measuring the level of gases. The HSE is still not in a position where it is content that that is the proposed way to do it. However, all those things are being considered and taken forward as part of the action plan that the Farm Safety Partnership has clearly set out.

Mr Poots: What steps are taken to ensure that the people carrying out the inspections actually know what they are doing? I wrote to the Minister recently about a case where the gentleman had soil stored and people mistook it for chicken manure. That soil has now been used, as soil, by another Department for its facility. Can we have people who know what they are doing when they carry out inspections?

Mrs O'Neill: I would like to think that the inspectors who go out are fully qualified. I am sure that, as a former Minister, the Member will be fully aware that, when it comes to dealing with individual cases, I do not want to comment on the one case that he wrote to me about. However, I am happy to correspond with him privately. I assure him that, if there are issues with inspectors not carrying out their job properly, I am always happy to look at that.

Rural Proofing

2. **Mr Milne** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on her proposals to enhance rural proofing. (AQO 6726/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In the annual progress report on the rural White Paper action plan I made a commitment to explore options for strengthening rural proofing. Having considered the issue, I believe that there is more that we can do to improve the effectiveness of the rural-proofing process across government. Therefore, I propose to introduce rural proofing legislation during the lifetime of the current Assembly, subject to Executive agreement. This important Bill will provide my Department with a firm basis for promoting rural proofing across government and help to ensure that rural needs are fully considered in policymaking. Whilst all Departments have been committed to carrying out rural proofing since 2002, the new legislation will build on the present commitment and help to improve the effectiveness of rural proofing across government. In particular, it will increase the availability and transparency of information on how rural proofing is carried out in Departments.

Mr Milne: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhuíochas don Aire go dtí seo. I thank the Minister for her answer thus far. Will she provide an update on the rural White Paper action plan?

Mrs O'Neill: The first annual progress report on the rural White Paper action plan was published earlier this year and demonstrates that good progress was made by Departments in implementing their commitments in the action plan during its first year of operation. Further reports from Departments during this year indicate that

good progress continues to be made. I hope to publish the second annual progress report later this year. I see the rural White Paper action plan as a live initiative that continues to respond to the needs of rural dwellers. I have therefore asked my Executive colleagues to identify new and challenging actions for inclusion in a refreshed rural White Paper action plan that I intend to publish in 2015.

Mr Byrne: I thank the Minister for her answers thus far and her commitment to rural proofing. Will she state what concrete proposals her Department has made in the last year to embed rural proofing and what is being done across other Departments to make sure that rural proofing becomes a reality?

Mrs O'Neill: To be clear, the reason I propose to legislate is that I am not convinced. Whilst I think that, individually, Departments are doing their best on rural proofing, particularly when it comes to policy development, there is no tangible way of measuring that. There are other opportunities that we need to explore. It is all well and good having the rural White Paper action plan. However, we do not want it to become just a tick-box exercise for Departments; it very much needs to be a live document. There are opportunities for us to provide a firm basis for rural proofing and to make sure that it is consistent across Departments. One possible area we can look at is an obligation on Departments to feed into DARD on the work that they do on rural proofing to make sure that there is consistency. For me, there is a lot of benefit in bringing this forward. Quite a lot of consultation will be necessary, and that will involve talking to stakeholders about what needs they identify. Given the Member's role on the ARD Committee, he will know that there will be a role for the Committee in scrutinising the legislation that we bring forward.

Mrs Overend: I thank the Minister for her response so far. Will she now at least give a commitment to speak to her colleague the Sinn Féin Education Minister with regard to the possibility of the Department rural proofing decisions on the future of rural schools, just as Scotland does, before he shuts any more?

Mrs O'Neill: I assure the Member that I have had many conversations with the Minister of Education, and he has clearly put on record his commitment to maintaining rural schools and making sure that he provides first-class education for all children right across the board. He has also made it clear that, when it comes to the future of schools, it is not merely a numbers game; it comes down to the position of the school in the community. Six criteria are clearly set out when it comes to the future of schools, and I am assured of his commitment to maintaining the best education for all children.

Mr McCarthy: What action is the Minister taking to ensure not only rural proofing but shared future proofing for all her policies and programmes?

Mrs O'Neill: I can give the Member an assurance, particularly with regard to some of the projects that we have seen taken forward through the rural development programme. Quite a lot of work has been done, particularly in rural communities around churches working together and trying to reach out to bring people together. My commitment through what we have done on the ground is on the record. I am happy to provide a bit more detail on projects that we have taken forward that clearly

demonstrate a shared future, but I can assure you that equality is at the core of everything that I do. That is key to a shared future for everybody.

Mr Campbell: The Minister has said that rural proofing is very important. She also said that she intends to legislate. Given that she has been in office for some time, can she outline what the change has been in rural proofing on her watch compared with previously?

Mrs O'Neill: Over the last two terms, before my time, when Michelle Gildernew was Minister, we made sure that rural proofing was at the core of the Department, and we have seen significant progress right across all Departments. However, as I have said, all Departments have signed up to the rural White Paper, which is reviewed every year, but there is a lot more scope for more positive collaborative working across Departments. I think that my commitment is very evident, particularly when it comes to tackling poverty and social isolation. For all the programmes across my Department, the evidence is there to back up that I truly am a champion of rural communities.

Fishing Quota

3. **Mrs McKeivitt** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the proposals being put to Brussels for the next fishing quota agreement for 2015. (AQO 6727/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Proposals for fishing quotas are made by the European Commission and are based on scientific advice for fish stocks. At the Fisheries Council on 15 and 16 December, Ministers will discuss the Commission's proposals and reach agreement on fishing opportunities for 2015. It is expected that initial proposals will be published around the end of October or early November. As usual, my main priority will be prawn quota for area VII, which includes the Irish Sea and is the main quota fished by vessels that are based here. The prawn stock is surveyed and assessed annually, and the scientific advice on catch limits is published at the end of October. That ensures that all the latest survey information is included in the stock assessment. The Commission's proposals for prawn quotas will be based on that advice.

Another stock of importance to us is the Irish Sea herring. The latest scientific advice shows that the stock is in good condition, but a small reduction is recommended in order to remain within the maximum sustainable yield levels. It is expected that the quota will vary up and down annually around the 5,000-ton level.

The scientific advice for cod has not changed for several years and is that there should be no directed cod fishery and that by-catches are kept to a minimum. We are doing all that we can with highly selective fishing gear to keep cod by-catch below 1.5%. It is inevitable that some cod will be caught in the prawn fishery, and the quota is probably as low now as it can be to accommodate the by-catch. I will be resisting further cuts, which would be completely pointless and would do nothing for cod recovery.

Mrs McKeivitt: What prior discussions have taken place thus far with Brussels in order to get that better fish quota deal for the people of Northern Ireland? What impact does she think that will have on our fishermen?

Mrs O'Neill: Every December, fishermen watch with interest, and we enter into a period now in which, first, the

Commission publishes its advice on what it believes the quota should be. We then have to go to Europe and fight science with science. We bring our own science expertise to that discussion. I will go to Brussels with an agreed approach, which I will talk to the industry about over the next number of months. We will have a set timetable, and we will go and fight the case for quota. I do not think that the way that Europe does it is the right way to do it. I do not think that fishermen can plan for the future on the basis of a yearly quota. It needs to be set out over a number of years so that people can financially plan and take business decisions. However, that said, we are where we are, and I will go out and fight for the adequate quota and fight against cuts that, in all likelihood, we will see the Commission trying to put forward again.

Mr McCallister: The Minister will know that licences have been issued lately for the Mourne Herring Fishery.

She will also be aware that the EU embargo on Russia will dramatically affect the market for the licence holders. Has any analysis been done on providing any compensation to them? What effects might it have on other sectors of the agrifood industry?

3.00 pm

Mrs O'Neill: Obviously, the Russian import ban has an impact. We did not sell any fish to Russia last year. There will be a knock-on effect for us, particularly on price, because the European market has an abundance. That will be an issue for the fish sector to deal with, and we are actively involved in conversations about that at a European level.

I was in Brussels about three weeks ago to talk about that issue and the fact that there is an implication for the dairy sector, particularly the cheese sector. We have made it clear to the Commission that we need to see timely intervention and support coming at an appropriate time. The Member will be aware that quite often in the past the EU steps in when things are too far down the line and a lot of businesses have already been negatively impacted on. I assure the Member that the Russia issue is high on our agenda and we are looking at it.

When it comes to supporting these industries, we are looking for new markets. Whether that be for the dairy sector or the fish sector, looking for new markets at an EU and local level is key.

Mr Hazzard: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Can the Minister provide an update on the European Fisheries Fund (EFF)?

Mrs O'Neill: The fund will remain open until the end of December 2014, and applications are still invited for projects that can complete by the end of 2015, when the programme will close. The Department and the EU made a joint funding commitment of just over £7.5 million to the fishing industry to the end of August this year. It is fair to say that spending under the EFF has been less than we wanted to see, but a number of factors contributed to that, particularly the uncertain economic climate, which has affected the industry's confidence to invest. In addition, the decommissioning scheme did not go ahead, and that also had an impact on the spend.

Looking to the future, however, we have the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) to be put in place. We already have a task force in place, the aim of which is

to get that spend on to the ground. We have to make sure that, as we design programmes, the fishing industry is integral to them. A lot of positive work is going on. The task force has met on a couple of occasions and will report by the end of the year.

Mr Nesbitt: I want to return to the original question about quotas and the December Fisheries Council. What can the Minister say that would give confidence to the local fishing fleet that she is ahead of the curve in preparing for that critical event?

Mrs O'Neill: The industry has been very aware of my approach to that issue over the past number of years. We have gone out and fought a hard battle with the European Commission. There is no point in going out to Europe unless you have the science to back up your argument. A number of years ago, we put forward a clear proposal on selective gear that allowed us to avoid cuts. My track record of commitment to standing up for the industry in Brussels speaks for itself, and I will do that again this year.

Conacre Land

4. **Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what proportion of total agricultural land is set in conacre. (AQO 6728/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The results of the June 2013 agricultural and horticultural survey — the latest available data — showed that land let under conacre accounts for 31% of the total area of farmed land.

Mr Gardiner: I thank the Minister. Can she tell us how many active farmers depend on the significant acreage of rented land for their farming operations?

Mrs O'Neill: I do not have the number of active farmers who occupy the 31% that I mentioned, but I will be happy to try to provide that to the Member. He will be aware that we will be working with a new definition of "active farmer" from next year, so those statistics might not be available. Suffice it to say that the active farmer issue is a contentious one at the moment. We need to make sure that everyone understands what defines an active farmer. We have been anxious to make sure that we make that clear for people to understand.

Mr McGlone: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Mo bhúochas leis an Aire as a freagraí go dtí seo. Ba mhaith liom ceist a chur. My question is exactly on that very point. What is the Department doing at the moment about the definition of "active farming" and its implications for land that is taken in conacre?

Mrs O'Neill: I think that that is an issue. The rule of thumb should be this: if you do not know whether you are an active farmer, you most likely are not. That is just a definition that I use in my head. Given the difficulties, it would be good to set out exactly what it means and what we are trying to do. The implementing Act for CAP reform contains a provision that, in 2015, entitlements to be issued under the new support regime must be allocated to the person who enjoys the decision-making power, the benefits and the financial risks in relation to the agricultural activity being carried out on the land for which an allocation is requested. My best advice to anybody who is unclear is to contact their DARD Direct office or the helpline and seek out the information.

The provision that we now have has particular relevance to us because we have the conacre system. That is obviously a long-standing system that we have. In general terms, however, it means that in 2015, when all existing single farm payment entitlements are abolished and the new entitlements are established, the landowners who rent out land in conacre will not be able to establish entitlements on that land. We are reviewing the information that the Department holds for all farm businesses that submitted an application for single farm payment this year, and we will write to all the businesses that, we think, the review suggests are not active farmers. We are proactively targeting those people. We will encourage them not to put forward an application in 2015, if that is what we believe to be the case. I think that that will lead to some farmers wanting to query that, which is fair enough. I think that that is the right direction to go.

Next year, when people are applying for single farm payments, we will be able to run reviews and check records to see if there is evidence of agricultural activity. We will look at herd books, movement histories and all those things. There will be a number of ways in which we will be able to look at and establish whether people are active farmers. Whilst I accept that —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Minister's two minutes are up.

Mrs O'Neill: It is a time of big change, but we are doing all that we can to make sure that we get the clarity out there that is needed.

Mr McAleer: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. What advice do the Minister and her Department have for potato and vegetable growers who have difficulty in accessing land?

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware of reports that potato and vegetable growers are having difficulty obtaining land for 2015, as landowners are, perhaps, speculating and trying to hold on to their land to see if they can maximise the value of their entitlements for 2015. Again, the Department has made available information to growers in a Q&A brief that is on the DARD website. I encourage farmers and landowners to look at that. The Q&A points out the issues relevant to whether landowners rent out their land or farm it themselves. It is probably determined by the financial benefit that there will be for them and, therefore, depends on the conacre rent that is on offer. It is important that the return received from establishing entitlements for 2015 is fully understood and compared with the alternative of forgoing conacre rent in 2015. There is a worked example of that on the Q&A, and I advise people to look at that. Potato and vegetable growers will also have the option of establishing entitlements on the rented land in 2015 and transferring those back to the landowner, provided that the landowner is also a farmer after 2015. It should be possible for landowners and potato and vegetable growers to reach an agreement on the way forward, which would see the land being rented out for potato and vegetable production.

Mr Irwin: There is still a lot of confusion among farmers, especially young farmers, about what constitutes head of holding. Has the Department yet decided what constitutes head of holding?

Mrs O'Neill: I assure the Member that young farmers have every piece of information that I have. Our problem is that Europe has yet to define a few remaining issues, particularly around young farmers. We will have a meeting

on 6 October with European Commission officials, and we are hopeful that clarity will be provided at that stage. We are asking for clarity, and I know that other member states are asking for clarity. We are hopeful that, with a bit of pressure, we will have a bit more information to provide to the young farmers after that meeting on 6 October.

AFBI Grant

5. **Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, given that the departmental grant to the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute has been cut, what steps her Department is taking to aid research aimed at maximising the contribution of agricultural and food industries to the economy. (AQO 6729/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I remain committed to supporting research and recognise that it is vital in supporting the agrifood sector plans outlined in the 'Going for Growth' report. My Department engages with stakeholders when prioritising its evidence and innovation needs, which helps to ensure that funding is correctly targeted. My Department is well advanced in preparing the DARD-directed AFBI research work programme for 2015-16. DARD funds a NI contact point based in the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, the role of which is to facilitate the local agrifood industry and research community in drawing down increased EU research funding.

The Department is funding postgraduate studentships to help drive innovation in the industry and to foster future local world-class leaders in industry, research and teaching, while developing the science base here in the North.

The industry-led DARD research challenge fund encourages collaboration between rural enterprises and the research community, and five new projects have recently been commissioned. My Department is working to develop strategic alliances and collaborations with other government funders to help to coordinate research and evidence gathering for the agrifood sector. For the new rural development programme, DARD has been developing proposals for innovation partnership groups that aim to bring together farmers, advisers, businesses and researchers to advance innovation in the agricultural sector.

Mr B McCrea: The Minister said that one of the strategic aims is to draw down further funds from Europe. In light of the fact that the first tranche has been announced for science, has agriculture, through AFBI or any other institution, been successful in applying for Horizon 2020 funding and achieved a drawdown?

Mrs O'Neill: Eighteen per cent of my resource budget goes to AFBI. Other than that, we are dependent on looking outside, particularly to Europe. You will be aware that the Executive have a Horizon 2020 target of increasing the drawdown of funding by 20%. We have now appointed our person in AFBI who will target that funding. We have no confirmation of new funding, but we are working in Europe and trying to form partnerships. One of the key areas that we developed under the new rural development programme is partnership working, and that involves everybody — farmers, researchers and scientists — coming together. We believe that there will be opportunities in Horizon 2020 for us to be able to take

that forward, but, as yet, we do not have confirmation of funding.

Mr Rogers: Minister, given the cuts that AFBI, like other organisations, is experiencing, what is the Department prioritising in its budget to ensure maximum delivery for the economy of Northern Ireland?

Mrs O'Neill: I assume that the Member is referring to the AFBI budget. Public expenditure is under significant pressure for a combination of reasons, and AFBI, as an arm's-length body, is no different from any other element of my Department, in that it is being prudent and looking at what potential savings it can make. As I said in my initial answer, it is not just for us to decide what areas need to be prioritised. Our clear vision for the agrifood sector is set out in *Going for Growth*. It sets out where we need to direct research, support, innovation and technology transfer. For me, the way to establish our priority is in consultation with stakeholders, and that work is ongoing. We are working with AFBI and stakeholders to design next year's programme and identify what research opportunities we will explore. All sectors feel that they are worthy of research, but, with limited budgets, you have to prioritise. As I said, we are working, with AFBI officials, to develop a strategic plan for research and to identify what will be targeted over the period to 2020.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. Can the Minister tell us about the postgraduate research programme?

Mrs O'Neill: The research programme is designed to ensure that we provide the best local students with the best opportunity to undertake research that is directly relevant to our agrifood industry. It has been successful in providing world-class leaders in research, teaching, industry and policy development, and it has had an impact throughout the local agrifood sector. This year, DARD increased the number of PhD studentships from eight to 12, the majority of which are undertaken in conjunction with Queen's and the University of Ulster. These take place at a university campus or at either the AFBI or CAFRE site. As part of our continuing need to provide assurance on the value and quality of the PhD studentships, the departmental scientific adviser has commissioned a review of the current arrangements. DARD is funding postgraduate studentships to help to drive innovation in the industry and to provide high-level training to help to develop the science base in the North. PhD research areas are directly related to DARD's priority in evidence and innovation needs.

CAFRE: Applications

7. **Mr Beggs** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many applications were received for the level II agriculture qualification at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise for the CAP young farmers' scheme and regional reserve. (AQO 6731/11-15)

12. **Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the young farmers' scheme. (AQO 6736/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: With your permission, a LeasCheann Comhairle, I will answer questions 7 and 12 together. My Department received 3,495 applications to the level 2 agriculture qualification. The qualification is one of the eligibility criteria for the young farmers' scheme and the

young farmer and new entrant categories of the regional reserve. CAFRE is providing an accredited training course for those who do not already have the required level 2 qualification. Equivalent or higher level agriculture qualifications are also acceptable, and CAFRE has compiled a list of eligible qualifications, which is available on its website.

DARD has recently written to all those who applied for the level 2 qualification in agriculture by the closing date of 29 August to provide further information on the young farmers' scheme and the regional reserve and to outline the possible types of evidence required to meet the head of holding eligibility criterion. Evidence will be required from young farmer applicants to demonstrate that they are the head of holding. If they are unable to provide it, they will be unable to participate in the scheme or benefit from associated support until they satisfy the requirements. Officials are also seeking legislative advice on whether a minimum age should be imposed for young farmers to satisfy the head of holding requirement, and a decision on that will be made in the coming weeks. Officials are also seeking clarification on the young farmer requirements, particularly in relation to the head of holding requirement. Commission officials have been invited to Belfast on 6 October, and it is hoped that further clarification will be provided during that visit.

3.15 pm

Mr Deputy Speaker: That ends the period for questions for oral answer. There is no time for a supplementary. We will now move to topical questions.

Farm Safety Action Plan: Schoolchildren

1. **Ms Sugden** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps she has taken to include primary schoolchildren in the farm safety action plan to instil safety awareness at a young age. (AQT 1531/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I do not have the detail with me but, yes, that is one of the elements that was looked at. A lot of schools do that work anyway, particularly schools in rural areas. The Farm Safety Partnership looked at whether there are some elements that it could incorporate, even into the curriculum, that would help. So, yes, work around imaging and diagrams would resonate with children. Some work has been done on that, but I am very happy to provide to the Member any other detailed information on what we have done.

Ms Sugden: Thank you for the answer. Would the Minister consider engaging with community and voluntary groups such as young farmers to engage with a younger group of people in rural areas?

Mrs O'Neill: I regularly engage with young farmers' groups and have met them over the last couple of months at different shows. They do great work in reaching out and getting that positive message across. I am very encouraged by the number of young people who have applied to be head of holding under the new CAP regime. To me, that very clearly sets out a change in the age structure in the farming industry. For all those young people who either have qualifications in agriculture or will now take part in the level 2 qualification, there will be a farm safety element to that training, and that will be key in changing mindsets and making sure that people start

out in their farming business with that to the forefront of their mind.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Question 2 was withdrawn. Mr Chris Hazzard is not in his place.

Single Farm Payments: Targets

4. **Mr I McCrea** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department is still on course to achieve the 85% target for single farm payments. (AQT 1534/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Yes, we will be announcing our targets over the next wee while. The Member will be aware that, year-on-year, we have reached increased numbers by December, and my aim this year is to do even better than last year. There is no doubt that it has been challenging year and a challenging couple of years with CAP reform, but I gave an assurance to the House last year that I will continue to make improvements year-on-year.

Mr I McCrea: It is certainly good news that that is to be the case, and we look forward to seeing the outworkings of that. Is the Department on target in respect of the inspections that need to be carried out?

Mrs O'Neill: Yes. Again, in our endeavour to speed up the payments, we have switched to a lot of remote control sensing inspections, and, this year, we were able to start those earlier again, which should obviously improve the bigger picture. I think that it is just over 1,200 remote control sensing inspections this year. So, we are certainly further on than we were at this time last year.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Mr Trevor Clarke is not in his place. Mr Robin Newton is not in his place. I call Mr Joe Byrne, who is in his place.

EU Infraction Fines

7. **Mr Byrne** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether DARD's EU infraction fine problem from Brussels has gone away. (AQT 1537/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Member will be aware that we are trying very hard to avoid infraction. We have been working very hard with the remapping exercise to try to avoid it, and we have had success in that, year-on-year, we have had a reduced fine. However, we want to get to the stage where we rule it out altogether or certainly try our best to rule it out altogether. We are awaiting confirmation of this year's fine, but we are pretty confident that the fine is coming down as it did last year.

Mr Byrne: I thank the Minister for her answer. Will she state whether there is a unit in the Department that is actively dealing with that issue to make sure that we do not incur any further fines, given the tight budgetary situation?

Mrs O'Neill: I assure the Member that it is my aim to get to a position in which we avoid fines altogether. People are working seriously hard on remapping. You will be aware that we had to remap over 750,000 fields, so it has been no mean feat. My officials who are working on the land parcel identification system project have been working hard with DFP's Land and Property Service officials to make sure that we avoid future disallowance.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Mr David McNarry is not in his place. Mr Edwin Poots is not in his place.

National Ploughing Championship, Laois

10. **Ms McGahan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development about her recent visit to the National Ploughing Championship in County Laois. (AQT 1540/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Yes. The National Ploughing Championship was fantastic. I think that record numbers attended the ploughing this year. Some 1,400 businesses from across Ireland exhibited, and over 100 were from the Six Counties. That shows that people were there to do business. I took the opportunity to visit as many of the stands as I could. They were doing real business and were very enthused by what they could get out of the show.

In our DARD stand, we took the opportunity to offer the opportunity to new or smaller businesses that are trying to establish themselves but perhaps could not yet afford to take a stand at such a significant agricultural show. From talking to the people who were on our stand, I know that they could clearly see the benefits and were so grateful for the opportunity to be there and promote what they have to offer. It was a success all round.

I congratulate all our local ploughmen and, indeed, ploughwomen, who were successful in taking part in the competition itself. The show has something for everybody, and I certainly enjoyed it. It is an absolute showcase of what we have to offer in Ireland.

Ms McGahan: Go raibh maith agat. I thank the Minister for her response. How practical would it be for the industry in the North to make a bid to host the event at some time in the near future?

Mrs O'Neill: It would be fantastic to have the National Ploughing Championship in the North. It is always held in the midlands area, given the nature of the land. However, from having conversations at the show, I know that others would be keen for that to happen.

I intend to write to Anna May, who runs the whole show — the president of the show — and ask if that is something that she would seriously consider. We would be honoured and privileged to host such a significant agrifood and rural event. It really does attract so many people. As I said, there are record numbers year on year. Over 120,000 came to it this year, and you can imagine the knock-on impact that that would have economically for local businesses, tourism and everything that goes along with it. I would certainly be keen for that to happen, and I will ask if it could happen in the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. Time is up. That concludes Question Time.

Private Members' Business

Kincora Boys' Home: Investigation of Allegations of Abuse

Debate resumed on motion:

That this Assembly notes with deep concern the allegations of sexual abuse that took place in Kincora Boys' Home during the 1970s and 1980s; further notes allegations that senior politicians, military personnel, paramilitary figures and businessmen from Northern Ireland and Great Britain were involved in the commissioning and subsequent cover-up of the abuse, as well as allegations that members of the intelligence service were complicit in a cover-up of this scandal; believes that the nature and seriousness of the allegations, especially that MI5 was involved in a cover-up, means that this cannot be adequately considered in any way other than a Westminster Government-led inquiry; and urges the Home Secretary to include Kincora Boys' Home in the inquiry by Fiona Woolf as the most appropriate means of achieving truth and justice. — [Mrs Cochrane.]

Mr Eastwood: I begin by echoing the words of support and, I suppose, congratulations to all the campaigners who, over the last number of years, have made an immense impact in this place and on the search for truth and justice for all those in our society who have suffered the great injustice of child abuse. Organisations like Survivors and Victims of Institutional Abuse (SAVIA) — I know that some of them are here — have done immense work to bring that issue to the fore and to ensure that the House and the Executive make good strides to try to bring about justice for all those people.

It is kind of depressing that, almost daily, we have a new revelation about the abuse of children in our society. Most recently, we have seen very prominent and powerful people across the water being facilitated by very powerful institutions to treat our children in the most despicable way. We have seen, over the last 10 or 15 years, the state and powerful elements in the Church across this island being allowed to get away with terrible injustices on our young people. Thankfully, we are now in an era where we can talk about these issues, where we can bring them to the fore and where we can attempt to hold these people and, more particularly, these institutions to account.

Even though they are nearly 30 years old, the revelations about Kincora are no less shocking and demand nothing less from us than all our efforts in trying to bring the truth to the fore. It is astonishing that this length of time has been allowed to pass without a proper investigation into what happened there being facilitated. Whatever the allegations about security services, state involvement and everything else, the bottom line is that many young people were abused and have not seen a modicum of truth or justice in all that time.

It is incumbent on us and on Westminster to ensure that we can now get to a stage where those people can have some level of truth and justice. Very good work is being done in the Justice Hart inquiry and through the acknowledgement forum, and we have to ensure that that work continues and that we get to a point where we can look at reparation and possible expansion, whether

through that inquiry or a further one, into the issues around clerical abuse. However, we understand that the issues around Kincora are outwith the abilities of the Justice Hart inquiry to get to the truth. We need to ensure that that part of the inquiry, whilst not diminishing victims' rights around the acknowledgement forum and so on, inquires properly into what the state and the security services have done. I think that, at this stage, that probably best rests with the Woolf inquiry.

As was pointed out earlier by Mr Attwood and others, we cannot take our eye off the ball. We, in this country, have had a very difficult and bad experience when it comes to what state agencies have been allowed to get away with and what they have been allowed to cover up. Victims have not been allowed to get near the truth or justice. We need to make sure that every bright light is shone into the darkest corners of the state and the security services in order to ensure that those people who are still struggling and striving for truth and justice with regard to Kincora and other issues are allowed to see those files and to act upon them.

Mr Beggs: I, too, thank the proposer of the motion for bringing it to the House and indicate my support for it.

As we have heard, the Kincora story is quite a gripping one, with all the elements of the plot of a thriller. However, it is not an imaginary tale set in a far-off location; it is a tale of real lives, a real story, that happened about a mile from this Building. We must never forget that, at the heart of this dreadful tale, is the terrible and unforgivable exploitation and abuse of young boys in care.

Then there are the claims about the involvement of the most powerful — politicians, businessmen and the intelligence services. Regardless, we must focus on two things: truth and justice. Truth means that there must be no hiding place for the perpetrators of these crimes no matter who or where they are, no matter their connections or affiliations and no matter how inconvenient it may be for the powers that be, whether in Belfast or in London.

Justice demands that the perpetrators should be exposed and held to account. These were young boys who were already disadvantaged and were to be cared for by the state but were abused. They had no one to defend them when they were alone in that house at the mercy of those beasts.

3.30 pm

The Kincora story has long been plagued with rumours that the full story never came out and that the involvement of powerful people in MI5 led to a cover-up. That is still the case, some 32 years later. There have been numerous inquiries over the period, starting with a private inquiry in 1982 set up by Secretary of State James Prior. It collapsed a month later, when three of its members resigned because they believed that the RUC had failed to carry out an effective investigation. In 1983, we saw former Sussex Chief Constable Sir George Terry look at the RUC's handling of the Kincora inquiry. He found no evidence of a homosexual ring, cover-up or paramilitary involvement. Tellingly, however, MI5 refused the RUC permission to speak to any of its officers. Then, in December 1983, James Prior appointed Judge Hughes to head up a public inquiry, with limitations, into Kincora, but still the allegations persist. All has not been uncovered.

Recent revelations about celebrities such as Jimmy Savile and former Liberal MP Cyril Smith have led to victims of abuse coming forward. In addition, there have been widespread claims of abuse involving the rich and the powerful in other parts of the UK, for example London, Jersey and north Wales. These have been uncovered, and there is emerging evidence that strengthens the argument that the Kincora story should be reinvestigated with appropriate powers.

It is worth pausing to assess the words of Tim Fortescue, Edward Heath's Chief Whip, as recorded in the 1995 BBC documentary 'Westminster's Secret Service'. Talking about the role of Chief Whip, Fortescue said:

"It might be ... a scandal involving small boys ... we would do everything we can because we would store up brownie points ... if we could get a chap out of trouble then, he will do as we ask forever more."

The question that must be asked is this: are there elements of that at Kincora?

In October 2012, the Labour MP Tom Watson claimed that there was a powerful paedophile network linked to Westminster. In late 2012, the Metropolitan Police commenced Operation Fairbank to investigate claims that the Elm Guest House in south-west London was the scene of child sexual abuse. That has been followed up by Operation Fernbridge. Clearly, there are ongoing difficulties. Further recent investigations have uncovered 13 undisclosed items, four of which have implicated Home Office officials. There are 114 missing files.

We need an open and transparent inquiry into Kincora, with all the necessary powers. Critically, this must include the ability to fully question members of the intelligence services and for them to be obliged to disclose information freely. Like others, I agree that Kincora should be included in the Westminster-based historical inquiry into child sexual exploitation, with powers to enable full disclosures to be made. The Ulster Unionist Party is determined that for Kincora and, indeed, any instance of wrongdoing there must be no hiding place.

Mr Poots: As a young man growing up, I remember hearing rumours about Kincora and about the various inquiries into Kincora. The truth is that there was a cover-up of what happened at Kincora. The truth was never properly told, and the victims of abuse in Kincora deserve the truth. It is as simple as that. I find many things disgusting, but one thing that I find particularly repellent is any individual thinking that they have the right to harm a child, to abuse a child, to interfere with a child and to destroy that child. I recently met a young man who had been a victim in Rubane, which we heard a little about yesterday in the Hart inquiry. Lives are not destroyed just at the time; they are destroyed for good in so many instances. The harm that is done to a young person or a child by the perpetrators — the evil, twisted perverts — will live with them throughout their life.

When I look at the findings of the Terry report, I think that, if they were not so terrible, they would be laughable. Sir George Terry could have come to his conclusions only as a result of cover-up, whitewash and sham. Surely the lives that have been impacted on, harmed and damaged as a consequence of the evil, twisted practices of individuals deserve better than that. We all know that, where there is

vulnerability, there will be perpetrators. There is nobody more vulnerable than young people who have lost their family and been put into homes and other services. That is why we must be so careful in protecting those young people. We must ensure that they receive the appropriate care from the appropriate people. That is work that we are always learning about. Very often, where you have vulnerable young people, you will have powerful people instigating the perpetration. I have absolutely no doubt that powerful people were involved in what was going on in Kincora. That is why we did not get the truth in the 1980s, even though every piece of evidence was pointing in a particular direction. That is why it is important that we get the truth now.

Kincora was not the only place. Abuse took place in the republican movement, and leading families, such as the Adams family, the Cahill family and the Meehan family, largely got away scot-free as well. It is not just about Kincora or Rubane and the Catholic Church; it goes much broader than that. Powerful people have used their power to abuse the vulnerable. That is something that we must always be very conscious of. In this instance, it has been alleged that people of great seniority in the security services and other places abused the trust that they had in order to victimise those young people. We owe it to those young people to do our utmost to find the truth. That is why we should ensure that the inquiry led by Fiona Woolf includes Kincora. Lord Justice Hart does not have adequate powers at this stage to dig deep enough into the issue, and that is why we would like to take it further. It is incumbent on the Home Secretary, Theresa May, to respond positively to what she hears in the House and, more importantly, to what she hears from the victims of this terrible crime.

Mr A Maginness: It is not very often that I agree with the First Minister, Peter Robinson, but he said in reference to Kincora that it was a national scandal, and I believe that it is. However, the scandal is not simply about abuse; it is about the cover-up and the use of the premises and the unfortunate boys who were residents in Kincora as a source of information and material for use by the intelligence services. That is the nub of the scandal.

The more you probe that sorry episode, the more you come to the conclusion that there has been a major cover-up. If anybody is in any doubt about that, I advise them to read Paul Foot's book 'Who Framed Colin Wallace?'. In that book, you will see the depths to which those in the establishment have gone to impugn the integrity of Mr Wallace. They fabricated a legal case of manslaughter against him, which, incidentally, was quashed in 1996 by the Court of Appeal. It is very important to remind ourselves that there was a web of intrigue that was assisted, organised and administered by the intelligence services. It is appropriate to say that, and many Members are in agreement with that, as are Members of the Westminster Parliament.

It is also appropriate for us to note that the intelligence services were, at times, out of control. As a political party, we took an awful lot of stick because we said exactly that. I think of people like Seamus Mallon, people who probed what was going on, people who defended people like Mr Stalker, who investigated the shoot-to-kill killings in the 1980s. Therefore, it is important for us to probe the full depths of the intrigue and this web of sinister interference

by the intelligence services. Those who say, "Don't worry about the intelligence services; they are under the control of Parliament", should remind themselves that in this instance they were not. Indeed, even Harold Wilson, the then Labour Prime Minister of Great Britain, confided to people that he was not sure that the security services were not conspiring against him. It is important for us to exercise or to try to exercise further democratic control over the intelligence services. As a note of caution, we should not simply allow those intelligence services to govern themselves and not be subject to democratic control. That is very important.

In relation to this inquiry, I support the view expressed by Members of the House that there should be a much wider inquiry under the chairmanship of Fiona Woolf and that Kincora should be included in that inquiry. Quite clearly, the powers that Mr Justice Hart has in the historical institutional abuse inquiry do not go far enough. Technically, how would he be able, for example, to subpoena people in the intelligence services who are resident in Great Britain? How could he do that? There are all sorts of technical reasons why Kincora should be absorbed into the Woolf inquiry.

Finally, it is important for us to remember once again those who were exploited so cruelly —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member will bring his remarks to a close.

Mr A Maginness: — for the so-called needs of the state.

Mr Agnew: Many Members have spoken, and it is always difficult to speak last in a debate like this where there is unanimity. I will not try to outdo everyone else's abhorrence at the acts that are alleged to have taken place at Kincora Boys' Home and at the cover-up that appears to have been perpetrated to protect institutions and powerful people at the expense of children. It is clear from everything that has been said today — the argument has been made, and it can no doubt be won — that the only just act is for the allegations to be investigated as part of Fiona Woolf's inquiry and for proper powers to be given to uncover the truth and, where possible, to seek justice for the survivors and victims of the Kincora Boys' Home.

3.45 pm

I will depart a little from what has been said and use the lessons of this situation, because the other way that we get justice for any victim of sexual abuse is to do all that we can to ensure that it does not happen today. We are looking at a historical event, although, as many said, it is very much present for victims and survivors, but abuse is still taking place.

A much-used phrase in the Chamber and elsewhere is that those who fail to learn the lessons of the past are condemned to repeat it. The lesson that we need to learn is about the place and value that we put on children in our society. There is an old phrase, "Children should be seen and not heard." We need to put that attitude to bed. Children's concerns and experiences must be listened to. They are a vulnerable group, and we need to be ever vigilant of any abuse that they could be suffering.

In different ways, I, as a parent, and we, in the various roles that we play, have a power over children that comes with a responsibility. That applies to us as individuals and

to our institutions, whether state, religious or educational — wherever adults have domain over children.

This case brings to light the importance of transparency. We talk about a position of trust, but there should never be absolute trust. That is the mistake of the past, when we had absolute trust in institutions to care for children. There must be accountability in whatever institution has dominance over our children — whether that is a school, religious institution or care home.

The Barnardo's report highlighted the vulnerability of young people in care and the level of sexual exploitation that many of them faced. It is incumbent on us that as well as this call today — I support it and welcome the motion from the Alliance Party — we must do more. We must look at how we treat children.

Discussing issues such as children's rights is the type of thing that vexes some people. We have become overly litigious as a society. Maybe we do not talk enough about responsibilities, but, when it comes to children's rights, these are the experiences and lessons that we have to learn from. The mistakes of the past are why we need a rights-based framework and the greatest possible protection for children, because they are one of the most vulnerable groups.

Whatever their socio-economic background, children are always vulnerable to the abuse of adults, and we must ensure that we —

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring his remarks to a close?

Mr Agnew: — exercise the responsibility that we hold and use it to ensure that institutions are transparent, accountable and use the responsibility that they hold accordingly.

Mr Lyttle: I thank all Members for their contributions to this important debate. I acknowledge the victims and survivors of all child sexual abuse, in particular, those present in the Assembly today, and the courage that they show daily in continuing to campaign on these important issues.

The weighty responsibility that I feel in summarising the key elements of the debate is eased slightly by the united way in which the Assembly has called for the inclusion of Kincora Boys' Home in the Westminster child sex abuse inquiry.

It is indeed a scandal of national seriousness. There is clear agreement on that. It is also an indictment of the UK Government and this society that it has taken over 40 years of pain and persistence to achieve full and proper disclosure of the full extent of the abuse suffered by children in our community at that home.

My colleague Judith Cochrane MLA and I attended a school that is yards from the location of that building. We were prompted to table the motion today by the work of our Alliance Party colleague and Member of Parliament for East Belfast, Naomi Long MP. Naomi Long has urged the Home Secretary and, indeed, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on several occasions now to include Kincora in the Westminster inquiry into child sex abuse. Many people have supported that call and many people have worked tirelessly towards achieving that outcome for victims and survivors. I think of the many journalists who have been referred to in the Assembly today, organisations

such as Amnesty International and many of the victims and survivors' groups like SAVIA that have worked on those issues.

At its heart, it is about the systematic abuse of the most innocent members of our society by the people specifically charged and entrusted with their care and about adequately investigating the most serious allegations that security and intelligence services were deeply complicit in that abuse and its concealment. The gravity of the allegations means that nothing less than the fullest independent investigation and disclosure of all available evidence will satisfy the right to justice for victims and survivors and the need to address the most serious disrepute that all of those allegedly involved, including the state itself, have been brought into by that litany of abuse.

There is a clear opportunity now for the British Government, the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Home Secretary to satisfy those demands by including the abuse in Kincora Boys' Home in the UK inquiry chaired by Fiona Woolf and to grant the military intelligence officers the clearance they need under the Official Secrets Act to present to the inquiry the grave allegations that they have made.

I understand that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has suggested that it may be a matter for the devolved Administrations to address child abuse. The Executive and Assembly have certainly shown a degree of leadership and taken responsibility by enacting the historical institutional abuse judge-led public inquiry here in Northern Ireland. It has created an opportunity for victims and survivors to present allegations, including those from Kincora Boys' Home.

Again, I acknowledge the work of organisations like SAVIA, Amnesty International and, indeed, former Members of the House, including Conall McDevitt MLA, who worked tirelessly to support the progress towards achieving that inquiry. I also pay tribute to SAVIA for the dedicated and dignified manner in which it has continued to campaign for adequate victim support for participants in the inquiry. I hope that it secures an update soon in relation to funding for a victims' support centre that it is working to put in place in relation to the inquiry. It has also sought an update on any interim report or information that can be given on the inquiry. It has requested that work be started to explore potential compensation and how non-institutional clerical child abuse may be addressed. That has been covered by a number of Members today. It is my understanding that OFMDFM is conducting scoping studies in relation to those matters. Hopefully, it will be able to provide us with an update on those important issues as well.

The chair of the historical institutional abuse inquiry has stated that he would not have the adequate powers to achieve full disclosure in relation to some of the most serious allegations of military intelligence involvement in Kincora. In addition, the contributions of Members in the House today have shown that the weight of argument and the support for inclusion of Kincora in the Westminster child sex abuse inquiry are increasingly irrefutable and that the clamour for justice is now unavoidable.

The Home Secretary must announce the inclusion of the Kincora Boys' Home in the Westminster inquiry and she must grant the exemption from the Official Secrets Act that the military intelligence officers need to provide

the necessary evidence if we are to secure the level of investigation that victims and survivors deserve and, indeed, that any democratic society must demand.

In their contributions, other Members said that there were indeed many other children who were — and are — abused and terrorised in many other ways by non-state paramilitary organisations in our community, who hold themselves to far lower standards of human rights and who have provided far less disclosure of their abuse and terror. As I hear it, the Assembly calls on the Home Secretary to ensure that this democratic society holds itself to much higher standards of accountability, justice and human rights, which are the standards on which the very legitimacy of this society depends. The Assembly calls on the Home Secretary to ensure that she does not add to what has become known as a chronicle of lost opportunities in relation to the Kincora Boys' Home, and to ensure that the principles that she set out for the Westminster inquiry — full investigation, prosecution and maximum transparency — are met by the inclusion and full investigation of all available evidence relating to Kincora Boys' Home in this inquiry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this has been a unique debate and a clear, united message comes from the Assembly calling on the Home Secretary to take urgent action in relation to this issue. I would be grateful if the Speaker's Office could ensure that a communication is sent to the Home Secretary to convey the mood of the House in relation to this serious and grave issue, and that we see the action that we have called for as soon as possible in relation to this important issue. Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly notes with deep concern the allegations of sexual abuse that took place in Kincora Boys' Home during the 1970s and 1980s; further notes allegations that senior politicians, military personnel, paramilitary figures and businessmen from Northern Ireland and Great Britain were involved in the commissioning and subsequent cover-up of the abuse, as well as allegations that members of the intelligence service were complicit in a cover-up of this scandal; believes that the nature and seriousness of the allegations, especially that MI5 was involved in a cover-up, means that this cannot be adequately considered in any way other than a Westminster Government-led inquiry; and urges the Home Secretary to include Kincora Boys' Home in the inquiry by Fiona Woolf as the most appropriate means of achieving truth and justice.

(Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)

Commonwealth Games: Team NI

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Business Committee has agreed to allow one hour and 30 minutes for this debate. The proposer of the motion will have 10 minutes to propose and 10 minutes to make a winding-up speech. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.

Mr Campbell: I beg to move

That this Assembly recognises the tremendous achievement of the entire Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games team at the recent Glasgow games, in particular the boxing team; congratulates all those involved; and calls on the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to urgently reassess other sports that might be expected to excel in the 2018 Commonwealth Games and ensure the appropriate training, resources and facilities are in place to maximise our medal return in 2018.

It is with considerable joy that I move the motion. This is a moment of rejoicing across Northern Ireland, and it has been so since the Commonwealth Games took place because of the success of the participants. It was a substantial improvement on previous performances, and while I will not spend undue time naming each of them, they are worth mentioning.

The gold medal winners were Paddy Barnes and Michael Conlon. The silver medal winners were: at boxing, Michaela Walsh and Joe Fitzpatrick; and in the men's triples at lawn bowls, Neil Booth, Paul Daly and Neil Mullholland. The bronze medal winners were: in boxing, Alanna Audley-Murphy, Steven Donnelly, Connor Coyle, Sean Duffy and Sean McGlinchy; Lisa Kearney in judo; and, in the women's pairs in lawn bowls, Barbara Cameron and Mandy Cunningham. They were symptomatic of the success of the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games team.

However, what we are really endeavouring to do with this motion is not just to commend the team. We should do that, and it already has been done by the Department, the Minister, and the First Minister and deputy First Minister. It is right, proper and entirely appropriate that the entire country congratulates those who took part, particularly the medal winners.

4.00 pm

We are looking ahead because, while everyone participated well — there were personal bests even amongst those who did not win medals — we always aspire to do even better. That is in the context of improved participation in sporting activity amongst young people, but, at the same time as that improvement in sporting activity, we have what amounts to a veritable explosion in obesity rates amongst our young. So, we almost have this dichotomy between having an excellent performance at the games and increasing participation rates in sporting activity amongst young people and, at the same time, young people generally becoming more obese, with a sedentary lifestyle becoming more and more prevalent. So, we have to try not only to improve our athletes at the top but to ensure that, right across the spectrum, people become more active.

On a personal note, I enjoy walking, and I find that, when I am out walking in the summer, quite a few people are also out walking, but between now and April, unfortunately, the numbers who engage in such physical activity will decline considerably, until the lighter evenings and the better weather return. So, we have to ensure — I hope that the Minister will respond to this — that, right across the board, we get greater participation levels across society as a whole, but particularly amongst our young people.

In addition to that — this is why, towards the end of the motion, we inserted:

“ensure the appropriate training, resources and facilities are in place to maximise”

those participating at the top end in the likes of the Commonwealth Games and even the next Olympic Games. It should not be forgotten that, prior to the Commonwealth Games, our rowing fraternity, particularly those from my constituency of East Londonderry, had fantastic success at the Olympic Games. As a result of that, we saw a significant increase in the numbers of young people taking up rowing. So, this has an effect; success breeds success. We find that people take up a sport that they perhaps thought was not the sport for them as a result of online and TV coverage during which they see someone whom they know is good at that sport.

So, we want to hear from the Minister about the Department's strategic plan to build on the success demonstrated at the Commonwealth Games this time. For example, the news about the tremendous success of our boxing team went across not just the UK and the Commonwealth but the wider world. They did — to use a pun — punch well above their weight. For a country the size of ours, the boxers were outstanding — absolutely outstanding. Yet, there are a lot of other sporting disciplines in which we can improve significantly and reach the boxing equivalent. Again, we need resources and a strategy, and we need to see the design that will put that in place over an incremental period of the next few years.

We saw the Scots athletes excel in Scotland. Of course, you would expect them to excel, given that they were on home soil. However, in addition to the athletes playing at home, the Scottish Government and Parliament deployed sufficient resources over the previous four-year period to ensure that they were better placed to succeed in Scotland in 2014. So, that is what we need to see.

We need to target obesity and diabetes amongst the young. All those issues can be tackled with a greater, more significant participation level at primary-school level and post-primary-school level, as young people move into preparation for the sporting activities that they would like to participate in. Then, those who are regarded as excellent prospects can be nurtured, and the tremendous facility that we have at Jordanstown can be fully utilised in order to get the cream of the crop for Australia in four years' time. Hopefully, those of us or whoever is here in the next few years after the Olympic Games and, in four years' time, after the next Commonwealth Games will be able to report an even better performance than that which took place in Scotland in 2014. Hopefully, we can also report that obesity among children is on the decline as a result of a targeted strategy by the Department and the contribution that we all make towards achieving that very worthwhile objective.

Ms McCorley: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Tá mé buíoch as an deis labhairt sa díospóireacht seo. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate. I support the motion. Tá mé i bhfách leis an rún seo inniu. Mar atá ráite sa rún, ba mhaith linn comghairdeas ó chroí a ghabháil lenár lúthchleasaithe, mná agus fir, a ghlac páirt sna Cluichí Comhlathais i nGlaschú i mbliana. As the motion states, we wish to extend sincere congratulations to the local sportsmen and sportswomen who competed in Glasgow's Commonwealth Games 2014. Their achievements were outstanding overall. I am sure that no one will mind if we make special mention of the tremendous success of local boxers. I would like to mention all the medal winners, who include Lisa Kearney, who won a medal in judo, and Neil Booth, Neil Mulholland, Paul Daly, Barbara Cameron and Mandy Cunningham who won in bowling. Agus, ar ndóigh, ár ndornálaithe iontacha, and of course, our fantastic boxers Paddy Barnes, Michael Conlon, Joe Fitzpatrick, Michaela Walsh, Steven Donnelly, Sean Duffy, Connor Coyle, Sean McGlinchey and Alanna Audley-Murphy. Despite not making it on to the medal table, other competitors also excelled in sports such as running, badminton, netball, wrestling and triathlon.

Recognition must also go to support staff, trainers, coaches, families and friends, who rightly deserve to be commended for their roles in the great achievements of our athletes. Such achievements are a source of great pride for us all, and we should continue to encourage and support those athletes in whatever way we can in their pursuit of sporting excellence. We should also, as the motion states, seek to identify other sports where possibilities might exist to excel if given the right support and opportunities.

Sport NI is the body whose responsibility it is to promote a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport, which contributes to a healthy, fair and prosperous society. I do not think that we can overemphasise the health aspects of this, particularly given the rise in diseases like diabetes and heart disease. It is important therefore that we encourage everyone to take part in physical activity, whether in competitive sport or not.

Dúirt Antoinette McKeown, príomh-fheidhmeannach, go bhfuil eagraíocht s'aici tiomanta do rath a bhaint amach sa spórt mar an gnáthrud seachas an eisceacht. The chief executive of Sport NI, Antoinette McKeown, stated recently that her organisation is committed to the achievement of success in sport being the norm rather than the exception. She went on to say that a very detailed review of the Commonwealth Games performance would be carried out in order to set targets for future games, identify where resources can be best used and learn particular lessons from the success of boxing in Glasgow this year. This review will be very important and will include participation from the Commonwealth Games Council and the governing bodies of all the sports. As I have stated, a clear focus will be on the boxing success, which was absolutely phenomenal this year.

Mar is eol dúinn agus mar a thuigtear go maith do chách, níor tharla na torthaí seo de thaisme. As everyone involved knows and understands only too well, these results did not come about by accident. The individual boxers, of course, were pivotal to their own success, but without the support structures around them, such as good coaches, training

facilities, physiologists, nutritionists, sports psychologists and vital family support, the chances are that they may well not have had such major achievements. That will therefore be hugely central to the forthcoming corporate plan for 2015-19.

The job will be to ensure that all those key support elements are in place for each of the identified sports so that they can, at the very least, be in with the best sporting chance for the 2018 games and any other major competitions in the calendar.

If our sporting network is to reach its full potential, one issue that it will be important to tackle is the under-representation of women as sporting participants, coaches and representatives on sports governing bodies. When it comes to equality, there must be a focus on strategies to increase the involvement of women in local sport.

As the motion states, there needs to be a reassessment of other sports that might be expected to excel in 2018. We fully expect Sport NI's review to flag up the ones that will have most to gain from an injection of appropriate training, resources and facilities. If the appropriate supports are put in place, we should rightly expect that athletes will emerge who will hopefully maximise our medal return in 2018.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member bring her remarks to a close?

Ms McCorley: I commend the motion to the House. Molaim an rún.

Mrs McKevitt: I support the motion, as I am a firm believer that sporting excellence and achievement should be recognised and celebrated. Each of the 117 local athletes who participated in 14 sports over 11 days of competition in Glasgow deserves recognition. All were very dedicated and trained hard to qualify for the Commonwealth Games team. All played their part and represented Northern Ireland with distinction, pride and commitment. I commend them all.

The motion singles out the boxing team, and so it should. The boxers' haul of two gold, two silver and five bronze medals — a total of nine for the 11 competitors — was phenomenal. Northern Ireland team captain, Paddy Barnes, deserves a special mention not only for winning gold but for leading and motivating the whole team through their best ever Commonwealth Games. I also give special mention to Michaela Walsh, as I believe that she has put the sport of women's boxing on a new level.

It is most appropriate that we are discussing sporting success and recognising achievement today, given the sporting weekend that we have just had. Our top golfers, Rory and Graeme, played a major role in helping Europe retain the Ryder Cup. Maybe even more important, Mr Deputy Speaker, we saw County Down win its first ever All-Ireland Intermediate Ladies' Football Championship against a very good Fermanagh team. Congratulations to them and to the Down camogs, who won the junior intermediate all-Ireland title the weekend before.

The most important part of the motion may be the call on DCAL to reassess urgently other sports and ensure that the appropriate training, resources and facilities are in place to maximise our medal return in 2018. Yes, we did good, but, you know what, we could do better. While recognising and commending coaches, medical personnel, support staff and team management, along

with the governing bodies and sponsors supporting our athletes and their families, the House and the Government have a responsibility to play their part in supporting sport. There is no doubt that we could do better. Many sports are underfunded, and facilities are dismal when compared with other Commonwealth nations. I look forward to the assessment, which will, I think, highlight opportunities for improvement, some of which may cost very little if we speed up the sharing of facilities between the likes of Jordanstown and Queen's University, which has been mentioned previously, as well as school and gym facilities and pitches.

Mr McGimpsey: I support the motion. It is a valuable one that highlights the value and importance of sport in our society among our young people and our population as a whole, the importance of strategies around fitness and the need to seriously engage in physical activity to promote good health. When I was in the Department of Health, we had a policy called Fit Futures. It was very much about encouraging our population to engage in physical activity, not least because of the challenge of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other serious conditions.

The Commonwealth Games are about more than that. They are about promoting elite sports. They are about the best and the brightest in each of the sports coming forward to represent their country. It is important that we invest in that. It is not only about public health and fitness in the general population; it is about targeting and concentrating on the individuals who can represent at that very high level. We have seen that at the Commonwealth Games, and we have seen that not least with Paddy Barnes and the boxers but with other sports as well.

4.15 pm

A key element of this is that we have sports that we show we can do well in. We can be proud of our achievements at the Commonwealth Games, but there is huge potential still waiting to be given the opportunity. For example, at the Commonwealth Games, we had the ability to put in a Northern Ireland rugby team, but that did not appear. Yet, look at the investment that the House has made in rugby in Northern Ireland in the past two or three years — around £15 million in the Ravenhill stadium alone. Hockey is another sport in which our men and women excel and are known internationally. Of course, there has been mention of golf. The Ryder Cup is a biennial tournament and is one of the most important in the world. It was led by two of our golfers — Graeme McDowell and Rory McIlroy, the world number one. That demonstrates that we have huge potential. When you look at our achievements in the past and you look at people like Tony McCoy, the greatest jockey in the world, or Carl Frampton, a world champion, you see that we have a pantheon of achievement in sport.

The key thing is ensuring that barriers to access to sport are broken down, that we have fairness, equality and investment in areas and that no one feels disadvantaged. I have to remind the Minister of the situation of Sandy Row Amateur Boxing Club, which has been subject, over the years, to sustained sectarian and racist abuse, proven by an independent review, on a number of occasions. The point is this: where are we going from here? One of the boxers who achieved a medal in Glasgow was a Sandy Row boxer, and there are youngsters in that area and in other areas who would love the opportunity to represent

their country. The fact is that that boxing club is currently not allowed to access funding because it is not affiliated with the boxing federation, which oversaw the sectarian abuse in the first place. We have a situation in which that boxing club is excluded. This is an issue of fairness. I have to say to the Minister that, if it was a boxing club in her constituency, I do not think that I would be talking about it in these terms; I think that it would be dealt with properly.

It seems to me that sport is the key area where our society can come together. It is the key area where we can see partnership, representing our community where we are all proud of the achievements of our sportsmen and women and we can all get behind them. They are such an important cohesive force in our society in bringing our communities together. Fairness is another key element in this and in ensuring that barriers to access do not exist, as far as possible. We invest, and we support. We have much to celebrate and much to be thankful for in the achievement of our sportsmen and women.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr McGimpsey: There is so much more potential there.

Ms Lo: I thank the Members who tabled the motion, which has the Alliance Party's support. First, I offer my warmest congratulations to all our athletes who competed in the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow this summer. The media coverage showed the games to be a fantastic sporting occasion, and it was wonderful to see how well it captured the public's interest. The Northern Ireland team did us proud. Across all sports, there were remarkable achievements, and it is fitting for us today to pay tribute to them. Secondly, I ask the Minister if a feasibility study could be carried out to see if a future Commonwealth Games could be hosted in Belfast. We saw how wonderful and how successful the World Police and Fire Games were, and it would be brilliant to build on that.

As we know, sporting activity is not only valuable in itself but increases confidence, empathy and a sense of community. Of course, it is not just about talent; it is about discipline, training, coaching, resources and a positive mental attitude.

Perhaps one of the most endearing qualities of people in Northern Ireland is that we are self-deprecating. The problem is that when that translates to sport, we tend to see ourselves as the underdogs and, at times, assume that we will never be the best. This is a shame when we consider that there are many sports in Britain in which our athletes are some of the best in the world. A constituent, Peter Hawkins, a professional cyclist who competed for Team Northern Ireland in Glasgow, told me that this is partly down to mentality but is also due to the fact that so many other countries have better support and facilities for their athletes. This, however, comes down to money: better training facilities, good quality full-time coaches and travel to international competitions are all very expensive. In Peter's opinion, however, they make a huge difference.

The ability to make a living as a full-time athlete is rare, and most athletes would need additional financial support in order to focus on their sport. Investment in sport is hard to come by, and I am interested to know what actions the Minister has taken or will take to help our athletes to get to a position where they can concentrate on their sport without having to work part-time. Peter also believes that

more should be done to allow athletes to travel to compete against international opposition as that would allow them to get used to competing on the bigger stage. It can also show them that the gap between where they are and where they need to be is often not as big as they think. In an email to me, Peter wrote:

"There are some sports in which Northern Ireland is genuinely world class, for example, golf. I'm sure a young kid taking up golf here would be thinking anything was possible ... whereas I never dreamed I'd even get to where I am now, never mind the very top of the sport. Maybe if it hadn't been made to seem so impossible, I would've progressed a lot faster. One of the things I take most pleasure in is showing how far you can go with hard work, persistence and belief."

We have the talent and the passion — there is no doubt about that. We now need to focus on how we nurture that so that athletes like Peter receive all the support they deserve.

Mr Humphrey: I thank the Members who tabled the motion, and I will speak in favour of it. The names of Michael Conlan and Paddy Barnes now stand alongside those of Philip Beattie, Mike Bull, Davy Larmour, Mary Peters and Barry McGuigan in Northern Ireland's Commonwealth Games hall of fame. I congratulate all our athletes who took part in the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and commend all the officials who went along to support them.

I watched the opening ceremony when at scout camp on the Isle of Man, and the reception that our team got as it went into the stadium was second only to that of Scotland, the host nation. Two weeks ago, with party colleagues from the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure, I met representatives of the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council to discuss a range of issues. On Thursday past, Sport NI was here to discuss the same issues. Participation in the Commonwealth Games is vital. When the representatives of the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council appeared in front of the Committee last year in the Sports Institute at Jordanstown, we were very sympathetic to what they were saying. Clearly, they wanted to do much more. I am sure that the Minister wants to do much more but has a very restricted budget. I pay tribute to the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council. The development of athletes for international competition is absolutely vital. We will maximise the potential that Members talked about only if we maximise our participation. It is great that we have the facility down at the Sports Institute, but we need people who train and work hard for four years. Sadly, however, some of them are not able to compete.

Mr McGimpsey mentioned two sports — rugby sevens and hockey — which I referred to last week in Committee. Northern Ireland is not able to take part in those sports at the Commonwealth Games, which is a huge regret. That is politics with a small "p" interfering in sport, and that should not happen.

I, too, support Northern Ireland hosting the games, but much has to be done with our infrastructure and facilities. Ravenhill is completed; Windsor is under way; there is development to come at Casement; and we have the Aurora swimming facility in Bangor, the Dub and the Odyssey. We have many great facilities, but we still do not have a velodrome, and considerable improvements are

required at the Mary Peters Track. If we are ever to do that, we will need a joined-up approach. Realistically, we need DCAL, Sport NI, local councils, universities, education and library boards and private clubs and their facilities to come together to be in a position to host the Commonwealth Games or any such major international sports event. A considerable amount of investment is required.

I appeal to the governing bodies of hockey and rugby. I am proud to be a part of the Northern Ireland green and white army and to support our wee country in international football. I am saddened when a player opts not to play for Northern Ireland, but it is his or her choice. I made this point in Committee on Thursday, and I make it again in the House today. You can swim for Ireland or GB and take part in the Commonwealth Games; and you can box for Ireland or GB and take part in the Commonwealth Games for Northern Ireland. However, you cannot play hockey for Ireland and play for Northern Ireland in the Commonwealth Games; and you can play rugby for Ireland, but you cannot take part in the rugby sevens at the Commonwealth Games. It is about time that the Irish Rugby Football Union, whether in Dublin or the Ulster branch, and the Irish Hockey Association addressed that anomaly.

Sport NI produced a document at our Committee meeting last week, and on page 67, Iain Lewers, a great hockey player from this wee part of the world, is mentioned. He now plays hockey along with Mark Gleghorne for England. He is a GB player. Two other players from Northern Ireland, Ian Sloan and David Ames, have declared for England. They will not play international hockey for three years to enable them to become eligible to play for England. We are missing out on an opportunity; and some sportspeople whom we are developing here are not participating for Northern Ireland at the Commonwealth Games. That needs to be addressed. Angela Platt, the executive manager of Ulster Hockey, was in front of the Committee last week. Members of the Committee will know that I asked her a question.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr Humphrey: I asked her whether she missed out on the opportunity to compete in the Commonwealth Games and whether she would have wanted to. She said that she would, but, sadly, Northern Ireland does not send a team. It is time that that was addressed. I support the motion.

Mr McMullan: Go raibh maith agat. The Commonwealth Games in Glasgow have just finished, with our athletes taking home a very creditable and excellent 12 medals, and our boxers took nine of that total. For the first time at the games, female boxers also took home medals. Athletes in other sports finished well but were just outside the medals. Those sports included wrestling, netball, badminton and athletics. We are already planning for the next games in 2018 and have an expectation to do better. The motion calls on DCAL to urgently reassess other sports that might be expected to excel at the next games and to ensure that appropriate training and facilities are in place.

On 7 August 2014, Antoinette McKeown, the chief executive of Sport NI, a DCAL arm's-length body, stated that a detailed review of how each sport had performed at the games would be undertaken. That review will help to establish where resources can best be used and spent. Sport NI will sit down with the governing bodies of all the

sports to understand the factors in the sports that have been successful and those that have not.

It is clear that Sport NI is serious about creating an environment in sport where success becomes routine. I am pleased to hear that targets will be set for the next games in Australia and that, unlike this year, those targets will be made public. Other sports will be encouraged to learn from the successes of our boxing squad, and the tally of two gold medals must be bettered.

4.30 pm

Why are our boxers so successful? What are they doing that is different from other sports? The boxing fraternity developed a high-performance system that the boxing family bought into completely. When you listen to any of the squad talking, you hear that they have total self-belief that they are the best, and that belief is brought into the ring with them. That same high performance must now be installed in other sports like judo, bowls, netball etc. When you go down and see the facilities in Jordanstown, where those high-performance athletes train — the Ulster rugby team has been down there as well — you see that we have got the basis for that.

Sport NI and DCAL have put money into our sports programme, but, next time, the lottery must put funding into sport. That has not been mentioned here today. For the Olympic Games in London, over £60 million was taken from us over six years as our contribution towards the cost of £2.2 billion. If that money can be taken from us for the Olympic Games in London, surely the lottery can put some of that money back to us to build up our sports facilities like a cycling track etc. By the way, the money that was taken from us was not returned. We were told that it would not be returned.

We have to look at all of this. The budget for the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow was £561 million, with around £460 million provided by public funds. The Scottish Government contributed over £380 million, and Glasgow City Council contributed the rest. No money was funded for that. Do we have that budget? We must look outside to get funding brought in, and the lottery has a big part to play. As I said, we contributed £60 million to the Olympics; surely, we can get part of that back. If they were to give us back the percentage that they took out of our total of money that we have here for our lottery, that would help to pay for quite a lot of the infrastructure that we need here to develop our sport. Otherwise, we will be totally struggling. For me, the key to the whole thing is funding.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr McMullan: I ask the House to look at where the lottery can play a major part here.

Mr McCausland: I support the motion. It recognises the tremendous achievements of the entire Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games team. Obviously, it picks out the boxing team, which excelled so much in the competition. It is right that we should recognise it, and it is right that we should congratulate all those involved and go further. Congratulations should be given to all the participants, but especially those who achieved medal success. Also, our congratulations go to the officials, coaches, trainers and all those who supported the athletes.

This is one of the occasions when the name “Northern Ireland” is blazoned on the sporting world. It happens in football, where we have a Northern Ireland football team. It also happens in the United Kingdom School Games, where a Northern Ireland team takes part. The Commonwealth Games is another occasion and is, obviously, a much more high-profile event than the UK School Games. It is a very important occasion when a Northern Ireland team is entered. It is good for the athletes that they are able to enter that competition. It is an opportunity for them to excel and show their excellence. It is good for the sport because it raises the profile of the various sports in the country and encourages people to take up those sports. The more a sport gets exposure in the media and the more local success there is, the more interest there is and the more participants there will be. It is good for the country because it means that the name of Northern Ireland is out there in the media around the world and is identified with success. It is also good for society generally here because, as was pointed out earlier by Mr McGimpsey, we live in age when there are issues with obesity and when many folk have a much more sedentary lifestyle. Role models in sport encourage participation, particularly amongst young people, and that is bound to be good for the health of Northern Ireland.

I want to pick up on the point that was made earlier by my colleague Mr Humphrey. If we are to achieve our very best in the Commonwealth Games, it is absolutely essential that we compete in as many sports as possible. It is just common sense that, if you do not enter as many events, you will not have the same level of success, and it is therefore particularly disappointing that it is not possible to enter a team in hockey and no team was entered in the rugby sevens. Those issues have been around for some time. Mr McGimpsey referred to his experience in the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, and I go back to my experience in that regard. Then, the issue of hockey was raised. People within the ranks of hockey and who played hockey said that they wanted to be able to enter the Commonwealth Games but could not do so. It would make good sense for us to have a team there, so I encourage all those who can exercise influence here to work with the governing body to see what can be done to remove any obstacles and overcome any difficulties and to ensure that, by the time we get to 2018, Northern Ireland teams enter the hockey and rugby sevens competitions.

The success that we had was testimony to the dedication, skill, perseverance, talent and passion of all those in the team. We did well, but we want to do better. As was pointed out, Sport NI had a deputation in regard to the issue of excellence in sport and elite performance. They were with us at the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure last week, and there was a positive response from the chief executive of Sport NI and from the others in that deputation. They were all very positive about ensuring that we can enter teams in hockey and rugby sevens in 2018.

Mr D Bradley: Go raibh míle maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Tá mé buíoch as an deis labhairt sa díospóireacht seo faoi na Cluichí Comhlathais. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak in this debate on the Commonwealth Games. The 2014 Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games team achieved its best result since 1986 in the Edinburgh games. In fact, it could be said that the team achieved its best result ever. I say that because the 1986 games, if you remember, was the only

time that Northern Ireland achieved a larger medal haul, but the games that year were less competitive. They were shrouded in controversy and subject to a wide political boycott, with 32 of the eligible 59 countries staying away due to Margaret Thatcher's Government's policy of maintaining sporting links with apartheid South Africa.

In any case, thankfully, this year's games and the Northern Ireland team demonstrated the power of sport as a unifying force. The men and women of the team — some of whom compete for Ireland in the Olympics, others for Great Britain and Northern Ireland — brilliantly represented the people of this part of the world. I hope that that spirit will continue and be encouraged across all our sporting codes. For example, I am heartened that the GAA will soon play at Ravenhill rugby ground for the first time in an all-star event that is being spearheaded by Anto Finnegan to raise much-needed funds for motor neurone disease, which, of course, is a hugely important cause. I hope that that is another sign of the burgeoning relationship between Irish rugby and the GAA, which will hopefully bring the Rugby World Cup to Ireland in 2023.

I also note the participation in the Commonwealth Games of Caroline O'Hanlon, the captain of the Armagh ladies' Gaelic football team. She was a Member of the Northern Ireland netball team that also excelled during the Games, even though they were not medal winners.

As other Members have said, there was great teamwork from the Northern Irish competitors at the games, in particular from the bowlers, who came home with two team medals. That teamwork also extended to the preparation for the boxing ring and, as many others have said, culminated in our boxers picking up three more boxing medals than their previous best haul.

With such successes from our athletes, I am happy to support the motion and its call for the:

"appropriate training, resources and facilities ... to maximise our medal return",

not just on the Gold Coast in 2018 but in all upcoming global sporting tournaments. I am looking forward to Brazil 2016, when hopefully we will see our former world champion cyclist Martyn Irvine achieve his best, Graeme McDowell and Rory McIlroy make their Olympic debuts and Paddy Barnes and Michael Conlan go for gold.

Gan tuilleadh moille, tá mé an-sásta tacaíocht a thabhairt don rún. With that, Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the motion.

Mr B McCrea: I have to say that I think that we are deluding ourselves. I have listened to the rhetoric in the Chamber and the platitudes about how well we did. You really have to say to yourself that we fund 42 sports — 28 elite sports — and if you were to take boxing out of our medal total, you would have precious little return for that.

I commend the proposer of the motion for tabling it. I was quite taken, as I said in Committee, by what Mr Humphrey had to say. There are a number of issues that we have not addressed. Some really important issues have not been taken on board. I refer to the document that is known as SPLISS. Some issues come out here when we talk about pillar one, finance:

"There is a reasonable argument to suggest that Northern Ireland subsidises the rest of the UK as it

benefits less from UK Sport funding than other nations, notably England."

What is the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure going to do about that, as she has been exhorted to do by her party colleagues?

The document continues:

"There is an acceptance that the funding for elite sport in Northern Ireland is modest compared with other nations and does not necessarily match Northern Ireland's ambitions in sport."

That is a failure in our structural approach. Our:

"inability to generate funding from other sources such as sponsorship and media rights"

is also a problem. One of the key issues that we could deal with is, I think, the point that Mr Humphrey made — he certainly made it in Committee. It says in the document in front of us here — our strategic approach:

"Many recognised governing bodies in Northern Ireland are actually branches of an all-Ireland or UK national governing body and therefore may present challenges for the planning, coordination and delivery of their sport."

That is the elephant in the room: we have no strategic vision for sport in this land. We have all-Ireland bodies, UK bodies, different bodies, but there is no great vision to take us forward. All we get is empty rhetoric where people try to cling on to the coat-tails of people who succeed in sport, largely because of their own ability.

4.45 pm

There are some suggestions for improvement in this document:

"Greater certainty in the planning process as DCAL and its non-departmental funded bodies are often subject to funding uncertainty from Exchequer funds and also National Lottery ticket sales."

"Greater incentives... to contribute funding to elite sport."

These are issues that DCAL ought to be taking on board. I am really interested to see what support the Minister can gather around the Executive table, because I realise that she can only deal with what she is given. We need to match our rhetoric with financial support.

I mentioned some other issues that I think that we need to address in this debate:

"Breadth of investment in Olympic/Paralympic sport; Commonwealth sport; and culturally significant sports means that policy has a broad rather than a narrow focus."

I think that we need some strategic leadership here, and I hope that the Minister will be able to provide some clarity on that. I also hope that she will tell us how she will tackle one of the other weaknesses brought forward:

"Processes can be perceived as being over bureaucratic and time consuming."

These are issues that we ought to be able to deal with.

The proposer of the motion mentioned wider social objectives linked to public health and obesity in his opening remarks, and those are addressed in Sport Matters. However, sport is not yet seen as an investment; it is seen as a luxury. We have to realise that sport should be something that we invest in because we want to achieve other objectives.

Others touched on the benefit of sport and what it can do. Just look at the passion that we saw when we watched the Ryder Cup, or when Ulster plays rugby, or when I watched the team triathlon come in sixth at Glasgow. There is a breakdown in our society; there is a growth in the importance of "me". Sport should be able to counter that, but sport is not being supported.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?

Mr B McCrea: Rather than have these meaningless debates, let us see real, strategic vision; let us see leadership for Northern Ireland; let us see what we can do. I would really like to see the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure step up to the mark, because Northern Ireland needs it.

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. I have listened carefully to the debate and the views expressed on the motion. It is clear that there is widespread support for our local athletes, and I thank Members for providing me with the opportunity to once again congratulate the athletes, coaches, officials and families who were involved in the 2014 Commonwealth Games. I have had the pleasure of meeting those people on a few occasions, particularly when they departed Belfast for the games in July and again when I visited the athletes' village in Glasgow. On those occasions, I saw at first-hand the individual commitment of each of the athletes and the support that they received from the network around them. Those athletes are certainly deserving of the tributes that have come their way today.

Much has been made of the boxers' success, and rightly so: winning nine medals out of 12 is no mean feat. It is clear that there are significant interests here today to ensure that our athletes, current and future, receive appropriate training, resources and facilities in order to maximise medal achievements in all future competitions. Some of those have been mentioned here today: the next Commonwealth Games in 2018 on the Gold Coast in Australia and the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2016. I believe that the motion is worthy, and I wholeheartedly support it.

The motion also calls on the Assembly to recognise particularly the success of the boxing team and its achievements.

I do not think that any of us are in any doubt that boxing is the leading light in our Commonwealth sports and, indeed, across all sports competitions. The achievements are all the more remarkable when we consider the poor facilities — they are among the worst — that we have to offer our sportspeople. They achieve these successes despite the conditions that they train in. My Department's current investment in boxing will go some way towards addressing some of these issues, but it merely scratches the surface.

The motion also calls on DCAL to reassess other sports where we may excel in future games. On Tuesday 16 September, I advised the House that I had met the chief executive of Sport NI to discuss plans to review the performance of all our athletes in the Commonwealth Games. Sport NI will carry out debriefs with all the governing bodies of the sports that had athletes competing in the games. It will also talk individually to each athlete, the coaches and their support personnel. It will examine what worked well, what needs to be improved and what had a negative impact on performance. The debriefing process will be completed by the end of this year, hopefully by early December.

When all the information is collected, a review will be undertaken by Sport NI. The review will be used as an appraisal of performances at recent games and as a mechanism to identify the changes and improvements that are required. The review is scheduled to take place in January and February 2015, and it will allow Sport NI to make evidence-based recommendations to the relevant sports' governing bodies and the Commonwealth Games Council. The review will also set targets for the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Australia. It is therefore crucial that the governing bodies involved engage completely in this process with Sport NI.

It is really important, especially in light of the reducing resources that we all face, that the governing bodies focus investment on the athletes capable of delivering a return on that investment. This will, no doubt, require difficult decisions to be made by the sports' governing bodies in the future. They will need to be objective and strong in their assessments, and I know that Sport NI will provide the necessary support and guidance to them as they go through the process. To improve athlete performance across all our competitive sports in the future, it is vital that any identified actions that are required are taken by the relevant governing bodies and their partners. The motion calls for appropriate training and for resources and facilities to be put in place to ensure that we maximise our medal return in 2018, and that is what we intend to do.

In Sport Matters — our strategy for sport and physical recreation — there are 26 high-level targets that set out key strategic priorities for sport and physical education. The strategy is used by DCAL and Sport NI to inform and prioritise investment, including in our high-performance athletes. Sport Matters targets are set around three clear themes of participation, performance and places, all of which provide the building blocks for us to develop systems to help our current and aspiring competitive sportspeople. Preparing athletes for major competitions is not about just a few elements of this strategy. Successful systems for athletes' performance must also include a range of important factors throughout the life of an athlete, namely encouraging initial participation in sport; having effective talent identification systems; having great coaches who will inspire and mentor athletes; providing crucial training and nutrition advice; providing access to suitable training facilities; and having effective governing bodies that will drive athletes forward, which is imperative. We have already achieved many of these factors; however, we recognise that there is much more to do. Sport NI is working closely with the governing bodies, the athletes, coaches and their support personnel who have Olympic and Paralympic aspirations for Rio in 2016 and Tokyo in 2020. As part of this, the Sports Institute at Jordanstown

does an excellent job through the provision of direct technical support to sports and athletes as they prepare for major competitions.

Sport NI also provides financial support to sports' governing bodies through its performance-focused and athlete investment programmes. Over the last two financial years, governing bodies that had athletes preparing for 2014 received funding from Sport NI of just over £2.3 million. That is substantial funding. In the same period, total funding of almost £834,000 was provided under the Sport NI athlete investment programme to athletes preparing for 2014. I anticipate that continued Exchequer and lottery funding will be provided through Sport NI to support athletes' preparation for future competitions. There will be a focus on 2018 and the Gold Coast games, and that focus will be shaped by the outcomes of Sport NI's review of the Glasgow games. In 2013, the Sport Matters monitoring group received a report detailing the actions around this target. It agreed that the target had been met and that facilities had been either newly developed or upgraded to support the player and athlete. The group toured nearly 20 projects that may be deemed as directly contributing to the PL23 target, including the 50-metre pool in north Down and new or upgraded facilities for boxing, which have yet to be completed, cycling, basketball, hockey, athletics, rowing and many more sports. However, it was also determined that, although that target had been partially achieved, there was evidence of significant additional need and demand for performance facilities to support sport governing bodies.

As part of that, Sport NI is working in partnership with councils to deliver a sports facilities strategy along with the 11 council areas. The documents will take into account the existing facilities and the demand for new ones. We must, however, where possible, continue the process of developing our sporting infrastructure so that we all have the opportunity to inspire and help those who want to compete. If they do so, they need all our support to realise their full talent and potential. Sport Matters recognises that there is a requirement for additional funding from not just government but stakeholders, including councils. There is much more to be done. As Minister for sport, I remain committed to ensuring that we do all that we can.

I welcome the fact that all Members spoke very positively about our athletes. They made special mention of the boxers, which is right. Mention was also made of all the other roles that we need to fulfil to ensure that the athletes have their opportunity. The role of rugby sevens and hockey was mentioned. As Nelson McCausland and Michael McGimpsey said, this is something that predates us all, but I intend to send a transcript of the debate to the governing bodies of those sports to try to ensure that we have full inclusion. It is regrettable that past athletes missed their opportunity to perform.

I also acknowledge that, despite the personal bests that they achieved, some of the athletes fell short of what they expected of themselves and were very disappointed. I was delighted, even from the tone of the debate, that it was not personal, because those athletes are children and young people with families supporting them. They need our encouragement to participate fully in future competitions.

I welcome the debate and all the contributions that Members have made. There is much more to be done, particularly on the investment that we need in

infrastructure for things such as velodromes, track and field, and strength and conditioning. It is great that we hopefully have three stadia that will be developed for those sports to avail themselves of opportunities. There is much more to be done, but I welcome the fact that we have had the debate today.

Mr Hilditch: I add my support to the motion and acknowledge the many positive contributions made by Members this afternoon. I join in the congratulations to all who were successful, compliment those who came close and sympathise with the participants where situations and conditions may have gone against them on the day.

The achievements of the boxing team certainly carried Northern Ireland in the medal table. It was perhaps a wise strategy by the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council not to announce targets prior to the games, thus not pressurising athletes and building expectations. The Northern Ireland medal haul improved from four years ago in Delhi and was only three short of that from the Edinburgh games in 1986.

As a country, we have notably produced talented sportspeople. We seem to have that in-built psyche and DNA for cultivating talent, whether it be in amateur boxing or professional golf. Today's debate has again highlighted that. Indeed, there are many Monday mornings in the House on which the Matter of the Day is on a sports-related topic, where credit has been given and Members have spoken with pride.

It is a quick turnaround to the next games. Three and a half years of preparation can fly by, and today's motion certainly places the Department and the current Minister in pole position to ensure that the appropriate training, resources and facilities are in place to maximise any medal haul in 2018.

5.00 pm

Unfortunately, we are having financial difficulties outlined to us daily. Yesterday, I attended a departmental briefing to the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee on the monitoring rounds. Perhaps, our expectation of delivery and our confidence in the ability to deliver resources and facilities are not as high as they should be. However, we must look beyond the barriers, and, setting aside the Commonwealth Games targets, we cannot lose sight of sport as one of the vehicles that constantly breaks down barriers in our society and has a major effect on other Departments, such as Health and Education, as Members mentioned.

We must remind ourselves that over half of our population is involved in sports-related activities. That covers those with disabilities, elite performers and those who wish to spectate socially. We have many unsung heroes in our sporting community, and not everyone gets the chance to fill the back pages, lift a trophy or covet a medal. There are hundreds who work away in the background, are dedicated to their sport, contribute to a lasting legacy and encourage others to follow.

Today's motion reminds me of a link between the Commonwealth Games and my home town. In 1998, cricket was introduced as a one-off to the games. Northern Ireland entered a side, even though cricket is usually played internationally on an all-Ireland basis. One local lad from Carrickfergus, Ryan Eagleson, was given the opportunity to compete in the games. That added to

his experience and career, and he went on to represent Ireland in 65 internationals. He became a cricketing development officer, and he is now manager of the under-19s side. This year, 16 years later, he helped to lead Carrick to an unprecedented four-trophy haul, including the all-Ireland National Cup, the Ulster Senior League Section 1, the Ulster Shield and the T20 Trophy. Ryan has been an inspiration to local cricketers and is typical of the dedication, enthusiasm and will to succeed shown by many of our sportsmen and women. That is a story that could be repeated in many of the towns and villages across the Province, as those unsung heroes build that legacy.

It would be remiss of me to not revisit the issue of community sports hubs, which has been raised many times before, if we are looking to resource our facilities. I have stated before that sports provision impacts on health, education and the social economy. We can look closely at our neighbours in Scotland and, as was mentioned, how they have maximised their resources with community sports hubs. We are too small a country to provide facilities for individual needs. We must look at bringing together different strands of participation, from elite to community and leisure.

To that end, it is crucial that the new councils and the local government structure have an important part to play. With the new councils in place from next April, a joined-up approach is needed. I will leave it to the experts to decide whether Sport NI will be the conduit to lead that or whether a strategic group will need to be set up with various partners. That is a pending priority as we try to develop our sports facilities.

Turning to the debate, all Members who spoke and the Minister offered their congratulations to the participants in the games. Mr Campbell ably introduced the motion and listed the medallists. He linked future improvement with health issues and the need to tackle obesity and to get greater participation generally. He also sought a strategic plan and used the Scottish model as an example.

Ms McCorley paid tribute to the coaches and the families and friends of the athletes for their support. Again, she linked sport to health and female participation. Ms McKeivitt commended all athletes for their commitment and dedication and noted other recent sporting achievements. Mr McGimpsey used his experience in health promotion and talked of the potential in sports like rugby and hockey. Again, he raised the Sandy Row boxing issue. Ms Anna Lo highlighted the public interest in the games and potential venues, which would need a lot of work. Mr Humphrey listed some past medallists and highlighted recent progressive meetings that have taken place on future opportunities. He also mentioned rugby, hockey and representation issues. Mr McMullan outlined commitments from Sport NI and the sports lottery issues, including funding. Mr McCausland highlighted the Northern Ireland brand and the showcasing opportunity that the country has on these occasions. He also mentioned additional participation in rugby and hockey. Mr Bradley said that sport was a unifying force. Mr Basil McCrea, whilst indicating that we were deluding ourselves, highlighted some structural issues and the benefits of upping the ante in the process. The Minister then gave an account of the interaction with the Northern Ireland team; highlighted the success in boxing, without mentioning any investment for it; made a commitment to review performances along with

the governing bodies; and gave a commitment to the terms of the motion.

We look forward to the Minister putting some meat on the bones of any review at a later date. We thank everyone who made a contribution to the debate and commend the motion to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this Assembly recognises the tremendous achievement of the entire Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games team at the recent Glasgow games, in particular the boxing team; congratulates all those involved; and calls on the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to urgently reassess other sports that might be expected to excel in the 2018 Commonwealth Games and ensure the appropriate training, resources and facilities are in place to maximise our medal return in 2018.

Motion made:

*That the Assembly do now adjourn. —
[Mr Deputy Speaker.]*

Adjournment

Sporting Provision: Dungiven

Mr Deputy Speaker: The proposer of the topic shall have 15 minutes, and all other Members who wish to speak will have approximately seven minutes.

Mr Ó hOisín: Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. Tá mé breá sásta páirt a ghlacadh sa díospóireacht atrátha seo faoi ionad spóirt faoi dhíon agus áiseanna eile spóirt i nDún Geibhinn agus a cheantar. I am very pleased that my topic was accepted for debate, although that perhaps reflects the anger in the local community about the issue. We had a public meeting in August, and the anger was palpable, so I hope to address some of the outstanding issues that came from that.

First and foremost, I declare an interest as a sports club official, because of my community involvement and because I was part of the management committee of the Dungiven sports pavilion, which is one of the facilities that we are talking about.

Dungiven is rightly famous for its sporting achievements and the wide variety of sporting codes practised in the area, be it athletics, boxing, GAA, soccer, bowls, badminton, handball, tennis, ladies' football, camogie, angling, bocchia, squash, kick-boxing, golf, cycling and, believe it or not, we once had a cricket team as well.

I took exception to what Basil McCrea said about people riding on the coat-tails of some of our better-known sportspeople. Some of them, particularly some of the local ones, cut their teeth in amateur sports, where it was the efforts of volunteers to create the facilities that took them to sporting prowess in later life.

I think particularly of St Canice's ABC in Dungiven, which has had almost an embarrassment of champions down through the years. Probably the most famous is Paul McCloskey, who was Irish, British and European light welterweight champion before he challenged — unfortunately, unsuccessfully — for the WBA light welterweight title in 2012. Likewise, his colleague Eamonn O'Kane — he was not referred to by name earlier — led the Commonwealth team that went to India in 2010 and returned with, I think, five medals, including three gold.

We also had five all-Ireland winners from the parish of Dungiven on the 1993 team: Brian McGilligan, Richard Ferris, Kieran McKeever, Eugene Kelly and Joe Brolly. Three went on to receive all-star awards. Jim McGroarty played professional soccer for Stoke City in England. In the Paralympics, Denis McMacken was the bowls gold medallist and world Paralympic champion. We also have a double amputee, Ryan O'Connor, a great young sportsman, and I want to touch on what he has done later. Of course, we have Special Olympians who competed for Ireland, such as Damien Murphy in swimming and bowls.

The current council facilities in the area are far from ideal. The council owns one pitch, which for much of the season is swamped. It has no floodlights, and the changing

facilities are a converted shipping container. Recent building surveys of the sports pavilion building have shown that it is not fit for purpose. It was built in 1984 and is probably due for demolition and replacement shortly. Indeed, one recent survey showed such a deterioration that the showers, which have not been in use for some time, are a potential source of legionella.

The roof is leaking, the floor is lifting, and the entire building is not disability-accessible. Ryan O'Connor, one of our elite Paralympian athletes, cannot even use the sports pavilion.

Estimates are that it would require £1 million to rectify this. In fairness to the council, it had identified the requirement for new facilities some time ago. With that in mind, Limavady Borough Council commenced work on the delivery of replacement facilities, including the potential purchase of additional land adjacent to the existing buildings. A timeline was rolled out for delivery, including the consultation, which had over 200 people in attendance, including 70 clubs, organisations and individuals. An economic appraisal began this year, and a bid was made to DCAL for £2.5 million. That was agreed and accepted by the statutory transition committee.

In May, the Department of the Environment deemed that projects over £250,000 would need shadow council approval. That happened when the council was on the cusp of appointing a design team. We then had the elections, and, at its July meeting, the Causeway Coast and Glens super-council delayed the project for a one-month moratorium. There was a suggestion of an audit of Causeway Coast and Glens council facilities, including the Dungiven project.

Last week, an all-party group visited Dungiven and the Limavady borough and was shocked at the provision of facilities. There was a question mark over the costings of the entire project, but, given the commitments under the Programme for Government, the framework document and some newspaper and media speculation about the costings being up to £7 million, I am not sure how they could have come to such a conclusion, given that, at no point, had a design team been appointed. The costings of the design team are much less than that.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the Member for giving way. How did DCAL decide to give £2.2 million to a project that has not been costed?

Mr Ó hOisín: In answer to the question from the Member opposite, I think that the bid came from the council. Obviously, the overall spend will be more than £2.5 million, but what I am saying is that the figure of £7 million may or may not prove practical. It may — indeed, it should — come in at a lot less than that.

We also have to consider that it is a capital spend over 25 or 30 years. I know that, during my time in council — I am sure that George Robinson will remember this as well — when we delivered the Roe Valley Arts and Cultural Centre for £4 million, that worked out at an increase of about 28p a year to our ratepayers over that time. We also delivered the Scroggy Road 3G pitch for £650,000, which was fully funded. This is all part of an ongoing project that we have been trying to deliver. Unfortunately, some people voted against that. Indeed, some of the people who voted against it do not leave the place now and are very pleased with it, but that is enough about that.

There is some talk of legal challenges, which may happen, but I can assure Members that there is huge local anger because of the lack of provision. We should not involve ourselves in zero-sum politics, because equality delayed is equality denied. I believe that it is totally unreasonable —

Mr Campbell: Will the Member give way?

Mr Ó hOisín: Yes, go ahead.

Mr Campbell: The Member says that there is a lot of anger. If there have been campaigns for sporting provision, one can understand that people want them to be delivered, but is the anger directed against an audit of provision per se to try to ensure equitable treatment across the new council, or is the anger directed in some other way?

Mr Ó hOisín: I think that the anger is directed at the dereliction, which has existed for historical reasons, and the fact that we do not have the facilities that we deserve and require. It is unreasonable for the Causeway Coast and Glens council to refuse to allow Limavady Borough Council to appoint a design team. After all, this is not the issuing of a contract; it is costings —

Mr Swann: Will the Member give way?

Mr Ó hOisín: Yes, go ahead.

Mr Swann: I am looking for a point of information on the appointment of a design team. If there is the potential for a legal challenge — I think that Sean McGlinchey, a Sinn Féin councillor, mooted that legal challenge — would that delay the appointment of a design team in any way?

5.15 pm

Mr Ó hOisín: I am not sure that I got the meaning of the Member's question. I think that the legal challenge might be on disability access, for a start. or it might be on overall sporting provision. That is where the legal challenge will probably come from.

There is also the aspect of the interdependence of funding for the Rugby Avenue project in Coleraine, so I appeal for all-party unity on the delivery of all those projects for all the people of the new council area. I do not want to see any repeat of the deliberate dereliction of responsibility for the provision of sporting and community facilities. It has not been a very auspicious start for the new council, but I hope that it is not beyond redemption. I welcome the Minister's commitment to all the projects. There is a workshop next Wednesday, 8 October, and we encourage our council colleagues to attend and do as the Minister said, in her reply to an oral question from me on 16 September:

"I imagine that that position should be, and will be, sorted out with local representatives in the new council configuration and, indeed, with officials that are there. When I made my investment to Coleraine Borough Council, I was very clear that it was part of a north-west legacy plan. Maybe the officials there, or even the elected reps, did not fully understand the implications and the import of that. I urge all local representatives, along with officials from both council areas, to come together to try to get the matter resolved, because proper sporting facilities are required in the Dungiven area." — [Official Report, Bound Volume 97, p138, col 1].

I hope that other Members concur.

Mr Campbell: As I said to the proposer of the Adjournment debate in my intervention, it is difficult to establish where the anger is directed. I drive past an exhibition of it every day I pass through the town of Dungiven, where a huge banner says, "Dungiven says Yes, but the Causeway Coast and Glens Super Council says No". Of course, there have been a number of very unfortunate comments made by a Sinn Féin councillor, amongst others. They were referred to by Mr Swann. That councillor indicated that, in his view, this was a sectarian decision. I noticed that in the 10 minutes and 30 seconds that Mr Ó hOisín took to propose the debate he did not, on any occasion, mention the S-word. I just wonder whether Sinn Féin has had a rethink. I hope they have, and if so I would welcome it, because I fail to see how trying to establish an audit of sporting provision across the new council area — to establish what is required, where it is required and the best way to deliver it — could be regarded as a sectarian decision. The Member wants to intervene.

Mr Ó hOisín: I thank the Member for giving way. The change of mind perhaps happened when part of that audit was carried out. A visit was made to the facilities in Dungiven and people actually saw the state of the facilities. So, there have certainly been changes of mind.

Mr Campbell: I am not much clearer now on whether there has been a change of mind on the use of the S-word. I thought that I was giving way for the Member to establish that, but I am afraid that he went off on a tangent.

The bottom line here is that every public representative wants to ensure that there is sporting provision across his or her constituency. As regards this Adjournment debate, that applies across East Londonderry. No one wants to see any sporting discipline, group of people, village or town denied sporting facilities. One would imagine that the audit will show what has been provided and where it has been provided. Hopefully, it will show that there are other locations that equally need provision. I hope that, at the conclusion of the debate, there will be consensus that sporting provision should be made across the district, irrespective of who the people are, as has been the case in the past. I noted what Mr Ó hOisín said in relation to my intervention about where the anger is directed.

You could conclude from his response that the anger of local people in Dungiven was directed against what is a nationalist council in Limavady for not providing what it is they are now trying to get through the new super-council. I was seeking to establish where the anger was directed. Was it at the decision to have an audit? It does not appear to be. Yet, he said that it was directed at those whose delivery previously had been some sort of historical underachievement. Of course, the people who deliver in local government are Limavady Borough Council. The largest party in Limavady Borough Council is Sinn Féin. Therefore, I do not know whether we have today a Sinn Féin MLA criticising Sinn Féin councillors for not providing sporting provision in Dungiven, but that is what it sounds like.

Hopefully, we can get to an end where we do have that consensus and there is a determination to reach a position across the constituency and the Causeway Coast and Glens District Council area where that audit is carried out and completed and that the end result of that is equality of provision right across the council area for everyone irrespective of their religious or political belief.

Mr Dallat: I live in the neighbouring council area. I have a lot of sympathy for the people of Dungiven who apparently did not get the nod to go ahead with the design exercise. That is all that it was. Cathal Ó hOisín, in his introduction, mentioned all those famous people in Dungiven. I just want to remind him that we have Hannah Shields, who climbed Everest, and Martin O'Neill, who, of course, needs no explanation to anyone. Every community is proud of their people, particularly their young people, and they want to see the best provision for them. In recent times, because of health issues and so on, sport and such activities have become lifelong. The centre in Dungiven certainly did that.

I know that all of us could regret the past. I spent 33 years in Coleraine Borough Council. I hope that I do not cause offence by saying that it was unionist dominated. Every inch had to be fought for. There were no gifts.

Mr Campbell: You were the mayor.

Mr Dallat: I picked up Gregory Campbell saying that I was the mayor. The council came into being in 1973. It is finishing next year. In that span, there has been one nationalist mayor.

Mr Campbell: How many councillors were there?

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Dallat: I worried about Limavady and Dungiven in particular when the three models were mentioned; the seven-, 11- and 15-council models. I realised that if the seven- or 11-council model was chosen, a nationalist-controlled council was going into a completely new environment. I pleaded with Alex Attwood to support the 15-council model. At the Executive meeting — I hate to say this, but it is true — Martin McGuinness, after 10 minutes of debate, forced a vote, and we were left with the 11-council model. It means that actually only two councils switched — if we need to talk in those terms. They were Limavady Borough Council and Moyle District Council. Both happened to be in the new Causeway Coast and Glens District Council area. I was actually glad to hear Gregory say the name because apparently they cannot even agree on that. No; they cannot agree on that. The “Glens” part somehow causes problems to them and they need to get “Coleraine” into it.

With my 33 years' experience in Coleraine Borough Council, I would not wish that on anyone. Sporting facilities in Coleraine included 22 soccer pitches and no Gaelic games pitches. Only when legal action was threatened did that change. I can tell you that when the councils began to be a little more generous toward GAA clubs, it changed the whole atmosphere of the place. I am sure that the Minister would agree with me that sport is something that should bring people together. My God, it has in recent times. *[Inaudible.]*

Mr Deputy Speaker: All remarks must be made through the Chair, please.

Mr Dallat: I just find it impossible to accept that the same individuals who sat on Limavady Borough Council supported the project going to the design stage, and then, when they got in with their new cronies in Coleraine, they changed their minds. I would not call anybody a Judas — God forbid, I would never do that — but that is exactly what they did. They put one hand up to support the project in Limavady, and then the other one. You can say what you like, but that is what they did. That is an awfully bad start

for a new council, and it certainly did not do anything for the type of unity that we need across the new council area. I do not want to see the new council being a microcosm of what went before.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he think that the audit that the Causeway Coast and Glens District Council — I will say it as well, John; I have no problem with it — is carrying out is a good thing or a bad thing?

Mr Dallat: I am really grateful to my former colleague from Coleraine Borough Council. I have very fond memories of him sitting on the other side, barging across at me. You need to bear in mind that the shadow council started voting on single projects. Then, when it got down to the last three, which included the Dungiven project, it had a multiple vote. I know that I am being a suspicious person. Why do you think that happened? I will take your advice not to talk across the Floor, although it is very tempting to do it.

Adrian intervened there. Of course audits are very important, but this was not committing the new council to anything; it was only asking it to proceed to design stage. It was not being asked to pay any money; the money was already provided by the old council, which is going out of business next April.

Mr Campbell: I thank the Member for giving way. I thought that Mr McQuillan's question was fairly straightforward: whether Mr Dallat thought that the audit was a good thing or a bad thing. I posed that question to Mr Ó hOisín, but I did not get a response either. I thought that Mr Dallat might have responded about whether he thought that it was a good thing.

Mr Dallat: I would be very surprised if Mr Campbell did not think that his colleague on that Bench was talking an awful lot of sense, whether he was or not.

Audits are very important. Of course they are, but this was stopping a project that had already begun and that several years of planning had gone into. That is the difference. Why pick on it? Why pick on Dungiven? Was there something about that town that they did not like?

Mr McQuillan: Will the Member give way?

Mr Dallat: No. You have had your say, and I will have my couple of minutes of glory as well.

I want to conclude by saying to the ordinary people outside —

Mr Deputy Speaker: The Member should bring his remarks to a close.

Mr Dallat: — whether Protestant, Catholic or of no faith whatsoever, that this is not the way forward.

Mr Swann: First, I will explain to Members and the Minister why I am here today. It comes into the new Causeway Coast and Glens District Council area, which, as it will include Moyle and Ballymoney, will cover part of my constituency.

Mr Campbell: You can say it, too.

Mr Swann: I can say it, too. I have no shame nor embarrassment in saying it.

I think it was back in May when the Member for East Antrim Oliver McMullan brought an Adjournment debate about leisure facilities in Moyle. I thought that this would

be along the same lines. At that stage, unfortunately, the Environment Minister responded because somehow they had put that responsibility under Environment rather than DCAL, even though it was about sporting provision. We got round that debate anyway. One of the things that I realised between that debate and today's, and which I think is important in regard to the audit, was that the motion that Sinn Féin brought about the lack of sporting provision and facilities in Moyle and the glens was on the same basis as they are talking about the lack of sporting provision in Dungiven. I thought that that is where an audit of the entire Causeway Coast and Glens area would bring those two problems together. At that stage, by conducting that audit, which I think was proposed by my party colleague Councillor William McCandless, the entire sporting provision would be looked at.

When you look at some of the recommendations of Sport NI, there are some areas in the Causeway Coast and glens that are oversubscribed with pitches and facilities. We should look towards an equality —

5.30 pm

Mr Ó hOisín: I thank the Member for giving way. I want to refer to something that was said earlier. A number of the projects went through and were approved, so what was the problem with the remaining ones? What were the issues there? Did they have to be seen, especially when they came from the old councils and not the new council, and, as others alluded to, at no cost to the new council?

Mr Swann: I thank the Member for bringing that up. It also explains another reason why I am here today. It was not just Dungiven that was stopped. That should be made clear. It is not the victimisation of Dungiven that this debate should be focused on. The four projects that were stopped were Dungiven, Benone, the Riada playing fields and the Joey Dunlop centre in Ballymoney in my constituency, which comes under the Causeway Coast and Glens District Council. This is not about nationalists or unionists stopping one facility or another; it was about establishing an audit of a number of new councils coming together —

Mr Dallat: Will the Member spare me just a moment?

Mr Swann: Certainly.

Mr Dallat: One of the features of the Dungiven project was that the funding from various sources was time-limited. In fact, I think that it was limited to September. Refusing to allow it to go to design stage put the project in jeopardy.

Mr Swann: That is the point that I was trying to make to Mr Ó hOisín earlier. When it was put in jeopardy, do you start to talk about legal proceedings? As far as I am aware, the audit concludes this month. I will stand corrected if any Member in the House can inform me of anything different. The funding being in jeopardy is the big thing. I am glad that the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure is here because I think that the DCAL funding was part of it.

I do not think that anybody here opposes support for sport; Mr Ó hOisín will know that from our time in the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure. When it came to the provision of libraries in rural communities, he fought for Dungiven as much as I fought for Kells, and we fought for a similar cause at that stage. The provision of sport across the entire Causeway Coast and glens is where the audit

should be based and where we should be focusing for the ratepayers and the constituents in that area.

One thing that was highlighted — I know that Mr Campbell referred to the banner — I would almost take it personally that the decision by my council colleague was referred to as sectarian. If anybody here knows William McCandless, they will know that the man is far from sectarian. That is something that I want to clarify.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the Member for bringing the debate. I will give you a wee bit of background to the debate, but, before I start, I have to say that it tells you something about the debate today when we have Gregory Campbell calling for consensus and Mr Dallat and Mr Ó hOisín using the S-word. There is something powerfully wrong about that.

Mr Ó hOisín: On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. At no point was the S-word used in my supposition.

Mr McQuillan: It should not matter whether it is Catholic or Protestant; it is a sporting facility that we are talking about here. John Dallat is the guy who brought it into the conversation.

A feasibility study was conducted by Otium Leisure Consultancy on behalf of Limavady Borough Council in 2012. Proposals therein included three main elements: the refurbishment or development of Dungiven Sports Pavilion; the relocation of an indoor community sports facility to an alternative site; and the need for and development of an outdoor sports facility. The report was intended not to identify a preferred option for development but to put forward a range of solutions. Its basis included a consultation with the local sports club and community groups. It claimed that a consultation meeting was attended by 160 people representing 21 sports clubs and 23 community groups. Local sports clubs have a membership of 3,200, so it was not that well attended if you take that into consideration. Seven options were outlined, ranging in capital outlay from £1.95 million to £7.22 million. It said that a full economic appraisal was required to further test the options and identify the preferred solution. It went on to suggest observations in its conclusions. Those include the assessment of need — demand clearly demonstrates the need — for indoor sports and community facilities and outdoor sports facilities. That points to options that deliver indoor and outdoor facilities on one or separate sites. It also recommended that the site at Ballyquin Road/Main Street could be enhanced with the inclusion of the ground that has the PSNI station on it presently.

We move forward to this year and to the Causeway Coast and Glens District Council. A capital workshop held in Flowerfield on 16 July recommended that the new council would have a capital spend programme of £8.8 million. The £7.1 million version of the Dungiven scheme came before the new shadow council on 24 July — it has not been costed, but it is still £7.1 million; I do not know where that came from — at its second meeting, along with other capital schemes from across the legacy councils. It was decided that decisions on all capital projects should be suspended for one month to enable officers to have more time to present more complete information on existing leisure provision in the area, other pipeline projects of significance to the new council area, population densities, travel times, demand and the impact that such schemes would have on rates etc. It was implied that a significant DCAL grant would be lost if the decision to proceed to

the £250,000 design stage was not taken there and then. Our party felt that there was not enough information available to make an informed decision and that, on the face of it, spending £7 million to serve a population of 7,800 in Dungiven and district was disproportionate. There are modern leisure facilities in Limavady, Londonderry and Maghera, each 12 miles or less from Dungiven. Portstewart has a similar-sized population but has no council sporting leisure facilities, and we are not seeking to spend a similar sum on provision there.

Sinn Féin led calls for a special emergency meeting of Limavady Borough Council to discuss the situation — the meeting was held on 5 August — and of the Causeway council on 7 August. Ms Hickey endorsed the notice, giving Sinn Féin the eight names that it required to get the meeting called. It was agreed that decisions on all major capital projects not yet in contract should be deferred until October, giving the council officers time to put together a full appraisal of the current sport and leisure provision in the new council area and the impact of proposed projects on existing and other planned provision. The review would also examine population densities and travel times.

It should be noted that, when the decision to postpone making a commitment to the Dungiven scheme was taken, extension and improvement projects at the Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre were also postponed to allow the council to take a fully informed decision from objective and relevant information. This is good governance and a responsible attitude to ratepayers' money. It also caused some pain in our party grouping, as representatives from Ballymoney were keen to see the Joey Dunlop centre plan taken forward.

Mr Campbell: Will the Member give way?

Mr McQuillan: Yes.

Mr Campbell: The Member is outlining what Mr Swann outlined, which is that some of the other projects were also put on hold pending the audit. Is he aware of any campaigns or accusations or banners being put up at any of the other locations, all of which require sporting provision as well? I am not aware of that; perhaps the Member could outline it if he is aware of it.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the Member for his intervention. I do not know of any at all, so it is very odd that it is just Dungiven that has taken this stand.

The proposed scheme at Dungiven has not been refused; it is on hold pending completion of the sport and leisure facilities and services strategy development work for the new council area. The same type of work on leisure and sports projects in the Ballymoney and Coleraine areas is similarly on hold. It is not about Catholics and Protestants; it is about all the sporting facilities. There is nothing sectarian about it at all.

Mr Ó hOisín: I thank the Member for giving way. Does he realise that the Dungiven project was not only attracting moneys from a different source — namely DCAL, through the City of Culture legacy moneys — but had money set aside in Limavady Borough Council for the same projects? It was much further advanced than many of the other projects, including some of those that received approval.

Mr McQuillan: I thank the Member for that, but I am not sure what projects received the go-ahead on that night. I am talking about the three main projects, the three that will take up the most spending. We also have to be

mindful of areas such as Moyle, which has no sport and leisure facilities at all. They will be looking for help to build something there. I also know that Loughgiel GAA is looking to the Causeway council to help it to develop its ground.

As I said, the total capital spend for the Causeway council is £8.8 million. If it spends £7.2 million on the Dungiven project, the rest of the region will lose out. There is no doubt in my mind or the mind of anybody else who has visited the site that Dungiven needs some sort of facility, but it is about getting agreement on the facility that is required.

Mr G Robinson: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to speak in the debate. First, Dungiven has leisure facilities, and I will not argue that some facilities need to be updated. In March 2013, when I was a member of Limavady Borough Council, I opposed such large expenditure on a replacement facility in Dungiven. If that project had gone through, it would have cost ratepayers in the Limavady area a substantial rates hike. Secondly, I will tell the Assembly of some facility provision that exists within a four-mile radius of Dungiven. There are the Gortnahey GAA pitches; the Burnfoot pitches; the Curragh Road football pitches; the Curragh Road play facilities; St Canice GAC in Dungiven town; the Drumrane Road GAC pitch; the O'Brien's state-of-the-art GAC facilities and council-provided play area; St Mary's Banagher GAC in Feeny, which has just received planning permission for an extension; and the main leisure centre in Dungiven town, to name but a few. Does that sound like an area — Dungiven and its hinterlands — in which there is a lack of sports facility provision for a population of approximately 3,000?

The so-called sectarian decision, as it was referred to by a Sinn Féin councillor, to put on hold the redevelopment of a new replacement facility at a cost of approximately £7.2 million to ratepayers was not, in fact, sectarian but one of a series of projects deferred by the newly elected Causeway Coast and Glens District Council owing to capital costs. Those also included projects in Ballymoney and Coleraine that have been deferred until October of this year. How that project was deemed sectarian completely baffles me.

I believe that sport offers great benefits for the population, and facilities are required to ensure maximum engagement. However, those facilities cannot be built regardless of cost, especially when there is an economic crisis created by the party of the Member who proposed the topic and the SDLP. Perhaps the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure will state where the proposed grant aid will come from, as her budget will undoubtedly be cut as a result of the current political posturing. If there is no grant aid, the likelihood of the project reaching fruition will diminish. My concern is that, although other suitable options for the redevelopment of Dungiven leisure centre were presented, the most expensive option was pushed through by a nationalist-controlled council with little thought of the economic consequences to the local ratepayers.

I believe that a workable and sensible accommodation on the size and price of the project can eventually be reached when other overall projects throughout the new Causeway Coast and Glens District Council area are appraised. Let Sinn Féin and the SDLP be positive for once and bring the matter to a conclusion by behaving responsibly and

by reaching consensus for an area that, in my opinion, is reasonably well catered for with sports facilities.

From a constituency point of view, I have no problem with facilities in any part of the Limavady borough area, but, in the present economic climate, with so many constituents unemployed, the new council has a massive task and needs to be prudent when making decisions on the whole area's needs, economic and sporting. The facilities that I mentioned are just the facilities in the Dungiven area.

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Gabhaim buíochas le Cathal Ó hOisín as an díospóireacht. I thank Cathal Ó hOisín for bringing forward the Adjournment debate to the House and the five other Members who contributed to the debate. All the contributors spoke about the need for facilities in the new council area. I will bank that, because we need to move forward. I appreciate the fact that Robin Swann, through representing other aspects of the council, contributed to the debate, but, for me, this is primarily around the capital investment legacy of the City of Culture. I might not go into detail about projects in his constituency, but that is not to say that I am oblivious or agnostic about them, because I am not.

Mr Swann: Will the Minister give way?

Ms Ní Chuilín: Certainly.

5.45 pm

Mr Swann: I think that Mr Ó hOisín said that this was connected to the Coleraine project. Just for clarity, what is the timeline on the funding for the legacy projects?

Ms Ní Chuilín: I imagine that the capital needs arising from the City of Culture in the city of Derry and the surrounding areas of Coleraine, Limavady, Dungiven and Strabane will not only come to the end of this mandate but, potentially, go into the next. Given that money is not flush, we may need to prudently organise and plan around having those facilities fulfilled if we can.

Mr McQuillan: Thank you, Minister, for giving way. Do you not agree that the Causeway Coast and Glens council is doing that? It is being prudent by asking for this audit and being careful.

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am trying to be generous, and I hope that that is the case. Coming out of this debate, very soon, I will ask Limavady and Coleraine councils and the Causeway Coast and Glens shadow council to come together for a meeting with me and my officials and their officials and elected representatives. I think that we need to assure each other that we are serious about sports provision regardless of where it comes from. It needs to be on the basis of need and not creed. So, if we are all agreed on that, that is a good way forward. I could lift a whole pile of stuff on sports provision in each of the constituencies that some of the sporting codes have brought themselves without the help of Sport NI or the lottery. That is not a good thing, but the fact is that, despite what was said about the population there, the population is growing. We have all been involved in debates about sporting provision, and we had one recently about the Commonwealth Games and even a velodrome. There is a wee bit of 'Field of Dreams' here: build it and they will come. You have to inspire people to become physically active, and you have

to provide access to participation for them. If we can agree that that is a good way forward, we need to move forward.

People are suspicious about labels, and, if they feel that someone is potentially using bureaucracy to score points or potentially to be sectarian or to exclude, even if they are proved wrong, no one has the right to say that they have no right to say that even if they disagree. So, people have a right. Equally, I have a right to say to John Dallat, who I have huge respect for, without being patronising, that the Executive meeting that John described that Alex Attwood was at is not the same one that I was at. I will say no more than that.

The issue is that we have an opportunity. I want to go to my colleagues in the Executive as well, because it will involve working with my colleague Mark Durkan. I want to take the opportunity to wish him and Anne all the best on the birth of their baby daughter. Comhghairdeas daoibh. I want to talk to and work with Mark on planning what we need to do. I want to work with Mervyn Storey now in DSD, and, indeed, I want to work with other Departments. The bulk of this money will, hopefully, come from DCAL, with Executive colleague support.

Let us be honest: in that whole constituency over decades, there has not been the investment that it was entitled to. There has not been, and my constituency and other constituencies can also claim that. By claiming it, we throw it out and walk away. We need to do something with it. With the councils coming together, I do think that we have an opportunity to provide sport and physical activities, but we need to look at this with a can-do attitude. Two and a half million pounds is no mean feat, and £1.5 million in Coleraine is no mean feat. We are looking at Strabane, Derry and the outskirts in-between. I went and visited cricket facilities in Magheramason and other areas. I believe that the work that is done through sports is fantastic and needs support, but I do not think that our constituents need us coming here with big bust out crying faces and scoring political points. OK, stuff happened, and we need to move forward. In moving forward, the test for us all is this: what can we do?

I have visited Coleraine, Dungiven, Limavady and many areas in the constituency. There is a need for sporting facilities. How much it will cost and what those needs are for this mandate and future mandates is something that we need to work through, but, as sure as the day is long, there will be sporting facilities in those constituencies. Nobody is getting dragged to the table, but we can come with a collegiate approach from officials in the council areas, elected representatives and DCAL officials. We will have a meeting and work out what we need to do, where we need to go and how, collectively, we can provide constituents in the north-west with sporting facilities that are fit for purpose. The population in the area is growing, and doing that will provide a good stamp. It will be a stamp of value showing that there has been investment, and I believe that it will not only provide local employment, in the construction and post-construction phases, but will hopefully give people an opportunity to be healthier. It will provide a further opportunity for people, in that it has been proven that investment attracts more investment.

I welcome the debate, but, for me, the challenge is what we do next, and I am looking forward to working with you to achieve those facilities in the north-west.

Adjourned at 5.51 pm.

Written Ministerial Statements

The content of these written ministerial statements is as received at the time from the Ministers. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.

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Education

Regulation of the Teaching Profession

Published at 10.00 am on Tuesday 12 August 2014

Mr John O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): I wish to make a statement to Members about an issue that has arisen in respect of the regulation of the teaching profession in the North. I have been advised that the Department has repealed its power to remove a teacher's eligibility to teach. The power, which was contained in the Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (the 1986 Order), was repealed in 2009 without replacement provisions having been put in place. I want to apologise to the House and the wider public for this issue which has recently come to light.

When the General Teaching Council was established in 2002, it was intended that it would assume responsibility for the regulation of teachers. It was also intended that the Department's existing teacher eligibility powers would be repealed and provision was made for this in the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (the 1998 Order). The transfer of this function to the Council did not take place within the timeframe originally envisaged. However, the Department is now taking this work forward in the proposed General Teaching Council Bill.

In 2009 the Department made a Commencement Order which enacted the repeal of the Department's powers under the 1986 Order. However, a breakdown in communication within the Department resulted in a lack of wider awareness of the implications in respect of teacher regulation. This has resulted in a gap in the powers to regulate teachers since 2009 which was not identified nor addressed.

The current legislative position is that teachers cannot have their eligibility to teach removed or restricted by the Department on the grounds of misconduct. In addition the Department cannot obtain or share information with employers relating to individual cases. However, since 2009 the Department continued to exercise its powers under the 1986 Order in a very small number of cases.

I want to reassure Members that the gap in provision does not affect an employer's ability to dismiss a teacher for gross misconduct. More importantly, separate legislation already exists for the barring from teaching of persons deemed unsuitable to work with children and young people.

When informed, I immediately asked officials to provide me with options to resolve the issue quickly and effectively. Therefore to provide assurance to this House, parents and the wider public, I propose introducing regulations using the limited powers available under the 1998 Order. This will enable me to put in place procedures for the General Teaching Council to investigate and adjudicate on cases of teacher professional misconduct. The regulations would provide the Council with the power to remove teachers from the register following an investigation. This will complement the powers already available to other statutory authorities and employers. I will also address the longer term regulation of the teaching workforce more comprehensively in primary legislation.

I hope that all Members will agree that, while the issue is a serious one and extremely regrettable, it is right to ensure that the Department has the necessary legislation in place to provide additional safeguards for the young people in our schools.

Environment

Planning Policy Statement 15 — Planning & Flood Risk

Published at 12.30 pm on Tuesday 23 September 2014

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): I am pleased to inform Assembly members that the Executive, at its meeting on 9 September 2014, agreed to the publication of Revised Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 15, titled 'Planning and Flood risk', which I am now issuing in final form.

Revised PPS 15 sets out the Department's planning policies to minimise flood risk to people, property and the environment. Its primary aim is "to prevent future development that may be at risk from flooding or that may increase the risk of flooding elsewhere".

In June 2006, when PPS 15 was first issued, a commitment was given to review this important policy document within 5 years of its publication. The purpose of this commitment was to make sure planning policy on flood risk remains relevant and up to date taking into account evolving information on climate change as well as new evidence and experience of implementing flood risk policy.

Since 2006, there have been a number of important changes in the policy context that have underpinned this review of existing planning policy on flood risk. The European Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood risks (the Floods Directive) came into force in November 2007 and was transposed into local legislation in 2009. This has led to significant improvements in regard to the quantity and quality of flood risk information now available through the ongoing implementation of the EU Floods Directive in Northern Ireland by DARD, as the competent authority.

Other significant developments include ongoing inter-departmental work aimed at promoting the use of sustainable drainage systems within Northern Ireland. Furthermore, a Reservoirs Bill is due to be enacted next year that will set out provisions for the management of this new source of flood risk highlighted by the Floods Directive.

The Review of this PPS is, therefore, well-timed and I am pleased to be issuing it today in final form.

The revised document contains 5 operational policies. Four of these policies, FLD 1 to FLD4 are carried forward from the existing PPS 15. While the overall thrust of the policies remains the same, some amendments have been made to provide greater clarity or to take account of current best practice. There is one new policy, FLD 5, which sets out planning policy for development in proximity to reservoirs. The revised PPS continues the core PPS 15 policy in setting out a presumption against development in flood plains. The revised PPS also enhances public awareness of flood risk and encourages preparedness through referring to the flood risk information now available and providing new and updated guidance. This includes a review of the guidance on sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and new guidance on flood proofing of buildings.

In terms of the more detailed changes to the existing policies some will introduce additional constraint to development in flood risk areas and others will introduce

additional flexibility where this is proportionate and the flood risks can be adequately mitigated and managed.

The key changes to the existing policies that will introduce additional constraints to development in flood risk areas, include:

- Within defended areas of the flood plain (ie those areas protected by adequate flood defences), the allowance for development of previously developed land is now expressly curtailed in regard to specific types of development because of the residual flood risk. Thus, there is now a stronger presumption against development which involves essential infrastructure, storage of hazardous substances, bespoke accommodation for vulnerable groups (eg residential / nursing homes) and for any development located close to the flood defences;
- Within undefended areas of the flood plain, the existing 'exception' allowing for the use of land for sport and outdoor recreation or amenity space is now amended so as to exclude playgrounds for children, thereby improving safety for this vulnerable group;
- Within undefended areas of the flood plain, the existing 'exception' allowing for the use of land for seasonal occupation by touring caravans and / or camp sites is now removed as an 'exception'. This takes account of changing weather patterns and the vulnerable nature of this form of development.
- Increased protection of flood defence and drainage infrastructure (including watercourses) against development likely to impede operational effectiveness;
- Strengthening of the presumption against the artificial modification of watercourses, for example through culverting.

In addition, a new policy is now introduced that will carefully manage new or replacement development in proximity to reservoirs. This will apply to the potential flood inundation areas of reservoirs above a threshold size of 10000 cubic metres. The policy will require the developer to provide assurance about reservoir safety before planning permission will be granted. In addition, the policy will preclude certain types of development considered inappropriate in these areas (eg bespoke accommodation for vulnerable groups and essential infrastructure) and also any development in which there is a risk of exposure to deep or fast flowing flood water (eg in areas close to the reservoir impoundment).

Changes that will introduce additional flexibility for development in flood risk areas include:

- In addition to the existing provision for consideration of development proposals in the flood plain which are of overriding regional importance, the revised PPS also makes provision for proposals of overriding sub-regional economic importance to be considered, subject to satisfactory Flood Risk Assessment;
- Some changes in regard to the prescribed 'Exceptions' to the policy allow additional flexibility for development in flood plains, subject to meeting the policy criteria and satisfactory Flood Risk Assessment. These are:
 1. A new 'exception' allowing for new development in settlements in the undefended coastal flood

plain (eg in areas such as Titanic Quarter in Belfast), provided that the building(s) is elevated to an appropriate level above the flood plain and subject to a number of other policy caveats to ensure safe and sustainable forms of development;

2. An amendment to the existing 'exception' for development within the undefended flood plain where such a location is essential for operational reasons; to allow expressly for agricultural development, where the farm unit is located wholly or largely within the flood plain and alternative suitable sites elsewhere are not available.
- A clearer presumption in favour of development in areas outside flood plains that may be susceptible to surface water flooding. The new policy permits development subject to a satisfactory Drainage Assessment (where this is required), and otherwise, where there is no evidence of a history of surface water flooding;

While flooding is a natural phenomenon that cannot be entirely eliminated, we in government need to do all we can to address this recurring problem which can have devastating impacts on the individuals and communities affected. I believe it is important to ensure that the planning system continues to manage new development so as to further reduce the risk of flooding to people and property.

I am delighted that there is much joined-up work in tackling flooding currently being progressed. Revised PPS 15 is one important example of this. I would like to record my thanks to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whose officials from DARD Rivers Agency have made an invaluable contribution to the review of the existing policy and in helping to bring forward this revised policy document.

My Executive colleagues have welcomed Revised PPS 15. I now commend it to you.

Copies of this written statement have been placed in Assembly Member's pigeon holes. A copy of Revised PPS15 is available to view or download from the Departmental website www.planningni.gov.uk/pps15revised

Finance and Personnel

2013-14 Provisional Outturn/2014-15 June Monitoring Round

Published on Thursday 31 July 2014.

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):

The purpose of this written statement is to inform the Assembly of the outcome of the Executive's deliberations on Provisional Outturn for the 2013-14 financial year and the June 2014-15 in-year position. I am doing this by written statement due to the Assembly currently being in recess.

Before moving into the detail of these two issues, it is critical to put on record that I remain gravely concerned about the current financial environment.

Normally, June Monitoring Rounds are benign events whereby the Finance Minister announces how much has been carried over from the previous financial year and, added to the reduced requirements received, the Executive make a number of allocations.

That is not the case this year. Unfortunately this Monitoring Round signals the radical change in the public expenditure environment that I have been warning about for some time. Whilst this pressure on public finances is due to a range of factors, the situation is not assisted by the ideological intransigence displayed by some parties that is going to have serious consequences for every single person within Northern Ireland.

I have, for many months now, been registering my concerns about the need to address welfare reform locally, move forward with the legislation and thereby avoid increasing financial penalties. Instead, dogma and political opportunism have prevailed and this will undoubtedly impact on public services here over the rest of this financial year and beyond.

Today I find myself having to announce immediate in-year budget cuts for all departments, excluding health and education. These cuts will see spend in departments like Regional Development, Justice, and Enterprise, Trade and Investment immediately decreasing by 2.1 per cent. That is only the start with further cuts to be processed in the forthcoming October Monitoring Round. This means less money to create jobs, police our streets and create safer roads.

The local economy is now showing growth and recovery and I am very keen that we as an Executive do everything we can to support our private sector in expanding, competing globally and creating jobs. The fact that the public expenditure position has needlessly been put in jeopardy is all the more frustrating as it inhibits the Executive's ability to support growth in the local economy.

I will expand on the in-year position and our economy later but will first set out the outturn position for last year.

2013-14 Provisional Outturn

The Provisional Outturn outcome is critically important for the Executive and this Assembly. Not only does it provide a strong indication of departmental budget management performance during the last financial year, it also determines the amount of resources that the Executive can

plan to carry forward through the Devolved Administration Budget Exchange Scheme.

This scheme allows the Executive to carry forward end of year underspends up to certain limits. For 2013-14 these limits amount to £51.1 million in terms of non-ringfenced Resource DEL and £12.5 million in respect of Capital DEL. Both these limits exclude the Department of Justice (DOJ), which is subject to separate end of year arrangements. Members should note that any underspends recorded above these amounts would be lost to the Executive.

Before detailing the Budget Exchange carry forward, it is necessary to highlight the individual departmental position. As usual the Executive's focus was on the non-ringfenced Resource DEL, which will be referred to as Resource DEL for simplicity hereafter. The non-cash ringfenced Resource DEL element is handled separately since this is strictly controlled by HM Treasury and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Departmental Outcome

The departments registered total underspends of £29.7 million in terms of Resource DEL and £34.8 million in respect Capital DEL. This is detailed in the tables attached to this Statement.

In terms of Resource expenditure, DHSSPS exceeded its Control Total by £13.1 million. This was, in my view, due to poor budget management within the department. The DHSSPS had more than three years since the Budget for 2014-15 was set to ensure it could live within its budget and in that context it was hugely disappointing that it then registered such as significant overspend. Fortunately underspend across other departments was sufficient to ensure that the Executive remained within its HM Treasury Control Total.

In terms of Capital underspends, DHSSPS reported an underspend of £10.2 million, which was due to slippage on Banbridge and Ballymena Health and Care Centre projects and extension to the shelf-life of some vaccines. Again, the budget management displayed by DHSSPS was extremely disappointing.

It should also be noted that the DETI Capital underspend includes £5.7 million relating to the Super Connected Cities scheme and can be carried forward into 2014-15 outside of the Budget Exchange Scheme.

Budget Exchange Scheme

The Budget Exchange Scheme carry forward is determined at the Northern Ireland Block level and excludes a number of elements, including the UK wide Super Connected Cities funding and the Department of Justice. Adjusting for these items reduced the total underspend to £19.4 million in terms of Resource DEL and £14.7 million in respect of Capital DEL. This corresponds to just 0.2 per cent and 1.4 per cent for Resource DEL and Capital DEL respectively.

It is also necessary to adjust for a number of 'Centre' items, which on the Capital side included a downward adjustment of £4.1 million to our RRI borrowing. This means that the Executive can now plan to carry forward £10.9 million of Capital DEL into 2014-15.

On the Resource side there were four such 'Centre' adjustments. The Regional Rate Provisional Outturn outcome was £0.7 million higher than forecast at January monitoring. There was also a £24.8 million overcommitment following the January Monitoring Round. The Executive also paid out £0.1 million less in RRI interest payments than forecast. Finally, the Executive set aside £15.0 million in January Monitoring to meet the estimated Welfare Reform penalty. However this adjustment was actioned by HM Treasury in the 2014-15 year and as a consequence this funding was carried forward from 2013-14. The impact of all of these issues is that the Executive can now plan to carry forward £10.4 million of Resource DEL into 2014-15.

Department of Justice

As already indicated, DOJ has separate End of Year Flexibility arrangements covering this Spending Review period. Under these arrangements DOJ can carry forward an unlimited amount of resources from one year to the next. However, any funding carried forward must first be used to address additional security pressures, although with certain exceptions applying in each particular year. The amounts to be carried forward will be agreed with HM Treasury ahead of the UK Supplementary Estimates later in the year. Members will note that this is the final year of the separate arrangement for DOJ.

Provisional Outturn Conclusion

Despite some poor budget management in one particular department, it is crucial to note that no money was surrendered to HM Treasury.

2014-15 JUNE MONITORING

I will now turn to the 2014 in year position, which was influenced by a range of issues and all of these will be covered next.

'Centre' Items

The starting point for this monitoring round is the overcommitment position, which resulted from the Capital Reallocation exercise agreed by the Executive last year. This led to a starting overcommitment of £76.7 million on the Resource side and £51.6 million on the Capital side.

There were a number of 'Centre' items, which along with the starting overcommitment and the Reduced Requirements surrendered by departments, impacted on the overall financial position in this monitoring round. These 'Centre' items are detailed next.

The Chancellor's 2013 Autumn Statement and 2014 UK Budget had implications for our budget position in this financial year. The combined impact was an increase of £53.2 million on Resource DEL and £15.0 million on Capital Investment.

As already highlighted the Executive can now plan to carry forward £10.4 million Resource DEL and £10.9 million Capital DEL from 2013-14 under the Budget Exchange Scheme. However, as part of the 2014-15 Capital reallocation exercise undertaken last year, the Executive included an assumption that £10.0 million of Capital DEL would be carried forward from 2013-14 under the Budget Exchange Scheme. As a consequence only £0.9 million

Capital DEL could be made available for reallocation in this monitoring round.

The Executive previously agreed that in 2014-15 the savings of £5.2 million arising from changes to the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme should be returned to the 'Centre' to offset the £4.6 million pressure relating to Student fees. The residual balance of £0.6 million Resource DEL was available for reallocation.

The Executive previously set aside £5.0 million in 2014-15 to meet the cost associated with the devolution from Westminster of powers enabling the Northern Ireland Assembly to set the rate of Air Passenger Duty on long-haul flights. HM Treasury has now advised that the actual cost to Northern Ireland in this year will be £2.1 million. As a consequence £2.9 million Resource DEL was released for reallocation in this monitoring round.

There was also an additional £9.5 million Resource funding available due to lower RRI interest payment liabilities than anticipated when the Executive's four year Budget was first agreed. This was primarily due to ongoing low interest rates charged by the National Loans Fund and the fact that the Executive borrowed some £45 million less in 2012-13 than originally planned as part of the flexibility negotiated in respect of the A5 road scheme.

HM Treasury has also now commenced the process of reducing the Executive's Resource DEL budget as a consequence of not implementing welfare reform. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury has imposed reductions to the Executive's Resource DEL of £13.0 million in 2013-14 and £87.0 million in 2014-15. The £13.0 million penalty has already been removed from the Executive's 2014-15 Resource DEL Control Total. Of course, the Resource DEL carried forward from 2013-14 under the Budget Exchange Scheme is inclusive of the £15.0 million set aside by the Executive for this purpose, which offsets the budgetary impact in 2014-15.

The latest Regional Rate forecast suggests that income in this financial year is now projected to be £5.0 million below the level included in the budget position, which then created a £5.0 million Resource DEL pressure.

There were also a number of smaller 'centre' pressures, including £0.4 million for statutory salaries, £0.2 million for the Coastal Communities Fund and £0.3 million for the Carrier Bag Levy.

In total, taking into account all of these items resulted in an overcommitment of £19.0 million in terms of Resource expenditure and £35.7 million on Capital investment. This was before departmental reduced requirements were factored in.

Reduced Requirements

Departments declared Reduced Requirements in this monitoring round of £5.3 million resource expenditure and £224.0 million capital investment. Full details are provided in the tables accompanying this Statement. The Executive previously anticipated £132.8 million of capital reduced requirements in the review of 2014-15 capital budgets carried out last year, leaving £91.2 million available for reallocation in this round.

Internal Reallocations

It is good practice that departments seek to manage any emerging pressures within their existing allocations before bringing forward bids for additional allocations. The public expenditure control framework stipulates that internal departmental movements across Spending Areas in excess of the de minimis threshold require the Executive's approval. Details of the internal reallocations approved in this round are detailed in the tables accompanying this statement.

Reclassifications

Departments may also, for a number of reasons, seek to reclassify expenditure from Resource to Capital or vice versa. All such reclassifications need Executive approval and these are also shown in the tables accompanying this Statement.

Departments may also, subject to DFP approval, seek to move budget between the ringfenced and non-ringfenced Resource DEL categories. The impact of these moves is shown in the table detailing the ringfenced Resource DEL position.

Welfare Reform

I have, for some considerable time now, been alerting the Assembly to the dire financial consequences of inaction and delay on addressing welfare reform roll-out. As mentioned earlier, the first penalty instalment for 2013-14 has already been processed by HM Treasury.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, in his 31 March 2014 letter to me, indicated that the penalty for this financial year would be £87.0 million rising to £114.0 million next year. The longer we delay in implementing welfare reform, the greater will be the damage that we impose on public services here. I will shortly detail the enormous pressures confronting our key public services. Yet, in spite of these, some in the Executive continue to countenance inaction that wastes £87.0 million. Indeed the damage related to non-delivery of welfare reform will increase dramatically in the coming months. I am at a loss to justify to the public the possible loss of 1,400 social security related posts in Belfast and Londonderry or the need to pay what will undoubtedly be exorbitant amounts for bespoke IT systems.

If there is no agreement on welfare reform the entire £87.0 million penalty will need to be addressed in this financial year. There is absolutely no doubt about this and it will have serious implications for public services here. The Executive's agreed approach to addressing this issue will be set out towards the end of this Statement.

Resources Available

All the above adjustments impacted on the total amount of resources available to the Executive in this monitoring round.

Setting aside the £87.0 million welfare reform penalty for now, the Executive had £51.6 million of Capital DEL available to allocate but a Resource DEL overcommitment of £10.4 million. Of course, with no agreement on welfare reform this would increase to £97.4 million.

Bids for Additional Resources

Departments submitted bids totalling £344.0 million in respect of Resource expenditure and £236.3 million in terms of Capital expenditure. The individual bids are also included in the detailed tables attached to this Statement.

Delivering Social Change/Social Investment Fund/Childcare Strategy

The Executive, as part of Budget 2011-15, set aside £11.0 million Resource and £15.0 million Capital in respect of the Social Investment Fund in this financial year. The Executive has also agreed that Delivering Social Change projects should be funded from this centrally held fund. In addition, the Executive also set aside £3.0 million Resource for this year to fund Childcare Strategy initiatives.

A number of allocations under the Delivering Social Change banner have been processed in this monitoring round. This includes £1.4 million Resource to DHSSPS, £5 million Resource to DE, £0.7 million Resource to DSD, £0.8 million Resource to DEL and £1.2 million Resource to OFMDFM.

There were also a number of allocations under the Social Investment Fund processed in this round. This included £1.9 million Resource and £1.5 million Capital to OFMDFM; and £0.5 million capital to DSD.

Furthermore an allocation of £1.5 million Resource to OFMDFM from the Childcare Fund has been processed in this round. It was also agreed that £0.15 million Capital from the Social Investment Fund should be transferred to OFMDFM for the purpose of the Childcare Strategy.

Since this is funding accessed from existing central funds set aside by the Executive for this purpose, these transactions were handled as technical transfers rather than allocations. These transfers mean that there is now £12.9 million Capital DEL remaining in the Social Investment Fund for 2014-15, with all Resource DEL relating to the Social Investment Fund now allocated. A total of £1.5 million Resource DEL relating to the Childcare Strategy remains unallocated.

Ringfenced Financial Transactions Capital Funding

The Executive started this financial year with £31.3 million of ring-fenced Financial Transactions Capital. In the 2014 January Monitoring Round, the Executive agreed to provide the University of Ulster with £10.0 million in 2014-15 for its Greater Belfast Development scheme, supplementing the £25.0 million provided in 2013-14.

The Chancellor's 2013 Autumn Statement and 2014 March Budget resulted in additional 2014-15 Barnett consequentials relating to Financial Transactions Capital totalling £3.5 million. The Executive also carried forward £5.9 million from 2013-14. As a consequence, the Executive now has £30.6 million of Financial Transactions Capital available for allocation in 2014-15.

The Executive agreed an allocation to DETI of £0.4 million this year and a further £2.1 million next year for the Northern Ireland Science Park. Following these allocations, the Executive exited the June Monitoring Round with £30.2 million of ring-fenced Financial Transactions Capital unallocated in the 2014-15 year.

Departments are progressing a range of proposals, which should hopefully facilitate further allocations in the October Monitoring Round.

Resource Expenditure Position

I will now return to the significant challenges facing the Executive's Resource expenditure position.

The Departments submitted £344.0 million of bids, which included a number of items totalling £30.4 million that the Executive had previously committed to fund in this year. The Executive agreed to honour those commitments and details of these are also shown in the tables.

Meeting these Executive commitments increased the Resource DEL overcommitment at the 'Centre' to £40.8 million, again excluding the welfare reform penalty.

2014-15 Resource Baseline Reductions and Allocations

The Executive agreed that it was necessary to agree an immediate percentage reduction to departmental budgets in 2014-15. The Executive carefully considered the basis upon which the percentage reduction should be applied to departmental budgets and there were calls to respond to the pressures within the key public services of health and education.

The Executive remains extremely concerned by the deteriorating financial position of the health sector in Northern Ireland. Having incurred a Resource DEL overspend of £13.1 million last year, DHSSPS has now registered Resource pressures of £160.0 million in this financial year. While it was not part of my initial recommendation, some within the Executive also sought protection for DE albeit without offering any justification. This was not and is not my preferred approach. However, in order to obtain Executive agreement on the overall June Monitoring position, it was agreed that DE as well as DHSSPS will be protected from any 2014-15 baseline reductions, along with NI Audit Office and the NI Assembly Ombudsman and Complaints Commissioner. The decision to protect DE in addition to DHSSPS will have significant implications for other departments.

Whilst the Northern Ireland Assembly has not been exempted from the reductions at this stage, the Executive recognises that it needs sufficient funding to perform its functions effectively. Given the Assembly Commission's independence, the Executive therefore agreed to review its decision not to exempt the Assembly Commission from the reductions as part of the October Monitoring Round and will adjust the Assembly budget at that time as necessary.

The Executive also agreed to set aside an additional £20.0 million at the 'Centre' to support pressures in DHSSPS. Access to the £20.0 million will be subject to DHSSPS demonstrating that it is taking the necessary actions to address the residual pressures it faces in this year to ensure that it remains within its Budgetary Control Total.

In addition, the Executive agreed a number of allocations in line with its priorities totalling £17.1 million and details of these allocations are set out in the tables accompanying the Statement.

The outworking of this protection for some departments and the additional allocations meant a greater percentage

baseline reduction for other departments. The level of reduction required now to afford protection and meet the bids agreed by the Executive was 2.1 per cent for all other departments. The impact of this on departmental Resource baselines is also shown in the tables attached to this Statement.

Welfare Reform Penalty

The Executive has agreed to further Resource DEL reductions in the October Monitoring Round to cover the welfare reform penalties. If there is no agreement on Welfare Reform this would amount to the full £87 million penalty, which would be a further 2.3 per cent reduction for those departments not protected. Any reduced requirements declared in the October Monitoring Round by individual departments will be used to reduce the level of any adjustments applied to that department in the October round.

My personal preference would have been to apply the additional £87 cut now, instead of waiting until the October Monitoring round. With departments also conveying their concerns that their budgets are under severe pressure, I am also increasingly worried that the NI Executive's overall block position runs the risk of being breached. A decision to adjust departmental budgets by the full amount now would have given departments the certainty about how much their control totals were being reduced and would have permitted far better planning around savings. However, it was not possible to obtain political agreement to that approach. Whilst prudent planning now was not possible and a further reduction to departmental budgets in October is far from ideal, non-agreement to the June Monitoring Round would have been a disastrous outcome. The mature and sensible way forward was therefore to seek to reach an agreement that would at least allow us to move forward and to action what are critically important public expenditure adjustments.

There is no doubt that this immediate 2.1 per cent reduction, along with further reductions in October, will have a serious detrimental impact on individual departments. I have expressed very clearly to all Ministers the need to now ruthlessly enforce the immediate 2.1 per cent reduction. I have also set out the critical need to plan carefully for a further 2.3 per cent reduction in October.

Capital Allocations

In terms of Capital Investment, the Executive agreed allocations totalling £90.2 million. This is a significant reallocation of resources, which will inject capital into key Executive priority areas.

The capital allocations included £23.0 million to DFP for delivery of the Executive's Asset Management Strategy. The Strategy outlined the significant potential to deliver savings in the provision of office accommodation for the public sector through tackling fragmentation in the office estate through the imposition of property controls. SIB's Asset Management Unit, along with DFP Properties Division, has been working to identify a range of options with the potential to deliver recurrent savings to the resource budget as a consequence of an upfront capital investment. Given the significant Capital funding available in 2014-15, the Executive believes that is now well placed to provide support to initiatives aligned to its Asset Management Strategy in this year. Importantly, this

investment would deliver future resource savings in an environment of increasing resource budget constraint.

There was also £26.3 million allocated to DRD, which will allow the department to take forward additional roads structural maintenance, coastal defence works and street lighting renewal, amongst other capital works.

Another significant beneficiary is DSD who have been allocated £23.5 million for expansion of the Co-Ownership programme and completion of a number of Urban Regeneration and Community Planning projects ahead of transfer of responsibility to local councils.

These significant capital allocations are not only good news for our construction industry but should also support in excess of 200 first time buyers looking to get on to the property ladder.

Full details of all the capital allocations are detailed in the tables accompanying this Statement.

June Monitoring Outcome

Setting aside the welfare reform issue, the Executive's decisions in this Monitoring Round resulted in a zero overcommitment in terms of Resource DEL. However, the welfare reform penalty must be addressed in this financial year. If there is no agreement on welfare reform the effective overcommitment would be £87.0 million, which would translate into a further 2.3 per cent baseline reduction for all the departments not protected from the cuts. Ministers affected must now plan to deliver these additional cuts in October.

I have also made it clear to all Ministers that they must adhere to their Budget control totals. I do not want a repeat of any department overspending against its budget at the end of this financial year. This will require difficult decisions but these must be made. The blame for this negative impact on public services can be laid firmly at the parties that continue to oppose welfare reform.

On the Capital side, the Executive left June Monitoring with an overcommitment of £38.6 million, a position that is manageable at this stage of the year. This allowed some £90.2 million of capital allocations to the departments, which will provide a significant boost for the local economy.

Whilst the public expenditure environment is extremely difficult, I am pleased with the ongoing recovery in the local economy. Our private sector continues to expand and this was reflected in the latest Ulster Bank PMI Index. This indicated that business activity here rose sharply and actually outstripped the UK average in June. This was also the thirteenth consecutive increase in new business being reported by local companies.

Our construction sector should also start to benefit from improvement in property prices. The Northern Ireland Residential Property Price Index rose 3% between Q4 2013 and Q1 2014. The recent sale of NAMA's Northern Ireland portfolio to US investment firm Cerberus should hopefully lead to increased activity in the local commercial property sector.

Our labour market also continues to improve with the number of people seeking unemployment benefit having fallen for eighteen months in a row, with a reduction almost 5,000 claimants over the last 6 months alone.

All of these indicators have been reflected in a number of job announcements over recent months. In the last month alone, my colleague Arlene Foster has been able to announce over 800 new jobs for Northern Ireland. An expansion at Moy Park will create 628 new jobs across three sites in Dungannon, Craigavon and Ballymena. Other developments include 80 new jobs in Belfast created by Financial Transparency Utility Ltd, 40 new jobs at HeartSine Technologies in Belfast and 50 new jobs at CDE Global in Cookstown.

In conclusion, in light of the many positive developments for our local economy, it is deeply disappointing that I have to deliver such a bleak assessment of our public expenditure position. The reductions of £77.9 million to departmental budgets now are harsh but necessary. They are to assist in paying for over £30 million of commitments already agreed by the Executive as well as a much needed allocation of £20.0 million to DHSSPS. The reductions that Departments face in October – and must begin to plan for now – will be every bit as harsh but they are completely avoidable. They are harsh because the impact they will have upon public service in Northern Ireland will be devastating because of the inability of some parties within the Executive to show the leadership required in welfare reform. Those parties are solely responsible for the damaging impact that welfare reform penalty related reductions in October will have on vulnerable people and on the economy. That damaging impact could be avoided by progressing with welfare reform. I have for some time warned that inaction on welfare reform would have dire consequences for our public services and today is the start of those consequences being felt.

I have no doubt that the months ahead will be extremely challenging as the impact of budget reductions across our public services is felt on the ground. It is gravely concerning that the public expenditure position looks set to deteriorate further as the penalties for inaction on welfare reform continue to escalate. I would urge those opposed to welfare reform to carefully consider the impact their inaction will have for those most in need of our public services and urgently reconsider their position.

I commend this statement to the Assembly.

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2013-14 Provisional Outturn

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Table A 2013-14 Provisional Outturn - Resource

	Final Plan £ million	Provisional Outturn £ million	Underspend (-) / Overspend (+) £ million	Underspend (-) / Overspend (+) %
DARD	211.9	211.8	-0.2	-0.1%
DCAL	116.5	115.9	-0.5	-0.4%
DE	1,917.1	1,913.3	-3.8	-0.2%
DEL	767.1	762.9	-4.1	-0.5%
DETI	188.4	186.7	-1.7	-0.9%
DFP	150.4	150.2	-0.3	-0.2%
DHSSPS	4,521.4	4,534.5	13.1	0.3%
DOE	126.8	126.3	-0.5	-0.4%
DOJ	1,188.0	1,177.8	-10.2	-0.9%
DRD	391.5	380.6	-11.0	-2.8%
DSD	579.9	572.1	-7.7	-1.3%
OFMDFM	84.3	83.6	-0.8	-0.9%
AOCC	2.1	2.0	-0.1	-3.6%
FSA	8.4	8.1	-0.3	-3.5%
NIA	40.7	39.9	-0.7	-1.8%
NIAO	8.1	7.8	-0.2	-2.9%
NIAUR	0.1	0.1	-0.0	-1.0%
PPS	34.6	34.1	-0.5	-1.4%
Total Departments	10,337.3	10,307.6	-29.7	-0.3%

Totals may not add due to roundings

Table B: 2013-14 Provisional Outturn - Capital

	Final Plan £ million	Provisional Outturn £ million	Underspend (-) / Overspend (+) £ million	Underspend (-) / Overspend (+) %
DARD	28.4	28.4	-0.1	-0.3%
DCAL	30.9	30.3	-0.6	-1.9%
DE	109.4	108.5	-1.0	-0.9%
DEL	25.3	24.6	-0.7	-2.8%
DETI	42.8	36.6	-6.21	-14.4%
DFP	25.4	25.1	-0.3	-1.2%
DHSSPS	261.5	251.3	-10.2	-3.9%
DOE	6.2	6.0	-0.1	-2.4%
DOJ	70.0	55.5	-14.4	-20.6%
DRD	397.2	396.9	-0.3	-0.1%
DSD	127.4	127.4	0.0	0.0%
OFMDFM	34.7	34.2	-0.4	-1.2%
AOCC	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0%
FSA	0.1	0.1	-0.0	-2.0%
NIA	1.7	1.1	-0.6	-34.7%

	Final Plan £ million	Provisional Outturn £ million	Underspend (-) / Overspend (+) £ million	Underspend (-) / Overspend (+) %
NIAO	0.2	0.1	-0.0	-15.0%
NIAUR	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0%
PPS	0.5	0.5	-0.0	-0.4%
Total Departments	1,161.5	1,126.7	-34.8	-3.0%

Totals may not add due to roundings

- 1 The DETI underspend includes £5.7 million in relation to the UK-wide Super Connected Cities scheme. This funding is channelled from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) through DETI to the Northern Ireland Councils and DETI has no role in managing this funding. The capital underspend directly under DETI's control was therefore only £0.5 million.

Table C: 2013-14 Provisional Outturn - Ringfenced Resource

	Final Plan £ million	Provisional Outturn £ million	Underspend (-) / Overspend (+) £ million	Underspend (-) / Overspend (+) %
DARD	12.9	12.9	-0.1	-0.4%
DCAL	5.9	5.7	-0.1	-1.9%
DE	0.7	0.5	-0.2	-35.0%
DEL	121.4	121.9	0.5	0.4%
DETI	2.1	2.1	0.0	1.8%
DFP	34.0	33.9	-0.1	-0.2%
DHSSPS	113.0	111.6	-1.4	-1.2%
DOE	3.7	3.7	-0.0	-1.1%
DOJ	81.3	65.9	-15.3	-18.9%
DRD	73.9	72.7	-1.3	-1.7%
DSD	1.8	1.2	-0.6	-33.7%
OFMDFM	0.8	0.9	0.1	11.8%
AOCC	0.0	0.0	-0.0	-13.0%
FSA	0.0	0.0	-0.0	-13.3%
NIA	3.6	3.6	0.0	0.0%
NIAO	0.2	0.2	-0.0	-7.1%
NIAUR	0.0	0.0	-0.0	-10.0%
PPS	1.6	1.6	0.0	2.4%
Total Departments	456.9	438.5	-18.4	-4.0%

Totals may not add due to roundings

Table D: June Monitoring Reduced Requirements (£ millions)

Department	Description	Non Ring Fenced Resource	Capital
DARD	HQ Relocation		-8.9
DCAL	Regional Stadia		-35.3
DETI	Gas Extension Project		-9.5
	PMS Loan Interest Receipts	-0.2	
Total DETI		-0.2	-9.5
DHSSPS	Causeway Hospital Wind Turbine		-1.2
	NI Fire and Rescue Service Logistic Centre		-2.6
	Craigavon Paediatric Ward and Ambulatory Care Unit		-0.5
	Daisy Hill Hospital – Paediatric Centre of Excellence		-0.5
	Regional Childrens Hospital		-10.5
Total DHSSPS		-15.3	
DOE	DVA - Delay in Driver Replacement System Project		-2.0
DOJ	NI Prison Service		-10.0
DRD	A2 Shore Road widening, Greenisland		-8.5
	A31 Magherafelt Bypass		-5.1
	A5 Western Transport Corridor		-119.5
	A8 Belfast to Larne Dual Carriageway		-1.0
	Roads CFER	-0.1	
	TEN-T Income		-3.0
	Trust Ports Loan Repayment		-0.4
Total DRD		-0.1	-137.5
DSD	Housing Benefit – Owner Occupiers	-5.0	
NIAO	Alignment with forecast in Main Estimate	-0.0	
OFMDFM	Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation		-3.8
	Ebrington		-1.7
Total OFMDFM		-5.5	
Total Reduced Requirements		-5.3	-224.0

Totals may not add due to roundings

Table E: Reduction and Reallocation (£ millions)

Department	Description	Non-Ring fenced Resource	Capital
DARD	Redistribution of HQ & Wider Estate funding to CPG		0.2
	Redistribution of HQ & Wider Estate funding to Forest Service		1.0
	Redistribution of HQ & Wider Estate funding to Rivers		1.2
	Redistribution of HQ & Wider Estate funding to SDG		0.4
	Redistribution of HQ & Wider Estate funding from Vet Service		-2.8
	Transfer of Plant Health Function to Forest Service	1.2	
	Transfer of Plant Health Function from Central Policy Group	-0.1	
	Transfer of Plant Health Function from Service Delivery Group	-1.1	
	DE	Education and Library Boards Youth	1.8
	Education and Library Boards Schools	-1.8	
DEL	United Youth Programme	1.5	
	Youth Employment Scheme	-1.5	
DFP	Transfer of Information Strategy & Innovation Division to Enterprise Shared Services	6.0	2.1
	Transfer of Information Strategy & Innovation Division from Finance & Personnel Policy	-6.0	-2.1
DOE	Budget Realignment – NI Environment Agency	1.2	
	Budget Realignment – Planning & Environmental Policy Group	0.6	
	Budget Realignment – Central Admin Services	-0.4	
	Budget Realignment – Driver & Vehicle Testing	-0.3	
	Budget Realignment – Local Government Reform Unit	-0.3	
	Budget Realignment – Planning Service	-0.5	
	Budget Realignment – Road Safety Services	-0.4	
	Budget Realignment – Driver & Vehicle Licensing	-0.1	
DRD	A8 Belfast to Larne		12.0
	NI Water		-12.0
	Belfast Rapid Transport Scheme		6.6
	Transport NI		-0.1
	Dundonald Park and Ride		-1.9
	Stewartstown Road		-2.0
	Falls Road		-1.6
	Upper Newtownards Road		-0.9
	Transfer of Strangford Ferry to Transport		1.3
	Transfer of Strangford Ferry from Road Service		-1.3
OFMDFM	Redistribution of Sites Funding to Crumlin Road Gaol		2.0
	Redistribution of Sites Funding from Maze Long Kesh		-2.0

Totals may not add due to roundings.

Table F: June Monitoring Reclassifications (£ millions)

Department	Description	Non Ring Fenced Resource	Capital
CENTRE	Green New Deal	-4.0	4.0
DEL	Invest to Save - Assured Skills	-0.2	
	Invest to Save - Capital - Assured Skills Project		0.2
Total DEL		-0.2	0.2
NIAO	Use of IT Assist instead of In-House Provision	0.2	-0.2
Total Reclassifications		-4.0	4.0

Totals may not add due to roundings

Table G: June Monitoring Bids Submitted (£ millions)

Department	Description	Non Ring Fenced Resource	Capital
AOCC	Cost of Legal challenge (Judicial reviews and appeals)	0.4	
	Local Government Ethical Standards and Reform	0.3	
Total AOCC		0.7	
DARD	CAFRE Building Improvements		3.1
	Going for Growth	1.4	
	Land Parcel Improvement Scheme	2.8	
Total DARD		4.2	3.1
DCAL	Arts and Museums		1.7
	Museums Essential Maintenance		1.8
	Libraries NI		1.5
	Cultural Programmes	1.5	
	Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty & Social Exclusion National Museums NI	0.1	
	Libraries NI Refurbishment and Minor Works		0.9
	Refurbishment Corn Exchange		0.2
	Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty & Social Exclusion Sports Facilities	1.5	2.1
	City of Culture Legacy	2.8	2.8
	Together Building a United Community	1.0	0.6
Total DCAL		6.9	11.6
DE	2014-15 Severance Costs	10.0	
	CCEA Revision of GCSE and A Level Qualifications	1.3	
	Drawdown of School Surplus	5.0	
	Maintenance of the Education Estate	22.0	
	Special Educational Needs	10.0	
	Staffing for Area Based Planning	1.4	
Total DE		49.7	

Department	Description	Non Ring Fenced Resource	Capital
DETI	Delivery of Major Events	3.4	
	Invest NI Property		1.6
	Selective Financial Assistance, Research & Development Projects	10.5	5.0
Total DETI		13.9	6.6
DFP	Asset Management Strategy: Collaborative Procurement	1.6	
	Asset Management Strategy: Reform of Property Management	2.0	40.0
Total DFP		3.6	40.0
DHSSPS	Children's Services	9.0	
	Clinical Negligence	10.0	
	Elective Care	30.0	
	Family Health Services - Dental Services	3.7	
	Family Health Services - General Medical Services	2.5	
	Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry	0.5	
	Mental Health and Learning Disability	9.0	
	Public Health Services	10.5	
	Safety and Quality of Services	13.0	
	Specialist Services	20.0	
	Domiciliary Care	8.5	
	Transforming Your Care Transitional Funding	21.3	
	Unscheduled Care	22.0	
Total DHSSPS		160.0	
DOE	Capital Grant Funding to Ards Borough Council for Exploris		0.9
	Dereliction Intervention Funding	1.0	
	Household Recycling	0.6	1.5
	Local Government Reform	13.1	
	NIEA - Dunluce Project	1.0	
	NIEA - Illegal Waste	1.8	
	NIEA - Listed Buildings	1.3	
	NIEA - Replacement Vehicles, etc		1.5
	Planning Portal Enhancement		2.0
Total DOE		18.6	5.9
DOJ	Legal Aid	19.7	
	Removal of Interface Barriers	0.7	
Total DOJ		20.4	
DRD	Active Schools Travel Programme		1.0
	Belfast Transport Hub		4.2
	Bridge Strengthening		1.6
	Bus Infrastructure		3.0

Department	Description	Non Ring Fenced Resource	Capital
	Coastal Defence Works		3.1
	Concessionary Fares	9.5	
	Cycling Infrastructure		1.0
	EU Exchange Loss	0.2	
	LTSM - Minor Works & Network Development		5.2
	NI Water Ballyclare Waste Water Treatment Works		2.0
	NI Water Waste Water Treatment Works, Sewers & Reservoir		20.5
	NIW PC 13 Final Determination	4.2	
	Release of value from Belfast Harbour	20.0	
	Roads & Bridges Operations & Maintenance	8.0	
	Roads Service Vehicles & Equipment		5.0
	Street Lighting Carbon Reduction Commitment	1.0	
	Street Lighting Inspection & Maintenance	5.5	
	Street Lighting Renewal		3.0
	Structural Maintenance		77.0
	Traffic Control Centre - Telematics		2.4
	Vehicle Restraint Systems		1.3
Total DRD		48.4	130.3
DSD	Co-Ownership Scheme		15.0
	Urban Regeneration & Community Projects		23.7
Total DSD			38.7
OFMDFM	China Office International Relations Team	0.3	
	Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry	4.3	
	Sites Gifted by MOD under Hillsborough Agreement	1.3	
	Together Building United Communities	3.0	
	Together Building United Communities Good Relations	1.8	
	Victims & Survivors Service	3.0	
Total OFMDFM		13.6	
PPS	Funding Shortfall	2.4	
	Fair Employment Tribunal Outcome	1.0	
	Grade A staff on Grade 6 scales	0.6	
Total PPS		4.0	
Total Bids Submitted		344.0	236.3

Totals may not add due to roundings

Table H: Reductions to Departmental Resource DEL (£ millions)

	Opening Monitoring Position	June reduction to Opening Monitoring Position (2.1%)
AOCC	1.8	0.0
DARD	197.6	4.1
DCAL	100.9	2.1
DE	1,943.7	0.0
DEL	795.7	16.3
DETI	186.5	3.8
DFP	156.8	3.2
DHSSPS	4,543.4	0.0
DOE	118.3	2.4
DOJ	1,089.0	22.3
DRD	344.6	7.1
DSD	658.3	13.5
FSA	8.5	0.2
NIA	40.7	0.8
NIAO	7.9	0.0
NIAUR	0.1	0.0
OFMDFM	69.9	1.4
PPS	32.7	0.7
Total	10,296.4	77.9

Totals may not add due to roundings

Table I: June Monitoring Executive Commitments (£ millions)

Department	Description	Non Ring Fenced Resource
AOCC	Local Government Ethical Standards and Reform	0.3
DE	Drawdown of Schools Surplus	5.0
DETI	Invest NI Reinstatement	7.7
DOE	Local Government Reform	12.8
OFMDFM	Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry	4.3
	China Office International Relations Team	0.3
Total OFMDFM		4.6
Total Executive Commitments		30.4

Totals may not add due to roundings

Table J: June Monitoring Allocations (£ millions)

Department	Description	Non Ring Fenced Resource	Capital
AOCC	Cost of Legal Challenge (Judicial Reviews and Appeals)	0.4	
DARD	CAFRE Buildings Improvements		3.1
DCAL	Libraries NI		1.5
	Promoting Equality, Tackling Poverty & Social Exclusion Sports Facilities		1.1
	Together Building a United Community	0.8	0.6
	Cultural Programmes	1.0	
Total DCAL		1.8	3.2
DETI	Invest NI Property		1.6
	Selective Financial Assistance, Research & Development Projects		5.0
Total DETI			6.6
DFP	Asset Management Strategy: Reform of Property Management/ Collaborative Procurement	3.6	23.0
DOE	Capital Grant Funding to Ards Borough Council for Exploris		0.9
	Planning Portal Enhancement		2.0
	Household Recycling		1.5
Total DOE			4.4
DOJ	Removal of Interface Barriers	0.5	
DRD	Coastal Defence Works		3.1
	Concessionary Fares	5.0	
	NI Water Ballyclare Waste Water Treatment Works		2.0
	Roads Service Vehicles & Equipment		1.0
	Structural Maintenance		12.0
	Street Lighting Renewal		3.0
	Active Schools Travel Programme		1.0
	Belfast Transport Hub		4.2
Total DRD		5.0	26.3
DSD	Urban Regeneration & Community Projects		13.5
	Co-ownership Scheme		10.0
Total DSD			23.5
OFMDFM	Together Building United Communities	2.0	
	Together Building United Communities Good Relations	1.5	
Total OFMDFM		3.5	
PPS	Funding Shortfall	2.4	
Total Proposed Allocations		17.1	90.2

Totals may not add due to roundings

Table K: 2014-15 Administration Costs (£ millions)

Department	Opening Position	June Monitoring Position	% Change
DARD	42.7	42.6	-0.3%
DCAL	7.1	7.0	-0.7%
DE	18.5	18.5	0.0%
DEL	27.1	27.1	0.0%
DETI	15.0	15.0	0.0%
DFP	151.6	155.0	2.2%
DHSSPS	31.0	30.6	-1.5%
DOE	19.8	19.6	-0.9%
DOJ	51.0	45.3	-11.1%
DRD	84.1	84.1	0.0%
DSD	31.9	40.7	27.4%
OFMDFM	14.2	14.5	2.2%
PPS	2.3	2.3	0.0%
Total	496.6	502.5	1.2%

Totals may not add due to roundings

Table L: Ring Fenced Position (£ millions)

		Ring fenced Resource
Opening Monitoring Over-Commitment		-17.9
Reduced Requirements		
DETI	Reduction in Depreciation and Impairment	1.1
DSD	Anticipated reduced Impairment Costs	1.9
FSA	Depreciation	0.0
Total Reduced Requirement		3.0
Allocation		
PPS	Depreciation Charges	-0.2
Reclassifications between Ringfenced/Non-Ringfenced		0.6
June Monitoring Over-Commitment		-14.6

Totals may not add due to roundings.

Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Evaluation of the Individual Funding Request Process

Published at 10.00 am on Wednesday 24 September 2014

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Members will recall that during a debate in the Assembly on 6th May 2014 I announced I had instructed my Department to carry out an evaluation of the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process. The purpose of this statement is to provide an update to the Assembly on the evaluation and to outline the next steps in taking this work forwards.

I originally initiated this evaluation because I want to test whether the IFR process is effectively meeting its objectives of providing access to unapproved specialist drugs where there is an agreed clinical need.

There are a large number of new licensed drugs coming to the market each year. In order to determine which of these new treatments offers the best prospect of improvement over standard therapy it is essential that they are assessed for clinical and cost effectiveness and approved before they are made routinely available.

The NHS and the HSC in Northern Ireland are guided in this process by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). The NICE process of assessment and approval has an international reputation of excellence in terms of its scientific rigor, independence and objectivity. The technical expertise and role of NICE in conducting cost-effectiveness assessments is regarded as world class.

However, a consequence of this necessarily rigorous approach to appraisal is that some more expensive treatments that do not meet the thresholds for value for money or which have not yet been assessed by NICE have not been approved for routine use in the HSC. The IFR process is intended to bridge this gap by providing access to specialist drugs which are not normally commissioned within Northern Ireland in circumstances where there is an agreed clinical need.

I have listened to concerns raised by stakeholders from cancer sufferers and survivors, charities, political representatives and the pharmaceutical industry that the current process could be improved and also to their calls for the establishment of a cancer drugs fund similar to that in place in England. As a result, I have decided to widen the scope of the evaluation.

The evaluation will include consideration of factors influencing access to specialist medicines including:

- The IFR process itself; including consideration of clinical exceptionality;
- Arrangements for access to specialist drugs in other UK jurisdictions;
- The Early Access to Medicines Scheme (EAMS);
- The Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS);
- The potential for the reintroduction of prescription charges to finance a specialist drugs fund.

I want to deliver an evaluation of the IFR process which will be definitive in terms of concluding if the process is meeting its objectives. The evaluation will also make recommendations as to whether the IFR should continue in its current form or whether a new process should be considered. It is also worth noting that this is a wider issue than access to cancer drugs and includes access to specialist medicines for patients with other serious conditions. Full terms of reference for the evaluation are attached at Annex A.

A project management structure has been established under the leadership of the Chief Medical Officer Dr Michael McBride to take forward this work. The Project Board includes membership from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, the Health and Social Care Board, the Public Health Agency, the Northern Ireland Cancer Network and the Department.

The Project Team will engage with a range of stakeholders and will organise workshops to inform the evaluation which will be held during October/November 2014. In addition the project team will conduct a literature search and gather evidence from clinicians and practitioners across the HSC, commissioners, the industry and from patient representative groups. I expect the initial findings of the evaluation to be available from late November 2014 and the evaluation will be completed by the end of the year.

I have met many patients who have undergone trauma and stress related to their treatment. I empathise entirely with them and I want to assure them that my aim is to ensure that they receive the most effective treatment possible and that our health service will continue to strive to provide the best service it can in terms of access to specialist medicines.

Annex A

Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of the Individual Funding Request process

- To assess whether the IFR is meeting its objective as a process to determine if a clinically supported request for specialist drugs should be funded rather than as a clinical decision making process.
- To consider the impact of the concept of Clinical Exceptionality in the IFR process in providing access to specialist drugs.
- To give consideration to policies and processes that England, Scotland and Wales have adopted in their approach towards providing access to specialist drugs.
- To evaluate the IFR process in terms of its impact on access to drugs on the Cancer Drugs Fund list, in England, and the related potential impact of the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS).
- To consider the implications for access to specialist drugs arising from the implementation of the Early Access to Medicines Scheme (EAMS) in Northern Ireland.
- To consider the implications of the NICE-led value based assessment process and its proposals to incorporate two new "value elements" into NICE appraisals.

Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services

Published at 4.00 pm on Wednesday 24 September 2014

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Members will recall that in an oral statement to the Assembly on 9th December 2013 I announced that in conjunction with Dr James Reilly TD, then Minister for Health in the Republic of Ireland, I had appointed a team of international clinicians to provide an assessment of a potential model for Cardiac Surgery and Interventional Cardiology for Congenital Heart Disease to meet the needs of Northern Ireland and also the Republic of Ireland. The International Working Group (IWG) was subsequently appointed, chaired by Dr John Mayer from Boston Children's Hospital and also consisting of Dr Adrian Moran from the Maine Medical Centre, USA, and Dr John Sinclair from Yorkhill Children's Hospital, Glasgow. Nursing expertise and advice was provided to the IWG by Dr Patricia Hickey, also from Boston Children's Hospital.

The purpose of this statement is to provide an update to the Assembly on the assessment and to outline the next steps in taking this work forward. The IWG has presented its report to my Department and to the Department for Health in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). Both Departments are currently considering the report and I would expect to be able to announce the IWG's full recommendations together with the Minister for Health in the ROI and Dr Mayer within the next month.

I am however aware that the families who use this service and the clinical staff who deliver it are anxious to learn the IWG's recommendation as to whether this service should continue to be delivered in the Belfast Trust. I want to end that uncertainty and therefore inform the Assembly that the IWG has recommended that children's heart surgery and interventional cardiology should cease to be delivered in the Belfast Trust. The IWG has reached this conclusion because of an insufficient volume of patients.

This recommendation is made within the context of the terms of reference set for the IWG to give consideration to an overall model for delivering both children's and adult congenital heart services on the island. This model would allow Belfast and Dublin clinicians to sustain and build upon the respective strengths of both cardiac teams. As the IWG's report needs to be carefully considered by both Departments I am not yet in a position to publicly release the report or to indicate what my decision is likely to be on its recommendations. However, I considered it important that I should announce as soon as possible the IWG's recommendation on the key issue of concern to Northern Ireland in respect of the future of children's cardiac surgery and interventional cardiology at the Belfast Trust.

Committee Stages

Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Employment and Learning
1 October 2014

Work and Families Bill [NIA 34/11-15]

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Robin Swann (Chairperson)
Mr Sammy Douglas
Ms Anna Lo
Ms Bronwyn McGahan
Mr Pat Ramsey
Mr Alastair Ross

The Chairperson: I advise the Committee that this is the Committee's formal consideration of the clauses of the Bill. I also remind members that the Committee deliberated on the clauses at last week's meeting and was content. Again, I remind members that formal clause-by-clause consideration is the last opportunity to discuss the clauses, and any decisions will be final. On completion of the formal clause-by-clause consideration, I will go through the issues that are outside the strict remit of the Bill. On that basis, I will go through the Work and Families Bill and group the clauses about which the Committee has previously indicated that it is content.

Starting with clause 1, I will invite members to indicate whether they are content with the clause as drafted, whether there are any issues they wish to highlight and/or any amendments they wish to propose or whether they wish to reject the clause in its entirety. DEL officials are present to answer any questions that members may have.

Clause 1 (Defined expressions in this Act)

The Chairperson: Clause 1 provides definitions of terms and expressions used throughout the Bill.

Question, That the Committee is content with clause 1 put and agreed to.

The Chairperson: Part 2, comprising clauses 2 to 14, deals with shared rights to leave and pay. I seek members' views on part 2, which consists of 13 clauses considering three broad areas: shared parental leave, statutory shared parental pay and other statutory rights. Members, are you content with those three areas and the clauses?

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 2 to 14 put and agreed to.

The Chairperson: Part 3, comprising clauses 15 to 18, deals with time off work for antenatal care and adoption appointments. I seek members' views on part 3, which consists of four clauses, including rights to attend

antenatal appointments and the right for agency workers not to be subjected to detriment. Are members content?

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 15 to 18 put and agreed to.

The Chairperson: Part 4, comprising clauses 19 and 20, deals with other miscellaneous employment rights. This is two clauses on flexible working and the procedure for regulations as to a prescribed amount of annual leave. I seek Committee members' views on that.

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 19 and 20, put and agreed to.

The Chairperson: Part 5, comprising clauses 21 to 24, is the general provisions. I seek members' views on part 5, which contains four clauses, including repeals and commencement dates. Are members content?

Question, That the Committee is content with clauses 21 to 24 put and agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2 agreed to.

Long title agreed to.

The Chairperson: Thank you, members. That was painless.

We will now go through the issues raised by respondents and considered at last week's meeting. The Clerk's paper, which is at page 245, summarises the issues raised and provides recommendations to the Department for inclusion in the Committee report.

The first issue — these are mostly in regard to regulations rather than the Bill itself — is that the two-week negotiation period may not be long enough. From last week's Committee meeting, the Committee feels that the Department's response is adequate but seeks the Department's assurance that the associated guidance has been reviewed by key stakeholders. Are members content with that recommendation?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Members, a further issue is that of employees making and then withdrawing a request for shared leave. Last week, the Committee accepted the Department's position on the issue. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Members, next is the process for requesting leave. The Committee felt that the Department's

response was adequate but sought the Department's assurance that the associated guidance has been reviewed by key stakeholders. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: The cut-off point for parents taking shared parental leave should be 52 weeks from the start of maternity leave, rather than from the birth of the child. Members, at last week's meeting, the Committee accepted the Department's position on this issue. The detail is listed there. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Members, next is the right to return to the same or a similar job when returning from periods of leave totalling up to 26 weeks. Members, at last week's meeting, the Committee accepted the Department's position on the issue. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Members, next is the day-one right to shared parental leave and pay. At last week's meeting, the Committee accepted the Department's position on this issue. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Members, on the keeping-in-touch days, the Committee accepted the Department's position on the issue last week as well. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Arranging cover for employees on shared parental leave — again, last week, the Committee accepted the Department's position. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: On allowing parents to take leave in one-week blocks, the Committee felt that the Department's response was adequate but did seek DEL's assurance that the associated guidance has been reviewed by key stakeholders. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Members, the amount of statutory pay available — again, the Committee accepted the Department's position on the issue but wished to receive further information on how and when the Department will review uptake of shared parental leave, including the terms of reference. Are members content with that?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Flexible working — again, the Committee accepted the Department's position on this issue last week.

New right to begin for parents of children expected to be born or adopted in April 2015. This was in regard mostly to the time frame of the Bill. The Committee felt that the Department's response was adequate but will seek DEL's assurance that the associated guidance has been reviewed by key stakeholders. Are members content with that?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: The issue of user-friendly processes came through from a number of stakeholder submissions that we received. Last week, the Committee felt that the

Department's response was adequate, but, again, it seeks DEL's assurance that the associated guidance has been reviewed by key stakeholders. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Members, arrangements will be in place for recouping overpayments and allowing employers to communicate to verify information. The Committee accepted the Department's position on the issue. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: On fear of being open to sex discrimination, the Committee accepted the Department's position on the issue. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Members, in regard to guidance, the Committee felt that the Department's response was adequate but sought the Department's assurance that the associated guidance will be reviewed by key stakeholders. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Members, on alignment with legislation in GB, the Committee again accepted the Department's position on the issue. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Another individual as a person with whom parental leave could be shared — again, members of the Committee accepted the Department's position.

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: On the issue of paid leave for partners to attend antenatal appointments, again, the Committee accepted the Department's position on the issue. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Members, one of the issues that Pat raised was kinship carers. Again, there was quite a lengthy response on that. Last week, the Committee accepted the Department's position on the issue.

Mr P Ramsey: Separate to that, is it possible to get some research paper on kinship care and how it is acknowledged or recognised in other places? It is a hugely relevant subject here for future reference.

The Chairperson: We can do that, Pat, separate from this. Are members content with the recommendation that we accepted last week?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: OK, members, those are all the queries and concerns that were raised at last week's meeting. Are members content with the recommended actions?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: That is us, members. Thank you. There is nothing else on the Work and Families Bill. Members, there will be a draft report to formalise and agree at next week's meeting. Are members content with that time frame?

Members indicated assent.

Written Answers

This section contains the written answers to questions tabled by Members.

The content of the responses is as received at the time from the relevant Minister or representative of the Assembly Commission, and it has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process or changed.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 11 July 2014

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Ms McGahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why AQW 31991/11-15 has not been answered.
(AQW 33466/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): We refer the Member to the answer issued on 27 May.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what foreign trips representatives of the Victims Commissioner's Office, including representatives of the Victims' Forum, have undertaken in the last year; and for what purpose.
(AQW 33910/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The table below details the foreign trips undertaken by representatives from the Commissioner's Office in the last year.

Date	Representative	Destination	Purpose
26 August – 3 September 2013	Commissioner	Rwanda	To inform research on comparing perspectives for victims and survivors.
2 – 9 November 2013	Commissioner	Nigeria	Participation in Forum Cities in Transition 2013 which included research on approaches for dealing with victims and survivors.
9-15 March 2014	Commissioner & Head of Corporate Services	New York & Washington	Invitation from President Obama to attend White House St. Patrick's Day Reception. Remainder of trip used as a research visit and included a meeting with 911 victims.

No members of the Victims Forum have attended Forum related international trips or engagements in the past year.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the boundary of the area to be included in the (i) Colin; and (ii) Lower Newtownards Road Urban Villages, under the Together: Building a United Community strategy.
(AQW 34369/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We announced Colin and Lower Newtownards Road as the first two Urban Villages on 25 February 2014. Since then, the Department for Social Development, as the lead department for these projects, has been developing delivery proposals. These two projects are at very different stages.

The Colin Town Centre is well developed with an existing plan having been launched, with support across a number of government departments.

The Colin Town Centre Urban Village is located within the Colin neighbourhood of West Belfast. The site is approximately 57 acres in total, lying South West of the Michael Ferguson roundabout. The site spans across both sides of the Stewartstown Road, and includes approximately 27 acres of the Laurel Glen parkland on the Poleglass side of the Stewartstown Road as well as 30 acres on the Twinbrook side; 96% of the site is currently in public ownership.

In contrast, the urban village proposed for the Lower Newtownards Road is at a less advanced stage. It is envisaged that the area covered will run from Ballymacarrett to Hollywood Arches.

Development of both Urban Villages will include the establishment of a local project board. The local board will then be tasked with co-ordinating and overseeing the planning, design and delivery of all aspects of each urban village.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the criteria against which (i) Colin; and (ii) the Lower Newtownards Road were selected as urban villages under the Together: Building a United Community strategy.
(AQW 34370/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The aim of the commitment to create four urban villages is to build shared culture, spaces, and identity.

In order to establish locations that have the potential to create community space, improve the area and its aesthetics and include community focus, the following high level selection criteria has been used to establish need and capacity.

- (i) Community relations issues
- (ii) Anti-social behaviour
- (iii) Deprivation
- (iv) Limited commercial heart/services
- (v) Community appetite and infrastructure for improvement

Colin has been chosen as an Urban Village because of the specific challenges it faces as a large urban area with a high population of roughly 26,000, which suffers from a distinct lack of social infrastructure.

The Lower Newtownards Road has been chosen as an Urban Village as it is a recognised area of high urban deprivation and suffering from dereliction and cross-community tension, and it is issues such as these that the Urban Village vision is designed to assist.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how regular meaningful contact between people of different backgrounds will be facilitated by the (i) Colin; and (ii) Lower Newtownards Road urban villages under the Together: Building a United Community strategy.
(AQW 34371/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We announced Colin and Lower Newtownards Road as the first two Urban Villages on 25 February 2014. Since then, the Department for Social Development (DSD), as the lead department for these projects, has been developing delivery proposals.

There has already been extensive engagement and consultation within the Colin community around Colin Town Centre proposals. DSD will build on this across all existing groups of interest, to include the views of a wide range of people of different backgrounds and will create a network of connections to facilitate ongoing contact with all of the people of the area. People's opinions have been and will be fully recorded and considered before moving the Colin Town Centre Urban Village initiative forward through planning and development.

In developing the Lower Newtownards Road concept, DSD has engaged with the East Belfast Partnership, as the representative body in the area, to explore their potential role and how best to capture the local community's views. The exact mechanism for community involvement has not yet been established but local consultation and community engagement will be critical in the development of the concept.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they are aware of the impact of not providing funds to successful group applicants approved grants of £75,000 or less for the 2014/15 financial year through the Victims and Survivors Service is having on the operational delivery of key services by the groups involved.
(AQW 34515/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We are aware of the importance of Victims and Survivors groups and the work that they do in representing the needs of and providing services for Victims and Survivors.

The Victims and Survivors Service has submitted a bid for additional funding in June Monitoring for the Victims and Survivors Programme.

Funding will depend on available resources. All our funds are finite and decisions always must be taken within that context. However, it should be noted we tripled funding to support victims and survivors here since devolution in 2007.

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, on the basis of past costs to date remaining similar in the future, for an estimate of the approximate cost of the (i) maintenance; (ii) security; (iii) flood defences; and (iv) other associated costs of the Ballykelly Army Base since handover from the Ministry of Defence until the time of the relocation of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development headquarters.
(AQW 34702/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The costs in relation to the former Ballykelly Army Base from 7 October 2011 and estimated costs to 31 March 2015 are detailed below:

	11/12 (6 months)	12/13	13/14	Estimated 14/15	Total
(i) Maintenance	£ 96,041	£164,614	£ 53,363	£ 53,000	£367,018
(ii) Security	£139,778	£264,989	£257,497	£258,000	£920,264
(iii) Flood Defences	£0	£ 50,100	£ 30,200	£ 20,000	£100,300
(iv) Other costs	£109,355	£118,345	£135,176	£141,000	£503,876

Executive approval has now been given to progress the work to move the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Headquarters to Ballykelly.

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what mechanisms they will put in place for redress for survivors and victims of institutional abuse, including potential compensation.

(AQW 34899/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Terms of Reference say that the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, in its report, will make recommendations and findings on four matters, including "The requirement or desirability for redress to be provided by the institution and/or the Executive to meet the particular needs of victims".

They go on to say "However, the nature or level of any potential redress – financial or the provision of services – is a matter that the Executive will discuss and agree following receipt of the Inquiry and Investigation report".

We will not pre-empt the work of the Inquiry or any future decisions that the Executive may make by speculating now about redress.

Mr G Kelly asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the funding that their Department, and its arm's-length bodies, invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014.

(AQW 34975/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: AQW 34975/11-15

The table below details funding invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014 by our Department and the Community Relations Council.

Fund	Investment (£) May 2011 – May 2014
Central Good Relations Fund	319,325
District Council Good Relations Fund	194,180
Summer Interventions Programme	181,045
North Belfast Good Relations Programme	2,327,184
Contested Spaces/Interface Programme	1,122,084
Community Relations Council Core funding	874,984
Total	5,018,802

Notes:

- 1 Figures relate to the sum of total yearly spend between 2011 and 2014. Projects are often funded over financial years or other annual time framings that, while in the main covering a 12 month period, do not necessarily start or end in May of any given year.
- 2 The definition of North Belfast as a geographical area to invest in can vary between funding programmes, and therefore the figures may include funding that in a geographical context could be referred to as North Belfast funding by some programmes but not by others.
- 3 The Community Relations Council provided additional funding on a Belfast wide basis totalling approximately £2.1m and some of this would be invested in North Belfast.

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what consideration has been given to interim compensation payments to survivors and victims of historical abuse in advance of Sir Anthony Hart's report, given the report has been delayed by one year and the age and ill health of a number of the victims.

(AQW 34980/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We do not underestimate the complexities of dealing with institutional abuse and every opportunity must be provided for those impacted by the allegations of abuse to be heard in an open forum.

The Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry Chairman has reluctantly made a very persuasive and compelling case for a one year extension to the timeframe. However, it would be neither realistic nor reasonable to expect the Inquiry to reach conclusions without completing its work of gathering and considering all the evidence and distilling the findings by which its recommendations would be informed.

For the Inquiry Panel to reach conclusions in an interim report, without hearing and investigating all of the evidence, its credibility would be called into question by those it had yet to see.

In addition, the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry Terms of Reference state “the nature or level of any potential redress – financial or the provision of services – is a matter that the Executive will discuss and agree following receipt of the Inquiry and Investigation report”.

We will not pre-empt the work of the Inquiry or any future decisions that the Executive may make by speculating now about redress.

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the departmental projects or funding schemes available to community organisations to help tackle low educational achievement.

(AQW 35004/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A number of projects funded by the Social Investment Fund are designed to address unemployment, provide training, or build or refurbish facilities for the provision of training, and therefore are likely to contribute to tackling low educational achievement.

A full list of projects is available at:- <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/delivering-social-change/social-investment-fund/sif-projects.htm>

At this point, within our Department, there are no funding schemes open to community organisations to specifically tackle low educational achievement.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what funding has been made available to the Northern Ireland Phoenix Project in each year since it was established.

(AQW 35087/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Northern Ireland Phoenix Project has received the following funding from the Victims and Survivors Service

Year	Award
2013-15	£91,619.48
2012-13	£18,628
2011-12	£4,320
2010-11	£4,488

It has also been in receipt of European funding.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what discussions they have had with the Northern Ireland Phoenix Project to ensure that it can continue to support the needs of victims and survivors.

(AQW 35089/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In keeping with the support offered to all groups funded under the Victims Support Programme (VSP), Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) Project Officers assigned to the Northern Ireland Phoenix Project continue to meet with the organisation on a quarterly basis. These regular meetings enable VSS to monitor and support the organisation in achieving its objectives, in terms of delivering services to victims and survivors via its activities funded under the VSP.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the permissions she has provided, or intends to provide, to InfraStrata to undertake oil and gas exploration in Woodburn Forest in Co. Antrim; and (ii) all other locations, under her Department’s ownership, where proposals have been made to conduct exploratory oil or gas drilling.

(AQW 34582/11-15)

Mrs O’Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): Licences granted for petroleum exploration is a matter for the Department of Enterprise Trade & Investment. The land at Woodburn forest, proposed by InfraStrata for exploratory drilling, is owned by NI Water (NIW). The trees on the land are managed by my Department under a Management Agreement with NIW. Any permission for access to the land is a matter for NIW.

I understand that since 2008, DETI has granted Prospecting Licences to Lonmin NI Ltd for mineral exploration in counties Antrim, Derry, Tyrone and Fermanagh. The areas licensed by DETI include forests on the Antrim Plateau, Sperrins, Bann Valley, and in some parts of Fermanagh and Tyrone, owned by my Department.

Forest Service agreed a licensing framework with Lonmin NI Ltd, for the period 2010 to 2015, under which access arrangements are managed. To date access permission has been pursued by Lonmin NI Ltd for two sites at Gortnamoyagh and Grange Park forests, in the north Sperrins area. I am aware that exploratory works were undertaken at Gortnamoyagh forest in 2011 and 2013.

In 2012, Dalradian Gold made an initial approach to my Department regarding access to Gortin Glen forest for mineral exploration works. However, no access arrangements were agreed or works undertaken.

Previously in the period 2002 to 2003, Forest Service had agreed access arrangements with Evergreen Resources Ltd, licensed by DETI, to undertake petroleum exploration works in West Fermanagh.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the action she has taken following each public petition presented to the Assembly and forwarded to her Department.

(AQW 34853/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In September 2012 I announced the intention to relocate staff from the Department's headquarters in Belfast to Ballykelly. In March 2013 I received notification from the Speaker of a petition relating to a campaign for Jobs in Strabane.

The petition was not specifically in relation to my Department's relocation but reflected the petitioner's wider perception that the Strabane area was being "bypassed by government" with subsequent social and economic impacts.

The petition did not require any specific action from my Department which is already committed to relocating jobs in rural areas.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the funding that her Department, and its arm's-length bodies, invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014.

(AQW 34879/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department, and its arm's length bodies, invested approximately £219,237 in North Belfast. Further details are provided in the table below:

Nature of Funding	Amount	Funding Body
Carrs Glen (Water Works) Culvert Replacement	£10,000 (approx)	Rivers Agency.
General watercourse inspection and maintenance – (£10k per annum)	£30,000 (approx)	Rivers Agency.
Forestry Grants Schemes	£14,259	Forest Service
Agri-Environment Schemes	£61,637	Core Department
Less Favoured Areas Compensatory Allowances (LFACA)*	£103,340	Core Department

* LFACA payments to applicants whose farm business address is in the North Belfast constituency.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) whether there is a requirement for her to consult prior to redesignating forestry land for petroleum exploration or extraction; and if so, to detail all consultations in the last three years; and (ii) whether there is a requirement for her to provide notification following the redesignation of forestry land to petroleum exploration or extraction; and if so, to detail the notices have been issued in the last three years to inform the local community of the redesignation of forestry land to petroleum exploration or extraction.

(AQW 34885/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Any determination including consultation and public notice requirements regarding the re-designation of forestry land to an alternative land use e.g. petroleum exploration or extraction is subject to Department of Environment considerations under its planning policy.

Therefore, as these responsibilities are not matters for my Department, it has not undertaken any consultations or issued any notices in this regard over the last 3 years.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the discussions she has held regarding banning wild animals in circuses.

(AQW 34925/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I hosted a meeting on 21 January 2013 to discuss the issue of animals in circuses. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Born Free Foundation, Animal Defenders International, and the Captive Animals Protection Society.

I raised the issue of wild animals in travelling circuses at the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) Agriculture meetings on 10 July 2013 and 13 November 2013. Minister Coveney and I agreed that officials would investigate the possibility of an All-island approach to the issue of these animals in travelling circuses, and that the findings and proposals would be reported at a future NSMC Agriculture meeting.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in the light of the delay in the Common Agricultural Policy reform process, how her Department will meet the targets for woodland creation in the next twelve months.

(AQW 35040/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: On the 2 July Forest Service re-opened the Forestry Challenge Scheme to bridge the gap between the end of the 2013-14 Rural Development Programme and the start of the new programme. The scheme aims to encourage planting of larger scale woodland areas by inviting bids from landowners to plant at least 5 hectares. Applications must be submitted by Friday 10 October 2014. In addition to the Challenge Scheme, Forest Service will also re-open the Woodland Environment Grant to support replanting woodland affected by Chalara ash dieback and restocking grants.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she will announce the launch of a woodland challenge fund; and to detail the funding set aside to support the fund.

(AQW 35041/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Forestry Challenge Scheme was launched on 2 July 2014 and detailed information and guidance is available on the DARD website.

Up to £0.3 million grant support is available for the Scheme and completed bids must be received by Forest Service by 3:00pm on 10 October 2014 to enter into an assessment process.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she aware of the initiative being led by the Woodland Trust to create a First World War Centenary Wood; and whether her Department can offer any direct assistance to the Woodland Trust to help make the Centenary Wood a success and a fitting and lasting memorial.

(AQW 35045/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware of a variety of initiatives to mark the Decade of Centenaries from 2012-2022 including the Woodland Trust's First World War Centenary Woods project.

The Woodland Trust had applied for and received from my Department a conditional offer of funding under the Forestry Grant Schemes to support planting and provision of public access to this new native woodland in the Faughan Valley however they decided not to take up this offer because they were unable to source site native species of local provenance required because of the special designation of nearby woodland. The Woodland Trust has informed my officials that they will make a new application this year under the re-opened Forestry Challenge Scheme.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there are any ongoing investigations relating to any public-private partnership projects that her Department is associated with; and if so, to detail the projects.

(AQW 35107/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department is not associated with any ongoing investigations relating to Public Private Partnership projects.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the Gross Value Added contribution of the local marine sector, for the most recent consecutive five years for which data is available.

(AQW 35148/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The estimated value added to the economy of the north of Ireland by those businesses engaged in the processing of both farmed and caught fish for human consumption is as follows:

2007	£14.4 million
2008	£14.1 million
2009	£13.8 million
2010	£15.2 million
2011	£17.3 million

This data is published by the Department in its annual statistical publication 'Size and Performance of the NI Food and Drinks Processing Sector'. The Department does not collate data on the value added by the fish catching sector.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the (i) targets; and (ii) strategies in place for woodland creation in 2016.

(AQW 35183/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Planting targets for 2016 will be published in the Forest Service Business Plan 2016/17 and will take account of support for woodland creation under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 and what is affordable given budgetary constraints. The Forestry Strategy for Sustainability and Growth, published by Forest Service in 2006, provides the framework for intervention via forest policy in woodland expansion.

Department of Education

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education why only four organisations have been invited to respond to the Elective Home Education consultation; and why Education Otherwise was not invited to respond.

(AQW 34315/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The Education and Library Boards (the Boards) have advised that consultation on the draft home education guidance document has been undertaken in line with the Consultation Strategy document (developed by all five boards). This was published alongside the draft guidance document, and sets out the range of methods through which the Boards have sought to facilitate engagement and consultation with all those who have an interest in elective home education.

This included a range of stakeholder organisations in the wider education community such as the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY); the Children's Law Centre (CLC); and the Special Educational Needs Advice Centre (SENAC). In addition, 343 Section 75 Consultees were contacted by the Boards to advise of the consultation process.

The Boards have advised that they identified Home Education in the north of Ireland (HEdNI) at the outset as the main regional representative group and, whilst Education Otherwise was not identified at that point, I understand the Boards subsequently provided a copy of the consultation documents to Education Otherwise for consideration and comment.

The consultation process has sought to provide an opportunity for views and ideas to be provided to the Boards - by organisations and members of the public - on how they best strike the balance between ensuring that the rights and needs of children themselves are appropriately protected and facilitating parental preference for home education.

As part of the Boards' consultation I have made clear that I expect the Boards to ensure engagement with as wide a range of stakeholders as possible and to ensure also that the feedback they receive is considered very carefully in reviewing the draft guidance.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education (i) which organisations were invited to respond to the consultation on elective home education; (ii) why they were selected; (iii) who made the decisions in respect of the those invited to respond; (iv) will these organisations form the Stakeholder Group; and (v) whether other organisations with a specific interest in elective home education can apply to join the Stakeholder Group.

(AQW 34577/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards (the Boards) have advised that consultation on their draft elective home education guidance document has been undertaken in line with the Consultation Strategy document (developed by all five boards) which was published alongside the draft guidance document. This details the range of methods through which the Boards have sought to facilitate engagement and consultation with all those who have an interest in elective home education.

I understand that the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB), on behalf of the five Boards, identified and contacted a range of key stakeholder organisations in the wider education community which included the Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY); the Children's Law Centre (CLC); Home Education in the north (HEdNI) and the Special Educational Needs Advice Centre (SENAC), to advise of the consultation process and invite feedback. In addition, 343 Section 75 Consultees were contacted by the Boards in this regard.

The Boards have advised that there is no formal "Stakeholder Group."

As part of the Board's consultation I have made clear that I expect the Boards to ensure engagement with as wide a range of stakeholders as possible including young people and their families and to ensure also that the feedback they receive is considered very carefully in reviewing the draft guidance.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education (i) why Education Otherwise was not invited to respond to the consultation on elective home education; (ii) whether this decision follows best practice of taking responses from a primary stakeholder; and (iii) whether he will revise the previous decision and invite Education Otherwise to take part in the consultation.

(AQW 34721/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards (the Boards) have advised that consultation on the draft home education guidance document has been undertaken in line with the Consultation Strategy document (developed by all five boards). This was published alongside the draft guidance document, and sets out the range of methods through which the Boards have sought to facilitate engagement and consultation with all those who have an interest in elective home education.

I understand that a range of stakeholder organisations in the wider education community were identified and contacted by the Boards to advise of the consultation process and invite feedback. In addition, 343 Section 75 Consultees were contacted by the Boards in this regard.

The Boards have advised that they identified Home Education in the north of Ireland (HEdNI) at the outset as the main regional representative group and, whilst Education Otherwise was not identified at that point, I understand the Boards subsequently provided a copy of the consultation documents to Education Otherwise for consideration and comment.

As part of the Boards' consultation I have made clear that I expect the Boards to ensure engagement with as wide a range of stakeholders as possible and to ensure also that the feedback they receive is considered very carefully in reviewing the draft guidance.

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many meetings have taken place over the last twelve months between officials from the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD), representatives of his Department and the Education and Library Boards in regard to handing over responsibility for Goods and Services to CPD.

(AQW 34769/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Since June 2013 there have been four meetings in regard to handing over responsibility for procurement of Goods and Services to the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) involving representatives from CPD, DE and the Education and Library Boards (ELBs).

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the legal issue he referred to as being the reason for the disparity between his two announcements at those times of £180 million and £170 million schools capital costs, at what time between 3.15pm on Monday 23 June 2014 and 11.30am on Tuesday 24 June 2014 was this legal issue relayed to him; and by whom.

(AQW 34834/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am glad of the opportunity to clarify these figures. The disparity between the two figures is simply a function of the level of accuracy that is possible at this early stage in the development of the projects. In my response to a question from Mr Brady, MLA on Monday 23 June I said that the announcement would be in the region of £180 million and on Tuesday 24 June 2014 I announced that the capital investment for the projects was in the order of £170 million. These projects are all at a very early stage of development (i.e. prior to completion of an economic appraisal) and hence it is impossible to provide an accurate estimate of the aggregate cost of all the school builds. The figures that I stated can only be and are only an indicator of the likely total cost, currently estimated as being between £170 and £180 million.

The legal matter I referred to was a judicial review regarding the amalgamation of Newtownbreda and Knockbreda High Schools. I received notification of Senior Counsel's advice from an official in my Department at around 18.10 hours on Monday 23 June. This advice was that a decision on the new build for Newtownbreda/Knockbreda should not be announced until the judicial review process related to the amalgamation of the two schools was complete.

The judicial review was later dismissed and I have since announced the new build for the amalgamated Newtownbreda/ Knockbreda High Schools on 3 July.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 34623/11-15, for a breakdown of where the budget allocated to Education Other than at School was spent in each Education and Library Board area in the 2013/14 financial year.

(AQW 34840/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Ear-marked Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) funding for the 2013/2014 financial year in each of the Education and Library Board (ELB) areas was spent to deliver education to young people who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties who, without its provision, cannot sustain access to suitable education.

EOTAS provision is delivered through specific EOTAS centres, Community providers, Pupil Referral units and for home tuition for young people who are unable to attend school due to illness or to expelled pupils who are awaiting a new school placement.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education to detail the capital investment in schools in North Antrim in each year since 2007.

(AQW 34861/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table details capital expenditure in schools in the North Antrim constituency in each of last seven financial years:

School	2007/08 £'s	2008/09 £'s	2009/10 £'s	2010/11 £'s	2011/12 £'s	2012/13 £'s	2013/14 £'s
Armoy PS	50.00	0.00	4,409.80	0.00	8,392.00	0.00	0.00
Ballee Community HS	65,647.00	252,584.36	180,202.90	130,622.00	2,618.00	40,286.00	360.00
Ballee PS	841.00	0.00	3,699.75	121,605.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

School	2007/08 £'s	2008/09 £'s	2009/10 £'s	2010/11 £'s	2011/12 £'s	2012/13 £'s	2013/14 £'s
Ballycastle Controlled IPS	191,181.00	100.00	24,470.00	1,357.00	37,947.00	267,088.00	2,990.00
Ballycastle HS	54,006.00	15,907.00	38,949.82	16,789.00	477,258.00	31,832.00	30,927.00
Ballykeel PS	860.00	26,290.81	8,381.00	9,106.00	11,056.00	0.00	16,997.00
Ballymena NS	156.00	3,680.00	41,032.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ballymena PS	4,864.00	314,916.00	17,310.47	9,548.00	3,340.00	54,019.00	608.00
Ballymoney Controlled IPS	47,219.00	122,951.78	23,903.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,298.00
Ballymoney HS	42,976.00	148,009.53	20,783.30	120.00	28,881.00	328,269.00	-3,704.00
Ballymoney NS	152.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Balnamore PS	1,432.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Broughshane PS	41,989.00	100.00	39,261.98	138,564.00	8,671.00	0.00	11,058.00
Buick Memorial PS	835.00	10,328.93	20,307.62	117,027.00	1,714.00	31,168.00	63,498.00
Bushmills PS	473.00	11,478.82	3,783.77	0.00	3,213.00	27,940.00	100.00
Bushvalley PS	437.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	30,929.00	178,279.00	16,616.00
Cambridge House GS	122,765.00	188,877.50	228,450.25	45,592.00	50,359.00	46,412.00	5,995.00
Camphill PS	97,621.00	49,806.15	583.88	9,934.00	0.00	704.00	134,902.00
Carnaghts PS	334.00	0.00	5,000.52	17.00	0.00	0.00	3,807.00
Carniny PS	3,275.00	13,450.00	178,786.59	38,964.00	31,440.00	21,781.00	474.00
Carrowreagh PS	229.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Castletower Spec School	42,897.00	175,161.76	99,161.28	30,174.00	507,240.00	38,080.00	174,291.00
Clough PS	76,214.00	205,927.67	289,727.97	2,180.00	-15,196.00	0.00	0.00
Cloughmills PS	444.00	4,827.90	35,000.00	7,110.00	100.00	0.00	0.00
Cullybackey HS	131,186.00	159,444.32	20,744.00	0.00	503,847.00	82,890.00	6,203.00
Dunclug College	209,378.00	635,612.78	64,550.20	3,665.00	36,446.00	70,173.00	8,169.00
Dunclug NS	4,895.00	40,270.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Dunclug PS	665.00	3,149.00	9,934.00	0.00	14,974.00	50,113.00	0.00
Dunluce School	35,246.00	300,704.65	139,961.54	7,113.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Dunseverick PS	103,994.00	63,207.42	27,963.82	-1,393.00	0.00	0.00	3,865.00
Eden PS	29,195.00	0.00	5,035.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fourtowns PS	1,577,752.00	34,661.37	24,247.64	0.00	0.00	5,146.00	6,832.00
Garryduff PS	134.00	0.00	50,123.27	1,089,229.00	20,364.00	0.00	22,100.00
Gracehill PS	11,865.00	0.00	3,850.00	22,346.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Harryville PS	23,975.00	0.60	5,405.76	0.00	1,190.00	249.00	3,330.00
Hazelbank PS	347.00	0.00	5,458.87	83.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Kells & Connor PS	102,671.00	44,847.87	26,594.17	12,632.00	0.00	3,058.00	0.00
Kilmoyle PS	321.00	106,476.60	67,935.05	1,547.00	2,314.00	201,812.00	13,310.00
Kirkinriola PS	7,271.00	6,433.68	605.24	0.00	9,915.00	0.00	0.00
Knockahollet PS	295.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Landhead PS	190.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Leaney PS	74,586.00	14,781.70	0.00	16,875.00	4,891.00	0.00	63,063.00
Lislagan PS	242.00	0.00	0.00	150.00	5,292.00	93,974.00	20,432.00

School	2007/08 £'s	2008/09 £'s	2009/10 £'s	2010/11 £'s	2011/12 £'s	2012/13 £'s	2013/14 £'s
Longstone PS	168.00	0.00	15,345.84	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Moorfields PS	1,251,508.00	1,065,813.47	13,085.92	0.00	8,347.00	0.00	0.00
Portglenone PS	469.00	0.00	0.00	3,117.00	0.00	0.00	34,586.00
Rasharkin PS	5,397.00	25,264.81	3,832.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Straidbilly PS	20,251.00	89,313.76	19,065.65	0.00	20,484.00	133.00	3,350.00
The Diamond PS	390.00	0.00	9,927.53	116.00	249,008.00	113,232.00	12,170.00
The Wm Pinkerton Memorial PS	406.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	24,778.00	23,257.00
Ballymena Academy	122,873.82	202,275.57	16,992.99	0.00	9,508.33	1,507.57	36,258.55
Barnish PS	23,916.00	8,755.32	1,451.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Braid PS	5,406.00	14,054.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Braidside IPS	10,312.00	4,644.89	0.00	17,038.00	9,400.00	0.00	16,584.14
Cross and Passion College	73,488.52	142,602.16	7,247.00	21,291.00	43,363.00	196,133.51	362,867.03
Cross and Passion College (meals)	58,415.00	0.00	0.00	4,412.00	8,756.00	51,296.00	0.00
Dalriada School	40,960.11	187,081.69	80,380.00	6,334.42	0.00	4,957.61	461,994.41
Gaelscoil an Chaistil	0.00	0.00	722,299.19	10,037.63	537.00	64,980.00	23,278.30
Glenravel PS	7,931.00	10,534.00	174,637.06	85,473.29	3,295.76	1,576.00	66,776.52
Millquarter PS	0.00	35,913.00	137,005.33	74,772.00	15,859.01	0.00	0.00
Millquarter PS (meals)	0.00	11,768.39	3,300.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Our Lady of Lourdes HS	2,577.00	1,636.33	0.00	7,469.00	38,093.00	96,958.60	942.66
Our Lady of Lourdes HS (meals)	12,052.00	12,873.00	13,429.00	0.00	9,350.00	0.00	0.00
Slemish College	94,095.98	0.00	18,929.00	0.00	0.00	768.00	26,927.00
St Anne's PS	25,745.00	13,407.92	0.00	373.81	900.00	2,268.00	0.00
St Brigid's PS, Ballymena	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	244.00	146,055.00	5,440.68
St Brigid's PS, Ballymena (meals)	227,278.00	-22,003.00	4,826.17	1,273.00	0.00	7,891.00	0.00
St Brigid's PS, Ballymoney	625.00	0.00	199,014.00	126,870.05	439,505.00	99,966.03	22,418.06
St Brigid's PS, Ballymoney (meals)	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,418.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Brigid's PS, Cloughmills	2,637.33	99,640.82	4,335.00	22,849.00	18.00	0.00	0.00
St Colmcille's PS (meals)	227,990.00	-39,206.02	10,520.22	1,273.00	0.00	11,815.00	0.00
St Joseph's PS, Dunloy	10,413.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	864.00	32,280.73
St Joseph's PS, Dunloy (meals)	0.00	0.00	18,725.00	3,565.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Louis GS	91,996.00	117,188.00	127,635.00	54,358.00	7,760.67	409,386.00	276,444.24
St Mary's PS, Ballycastle	0.00	0.00	2,578.00	10,140.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Mary's PS, Glenravel	10,613.33	520.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11,769.00

School	2007/08 £'s	2008/09 £'s	2009/10 £'s	2010/11 £'s	2011/12 £'s	2012/13 £'s	2013/14 £'s
St Mary's PS, Portglenone	1,681.54	420,546.00	0.00	8,224.78	0.00	696.00	0.00
St Mary's PS, Portglenone (meals)	0.00	3,300.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Olcan's PS	16,893.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Olcan's PS (meals)	0.00	0.00	4,900.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Patrick's & St Brigid's PS	29,000.40	449,055.56	2,850,182.00	1,099,274.00	2,711.00	128,165.88	-33,750.00
St Patrick's & St Brigid's PS (meals)	0.00	4,428.88	41,076.38	12,110.00	0.00	7,891.00	0.00
St Patrick's College, Ballymena	191,314.97	270,244.00	11,053.00	0.00	16,335.97	859.00	5,315.96
St Patrick's College, Ballymena (meals)	0.00	0.00	8,263.00	0.00	3,865.00	56,606.00	0.00
St Patrick's PS, Loughguile	1,581.19	0.00	232,030.00	1,925.00	14,356.13	6,919.40	467.77
St Patrick's PS, Loughguile (meals)	10,833.00	3,050.00	15,221.65	194.00	8,258.00	180.00	0.00
St Patrick's PS, Rasharkin	0.00	0.00	16,519.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Patrick's PS, Rasharkin (meals)	0.00	0.00	8,686.00	0.00	0.00	3,465.00	0.00
Overall Yearly Totals	5,690,323.19	6,086,691.41	6,508,107.72	3,408,863.98	2,697,149.87	3,012,620.60	2,000,899.05
Overall Total For All Years = 29,404,655.82							

- * The North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) has provided expenditure information in relation to the controlled sector and school meals accommodation in the maintained sector.
- ** Information relating to capital expenditure in the voluntary sector has been obtained from Departmental records.
- *** In cases where there are minus figures these relate to accrual adjustments with the exception of St Patrick's and St Brigid's PS which is a refund.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education what community projects or programmes of work are used to measure parental demand for integrated schools, in areas that do not have integrated provision.

(AQW 34891/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department does not fund community projects on the basis of parental demand for integrated education. However, I take my Department's statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of integrated education very seriously and will continue to encourage growth in this area.

I have commissioned the Education and Library Boards (ELBs), working in conjunction with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and engaging with other sectors, including the N I Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), to co-ordinate strategic planning in each board area to shape the future provision of education in that area.

Given the respective roles of the organisations involved, it is clear that planning for new integrated education provision is dependent on collaboration between NICIE, the ELBs and the CCMS.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education when the cycle to work scheme will be available to staff in the South Eastern Education and Library Board.

(AQW 34898/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The decision whether to offer a 'Cycle to Work' Scheme to employees is a matter for individual employers.

The SEELB inform me that in the context of a challenging financial climate and in light of anticipated changes to organisational structures within the Education and Library Boards (ELBs), the Boards' determined some time ago that it was not possible to participate in any new scheme. The matter has and is being kept under regular review by the ELBs.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education how many pupils in each Education and Library Board benefited from the Vision Support Service in the 2013/14 academic year.

(AQW 34924/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that the number of pupils who benefitted from the Vision Support Service in the 2013/14 academic year is as follows:

BELB	175
NEELB	215
SEELB	238
SELB	121
WELB	132

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of staff employed in each Education and Library Board's Vision Support Service, including the hours of any part-time employees.

(AQW 34926/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The number of staff employed in each Education and Library Board's Vision Support Service is as follows:

NEELB	4 Part Time
SELB	1 Full Time and 2 Part Time
SEELB	2 Full Time
WELB	2 Full Time
BELB	1 Full Time & 1 Part time

The Department is unable to provide the information in relation to hours worked of any part-time employees as the number of staff involved is relatively small. Given this fact, release of the information requested may lead to an individual being identified which would constitute a breach the Data Protection Act 1998.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education (i) how many new referrals were made to the Vision Support Service in each Education and Library Board in the 2013/14 academic year; (ii) how many of these pupils received a home visit; and (iii) how many were (a) self referrals; (b) from ophthalmology; (c) from the low vision clinic; (d) from a voluntary organisation; and (e) from another source.

(AQW 34927/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised as follows:

The number of new referrals that were made to the Vision Support Service in the 2013/14 academic year, and of those the number who received a home visit, are as follows:

	New Referrals	Home Visits
BELB	n/a*	n/a*
NEELB	37	5
SEELB	57	15**
SELB	26	7***
WELB	16	4

* BELB has advised that it is unable to source this information currently.

** Pre-school referrals – other children may have received a home visit depending on need but SEELB is not currently able to provide that number.

*** Early years referrals - other children may have received a home visit depending on need but SELB is not currently able to provide that number.

The breakdown of the new referrals is as follows:

	Self-referrals	Ophthalmology	Low Vision Clinic	Voluntary Organisation	Other Source
BELB	n/a*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
NEELB	0	29**	5	0	3
SEELB	2	9	0	3	43
SELB	0	24***		0	2
WELB	0	4	0	0	12

* BELB has advised that it is unable to source this information currently.

** Four referrals directly from an ophthalmologist and 25 from the Eye Clinic Liaison Service (ECLS) which is funded by RNIB. The ECLS referrals originate from ophthalmologists.

*** SELB is unable to split this number.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education how many referrals to the Vision Support Service were not accepted by each Education and Library Board in the 2013/14 academic year; and to outline the reasons in each case.

(AQW 34928/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All Education and Library Boards, with the exception of the South-Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB), have advised that all children who were referred to the Vision Support Service in the 2013/14 academic year were accepted where parental permission was given.

SEELB has advised that it is unable to provide this information currently.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Education how many pupils, who were supported by the Vision Support Service in the 2013/14 academic year, received (i) weekly visits; (ii) one visit each term; (iii) a bi-annual visit; (iv) an annual visit; (v) no visits; and (vi) any other periodical visits.

(AQW 34930/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that the breakdown of visits is as follows:

	Weekly	Termly	Bi-annual	Annual	None	Other
BELB	0	53	0	81	0	41
NEELB	0	18	0	196	0	1
SEELB	N/A*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SELB	0	30	6	29	2	54
WELB	1	38	12	78	0	3

* SEELB has advised that it is unable to source this information currently.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Education what is the completion date for the Belvoir Youth Centre; and how much is being spent on the Centre.

(AQW 34956/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As Belvoir Youth Centre is a controlled Youth Centre, the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) is responsible for the capital work.

The SEELB has advised that the target completion date for Belvoir Youth Centre is 26 September 2014.

The projected capital expenditure is approximately £1.4million; however the final figure cannot be confirmed until the project has been completed.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Education what is the official opening date of the Belvoir Youth Centre; and how many young people the Centre will accommodate.

(AQW 34958/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As Belvoir Youth Centre is a controlled Youth Centre, it is the responsibility of the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB).

The SEELB has advised that no official opening date for the Centre has yet been agreed.

The SEELB has confirmed the primary objective would be to provide adequate and suitable youth provision for approximately one thousand young people on an annual basis (one hundred users/young people at any one time) within the Minnowburn and Carryduff areas.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Education what measures his Department is taking to promote digital technology skills within (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools.

(AQW 34993/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The curriculum has been designed to provide flexibility for schools to develop experiences that suit the needs of their pupils. Embedding mandatory, cross curricular skills and keeping prescribed content to a minimum, allows schools to choose the most appropriate approach to take to ensure that pupils are engaged and challenged, to reach their full potential.

ICT is a cross curricular skill, which is an integral part of all Areas of Learning which make up the curriculum. Computer Coding/Science is a specific and more specialised subject and the flexibility in place within the curriculum enables schools to teach Computer Coding/Science in any Key Stage, including at primary school level, if they feel it appropriate.

My Department participates on the ICT Working Group established in response to the ICT sector's concerns in relation to skills shortages and skills mismatches here. As a member of this group, we have been exploring ways to increase pupil awareness of potential career opportunities in the ICT sector with the aim of increasing the numbers of pupils studying computer science at GCSE and GCE.

I have commissioned the development and delivery of a bespoke computer programme of practical pupil engagement activity covering Key Stage 2 – Post 16. The programme, 'IT's Your Choice – A Computer Programming Continuum for Schools', has been designed with the assistance of the sector, will engage over 10,000 pupils annually, and was launched into schools in September 2013.

The Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has also developed a new GCE qualification in 'Software and Systems Development' as part of its expanded portfolio of 'Applied' qualifications and is also currently reviewing the need to develop a progression route from GCSE to the new GCE in Software and Systems Development.

My Department will continue to examine the current provision and range of school computing/ICT qualifications to ensure it meets the needs of our economy and to develop awareness programmes aimed at encouraging more pupils to choose to study relevant subjects such as Computer Science and Maths at A level.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education to list the schools in each sector that have been closed in (i) 2011/12; (ii) 2012/13; and (iii) 2013/14.

(AQW 34996/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

(i) 2011/12

Controlled Primary

- 501-1034 Aghavilly PS
- 201-6376 Ardstraw PS
- 401-1647 Ballykiegle PS
- 201-2392 Drumlegagh PS
- 501-6028 Keady PS
- 401-1688 Redburn PS

Controlled Secondary

- 421-0194 Dunmurray High School
- Controlled Special
- 231-6601 Elmbrook School
- 231-6234 Erne School

Maintained Primary

- 303-0713 Carlane PS
- 203-1886 Coranny PS
- 203-1892 Cornagague PS
- 203-2537 Loreto Convent
- 203-6053 St Colmcille's PS
- 203-2664 St Davog's PS
- 203-2689 St Mary's Boys' PS
- 203-6096 St Mary's Girls' PS

(ii) 2012/13

Controlled Primary

- 101-0296 Ballygolan PS
- 201-2674 Bridgehill PS
- 301-2224 Cullycapple PS
- 301-2255 Drumard PS

Controlled Secondary

- 221-0305 Devenish College
- 321-0013 Garvagh High School
- 221-0080 Lisnaskea High School

Controlled Special

- 231-0029 Altnagelvin Hospital School

Controlled Nursery

- 211-6333 Ballycolman Nursery School

Maintained Primary

- 103-0329 Edmund Rice PS
- 103-6464 Star of the Sea PS
- 103-0316 St Aidan's PS
- 103-0317 St Bernadette's PS
- 203-1888 St Eugene's PS

Maintained Secondary

- 223-0111 St Eugene's High School
- 123-0173 St Gemma's High School
- 223-0181 St Peter's High School

Voluntary Preparatory School

- 362-0012 Dalriada Preparatory Department

(iii) 2013/14**Controlled Secondary**

- 321-0233 Ballee Community High
- 121-0266 Orangefield High School

Controlled Special

- 231-0015 Belmont House School
- 231-6525 Foyle View School

Maintained Primary

- 203-2510 Barrack Street Boys' PS
- 503-1301 Clontifleece PS
- 303-3311 Glenravel PS *
- 203-6389 St Anne's Girls' PS
- 503-1213 St Clare's Convent PS
- 503-1576 St Colman's Abbey PS
- 303-0625 St Mary's PS *

* these schools are in the process of amalgamation and may close at 31 August 2014 or as soon as possible thereafter. However, the Department is awaiting confirmation from the relevant Education and Library Boards and CCMS.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education when the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity programme will be evaluated. **(AQW 34998/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: A series of focus groups involving teachers, youth workers and young people took place in 2012 as part of the evaluation of the effectiveness policy.

The Department also commissioned a module in the 2012 Young Life and Times on young people's experience of the policy, an exercise which is to be repeated in the 2014 Young Life & Times Survey.

An independent review of the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity policy, to be undertaken by the Education Training Inspectorate, is scheduled for autumn 2014.

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Education whether there are trained professionals in each Education and Library Board available to oversee the provision of educational support to students with a muscular dystrophy condition who attend mainstream education.

(AQW 35015/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As muscular dystrophy is a medical condition primary responsibility for the care of pupils rests with the local health trust. Health professionals provide an individual Care Plan for a child which will specify how the child's medical needs are to be met. Health professionals will also train school staff so that they are competent in dealing with all aspects of the Care Plan.

The Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have advised that school Principals, teachers and allied health professionals work together as active partners to ensure the educational and allied health needs of the pupils are successfully met.

At the core of ELB support services is an understanding that the needs of each pupil will be unique depending on the specific presentation of their condition. In all services the nature and extent of the support which is made available to schools is determined by the severity of the special educational needs of the pupils. A range of levels of support are available which are aimed at capacity building for educational professionals and the development of collaborative working practices between schools, ELB services and health trusts.

The Southern Education and Library Board also has a primary and a post-primary Educational Centre for Children with Physical Difficulties (ECPD) attached to mainstream schools. These ECPDs are specifically designed to cater for pupils with physical difficulties, including muscular dystrophy, who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. ECPDs are resourced with their own full-time teacher and two full-time classroom assistants and the Principal has overall responsibility for the educational support within the setting.

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Education to list the special educational needs schools with a hydrotherapy pool on school grounds.

(AQW 35016/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The special schools with a hydrotherapy pool on school grounds are:

	Special School
BELB	Fleming Fulton, Belfast
NEELB	Jordanstown, Newtownabbey Kilronan, Magherafelt Castle Tower, Ballymena Sandelford, Coleraine

	Special School
SEELB	Knockevin, Downpatrick Clifton, Bangor Parkview, Lisburn
SELB	Lisanally, Armagh
WELB	Willowbridge, Enniskillen oyleview, Derry

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education what advice he has received from his departmental officials on the allocation of Peace IV funding for integrated education, which is currently out to public consultation.

(AQW 35032/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Officials in my Department have been liaising with the European Division of the Department of Finance and Personnel and the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) regarding the Peace IV EU Funding for 2014-2020 for education and youth projects. My officials have been keeping me informed as the proposals for the Peace IV programme develop.

I welcome a public consultation by the Special EU Programmes Body on its proposals for European Territorial Co-operation 2014-2020. The draft Peace Co-operation Programme 2014-2020 does not specifically reference integrated education, although it does identify Shared Education as a strategic investment area. I particularly welcome the proposed support for Shared Education which carries a potential European Funding allocation of €45million. Shared Education is a key priority for me and it is also a shared commitment in the Executive's Programme for Government.

As the programme is currently subject to public consultation prior to being submitted to the European Commission for negotiation and final approval, it is too early in the process to consider allocation areas. The consultation document indicates that SEUPB will be the managing authority for the programme and consequently decisions on the allocation of Peace IV funding would be for SEUPB and not my Department. Discussions are still at an early stage as to what, if any, role my Department may have.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education to detail the amount of funding the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education scheme, or its similar preceding policy, received in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35043/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I can confirm that the amount of funding allocated to the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity programme is as follows:

Year	Allocation
2010/11	£1,190,000
2011/12	£1,139,000
2012/13	£1,163,000
2013/14	£1,195,000
2014/15	£1,228,000

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education whether there are any ongoing investigations relating to any Public Private Partnership projects that his Department is associated with; and if so, to detail the projects.

(AQW 35108/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department is not associated with any ongoing investigations relating to its Public Private Partnership projects.

Department for Employment and Learning

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of vacancies currently listed on the job centre website within each District Electoral Area in the Fermanagh District Council area.

(AQW 34552/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): Current vacancy information (30th June 2014) details 32 unfilled vacancies (offering 36 positions) within Fermanagh Local Government District. Official Statistics analysis for 2014 by District Electoral Area will be available in August 2014.

Notes:

1. All statistics are derived from data extracted from the Department for Employment and Learning Client Management System (CMS) on 30th June 2014. Figures are subject to validation and thus should be treated as provisional.
2. These vacancies are current unfilled vacancy positions notified and added to JobCentres / Jobs & Benefits Offices of the Department for Employment and Learning.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, given there is no provision for zero hour contracts in the Northern Ireland Civil Service, to detail (i) why service providers contracted by Departments use zero hour contracts; (ii) whether tenders issued by the Executive for service providers make reference to zero hour contracts; and (iii) whether he intends to address these points in any forthcoming proposals.

(AQW 34654/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department of Finance and Personnel, Central Procurement Directorate's (CPD) standard Conditions of Contract require contractors to perform the contract in accordance with the law. The strategy chosen by the contractor to resource the contract appropriately must therefore comply with employment legislation. Tenders issued by CPD do not make reference to zero hours contracts.

I launched a consultation on 23 June 2014 that seeks to determine the extent of the use of zero hours contracts and to provide a clearer picture of their impact within our economy. I have also commissioned quantitative and qualitative research to provide a better understanding of the numbers of zero hours contracts and the sectors in which they are most prevalent.

The consultation and parallel research will allow me to determine whether there is a need to bring forward legislative proposals or provide clearer information, advice and guidance for employers and employees availing of these contracts, whether within the Northern Ireland Civil Service or otherwise.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail how many Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutes have (i) been operating a budgetary surplus; and (ii) overspent, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34731/11-15)

Dr Farry: For the year ended 31st July 2013 three further education colleges and four higher education institutions reported a historic cost surplus while three further education colleges and no higher education institutions reported a historic cost deficit.

For the year ended 31st July 2012 four further education colleges and four higher education institutions reported a historic cost surplus while two further education colleges and no higher education institutions reported a historic cost deficit.

For the year ended 31st July 2011 four further education colleges and four higher education institutions reported a historic cost surplus while two further education colleges and no higher education institutions reported a historic cost deficit.

These details are taken from the annual audited accounts of the further education colleges and higher education institutions. Further details on these annual financial statements are available on the colleges' and universities' websites.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he has taken to reduce administration and the associated costs in his Department and its arm's-length bodies.

(AQW 34732/11-15)

Dr Farry: In response to Budget 2010 commitments, a Workforce Plan for the Department was developed which included a financial saving of around £2.8 million to be achieved through a reduction of around 97 Full Time Equivalent posts across a range of grades over the term of Budget 2010.

The Department has a number of arms length bodies and the measures taken to reduce administration and the associated costs in these are outlined below.

Ulster Supported Employment Limited (USEL)

USEL has introduced digital assistance where staff can take real time notes and email them back to the office using iPhones. This reduces administration time in the office while adding time for their client interaction.

USEL also introduced client trackers, hosted centrally on the USEL servers, so each office and member of staff can keep client data up to date. This reduces back office administration time and removes the need for additional administration resource.

Labour Relations Agency (LRA)

The Agency is independent of Government and is funded mainly in the form of a grant from the Department for Employment and Learning. The Department reduced the LRA's annual budget by £200,000 in 2011/12, and has maintained it at the reduced baseline level in 2012/13 and 2013/14.

Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)

Following a formal staffing review, staff numbers reduced from 55 to 30 in 2010 and the core administration functions of the organisation are now carried out electronically using electronic communications.

BACS payments made to suppliers have increased year on year and are currently 96% and direct debit payments are actively encouraged and are currently at 56%.

CITB- ConstructionSkills has also been undertaking internal projects since 2012 to introduce a culture of continuous improvement including process mapping of administration processes. The overall reduction in administration and associated costs over the last three years totals £48,000, 3.4% (this includes pension and social security costs).

Further Education Colleges

Administration and associated costs of the further education colleges are an operational matter for the colleges themselves. However, as part of the Budget 2010 Savings Delivery Plan, the Department required the colleges to achieve efficiencies of £4m per annum over the period 2011-2015.

Higher Education Colleges

In the higher education sector I have initiated a project under Graduating to Success. One of the aims of the project is to achieve £30m of efficiency savings by the end of 2014-15. The project is on track to deliver these efficiencies.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the administrative cost of each regional college, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34734/11-15)

Dr Farry: Full details of the income and expenditure of further education colleges are contained in the annual reports and financial statements that are audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. These are laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and, therefore, are available in the Assembly Library. They are also published on the individual college websites.

Administration costs are included within staff costs and other operating expenses. The totals for staff costs and other operating expenses, excluding exceptional costs, are detailed in the tables below. The figures are taken from the audited financial statements of the further education colleges.

Year ended 31st July 2013

	BMC £m	NRC £m	NWRC £m	SERC £m	SRC £m	SWC £m
Staff costs						
Teaching	18.3	15.5	14.7	16.9	15.8	12.4
Support	3.7	2.4	1.6	3.8	3.0	2.2
Administration	9.5	4.8	3.6	6.3	6.1	4.4
Premises	1.9	1.0	0.5	0.4	0.7	0.3
FRS 17 adjustment	0	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1
Total	33.4	23.9	20.5	27.6	25.8	19.4
Other operating expenses						
Direct teaching	1.1	0.9	0.7	0.9	1.9	0.9
Direct support	4.0	2.4	3.2	5.0	4.9	6.7
Administration	2.2	1.9	1.9	1.7	2.2	3.0
Premises	12.7	2.9	6.0	10.7	5.9	9.4
Total	20.0	8.1	11.8	18.3	14.9	20.0

Year ended 31st July 2012

	BMC £m	NRC £m	NWRC £m	SERC £m	SRC £m	SWC £m
Staff costs						
Teaching	20.3	15.2	14.6	16.2	15.8	12.2
Support	3.8	2.4	1.6	3.4	2.8	1.9

Administration	7.5	4.9	3.5	5.8	5.9	3.9
Premises	1.6	1.1	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.3
FRS 17 adjustment	0.0	0.1	0.1	-0.1	0.1	0.1
Total	33.2	23.7	20.3	25.7	25.2	18.4
Other operating expenses						
Direct teaching	1.3	0.8	0.6	0.8	2.3	0.7
Direct support	4.2	2.5	5.2	5.1	4.9	6.5
Administration	2.8	1.9	1.8	1.9	2.3	2.3
Premises	15.3	2.6	5.8	14.5	4.6	9.0
Total	23.6	7.8	13.4	22.3	14.1	18.5

Year ended 31st July 2011

	BMC £m	NRC £m	NWRC £m	SERC £m	SRC £m	SWC £m
Staff costs						
Teaching	24.9	15.9	15.6	16.7	16.3	11.9
Support	4.1	2.6	1.6	2.5	2.4	1.8
Administration	7.5	4.4	3.0	6.1	6.4	3.7
Premises	1.8	1.2	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.3
FRS 17 adjustment	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.2	-0.0	-0.0
Total	38.3	24.2	20.7	26.0	25.8	17.7
Other operating expenses						
Direct teaching	1.5	0.8	0.7	0.7	1.6	0.8
Direct support	4.0	2.6	3.1	4.8	4.9	6.3
Administration	3.2	2.0	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.4
Premises	7.6	3.3	6.4	8.9	4.5	9.7
Total	16.3	8.7	11.9	16.4	13.3	19.2

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he will consider taking steps to reduce the administration cost of Further Education Colleges, to deliver the Executive's education and training targets.
(AQW 34735/11-15)

Dr Farry: Administration and associated costs of the further education colleges are an operational matter for the colleges themselves. However, as part of the Budget 2010 Savings Delivery Plan, the Department required the colleges to achieve efficiencies of £4m per annum over the period 2011-2015.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why applicants for positions at Queen's University are asked to declare their nationality; and whether his Department has considered the potential impact this has on fair employment.
(AQW 34815/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department provides funding to the Higher Education Institutions for teaching and learning and research purposes. The Universities are responsible for their own policies and procedures, including their recruitment processes.

However, departmental officials contacted Queen's University Belfast in relation to this matter and it advised that the University is required to make an annual return, on all staff employed, to the UK's Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). This return includes the completion of a number of specific fields, including the nationality of staff. This information is gathered at the job application stage of the recruitment process.

HESA is the central source for the collection and dissemination of statistics and management information relating to all UK higher education institutions.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, following the article in The Times Higher Education on 26 June 2014 providing a further reference by Queen's University academics to a non-existent book they had claimed to have edited, for his assessment of the damage to the reputation of the university and whether all relevant steps have been taken to deal effectively with this situation; and if so, to detail the steps.

(AQW 34817/11-15)

Dr Farry: I would advise that this is not a matter for me or my Department to provide comment on, nor would I have any remit to intervene.

This is an internal matter for Queen's University, Belfast and it is up to that institution and the individuals involved to assess the impact of the article and take any relevant action deemed necessary.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the main distinctions between Steps 2 Success and Steps to Work.

(AQW 34821/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Steps2Success (S2S) programme has been designed to improve the performance of the Department's employment programmes for eligible jobseekers.

While Steps to Work has had a positive impact there is a need to focus even more on positive outcomes. Steps 2 Success will do this by:

- introducing a stronger emphasis on output related funding for Contracted Providers; and
- reducing the prescriptive elements of the previous programme, allowing Contracted Providers to work with individual clients to agree on a range of supports to assist them to find and keep work.

The following table outlines the main differences between Steps 2 Success and Steps to Work.

	Steps 2 Success (NI)	Steps to Work
Entry to Programme		
Entry points for Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) 18 – 24 year olds.	Mandated after 9 months.	6 months
Entry points for JSA 25+.	Mandated after 12 months.	18 months
JSA early entry	After 3 months for identified groups or clients with significant barriers. Offered from Day One for ex-offenders	Voluntary entry to Step 1 provision from day one of claim. Voluntary entry to Step 2 provision after 13 weeks although Employment Support Adviser discretion is allowed for entry before this.
Employment & Support Allowance (ESA) Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) clients.	Employment Service Adviser discretion identifies suitable provision e.g. S2S, Condition Management Programme, Work Connect	Voluntary entry from day one of claim.
Voluntary access for non-benefit clients	No	Yes

Programme Approach	Steps 2 Success (NI)	Steps to Work
	Providers given flexibility to agree practical support(s) with client.	The Department prescribed the range of supports that can be delivered. These include First Start, Step Ahead 50+, Employer Subsidy, work experience placements, qualifications, help with essential skills and help for those who wish to become self employed.
	Service Guarantee for each conditionality group (JSA/ESA)	Service prescribed by Department. Includes up to 16 weeks advice and guidance by ESA
	Childcare support provided for lone parents.	Childcare support provided for lone parents or those with partners on specific benefits/ programmes.

Programme Approach	Steps 2 Success (NI)	Steps to Work
	Additional funding for providers when participants enter employment and gain recognised qualification .	Specific funding streams for qualifications.
	ESA provision to be in line with current Work Connect provision.	ESA can participate in all elements on a voluntary basis.
Programme duration	Steps 2 Success (NI)	Steps to Work
	Length of time on programme will be 12 months for JSA groups and 18 months for ESA WRAG and harder to help early entry JSA clients.	Most participants will undertake between 8 and 26 weeks. Some participants can avail of up to 78 weeks on Step 2 provision.
	Hours of participation to be agreed between provider and participant. Minimum covered in service guarantee.	Sets hours of participation - 30 per week while on Step 2 provision.
	Benefit Based Training Allowance (BBTA) will only be paid when participants complete more than 30 hours per week.	JSA participants BBTA. All other benefit participants e.g. IS, IB, ESA retain their current benefit and receive a top-up.
Contracting	Steps 2 Success (NI)	Steps to Work
	Northern Ireland divided into three contract areas.	Northern Ireland divided into ten contract areas.
	One lead contractor per area.	One lead contractor per area.
	Contract period four years with option to extend for a further two years.	Contract period three years with two one year extension options.
	Two stage procurement process. Stage 1 selection of organisations to bid in Stage 2; Stage 2 a formal assessment of bids to deliver Steps 2 Success.	One stage procurement process.
	Using price as an element of the procurement process	Price not a determinant.
Supply Chain Management	Steps 2 Success (NI)	Steps to Work
	The breadth and depth of supply chain marked as part of the procurement process.	The breadth and depth of supply chain marked as part of the procurement process.
	A Code of Conduct for lead and sub-Contractors will be included as part of the contract.	No formal Code of Conduct.
	Quality of service will be marked as part of the procurement process.	Quality of service was marked as part of the procurement process.
Balance of Service and Outcome Funding	Steps 2 Success (NI)	Steps to Work
	Baseline performance based on previous performance levels achieved on other Departmental provision e.g. Steps to Work and Pathways to Work.	Baseline performance based on previous performance levels achieved on New Deal programme.
	The funding regime is based on providers receiving 50% of funding as attachment fees and 50% as Output Related Funding if baseline performance is achieved.	It was estimated that providers would receive 60% of funding from attachment fees and 40% from performance related funding.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) what was the annual expenditure on food in (a) Higher Education Institutes; and (b) Further Education Colleges, in each of the last three years; (ii) of this total expenditure, what was the expenditure on food produced in Northern Ireland; and (iii) whether this food is clearly identified as having been produced in Northern Ireland on menus and at point of service.

(AQW 34847/11-15)

Dr Farry:

Higher Education Institutes

The Department for Employment and Learning does not hold the information requested in respect of higher education institutions. The institutions, with the exception of Stranmillis University College, are not classified as public bodies by the Office for National Statistics. Funding provided to the higher education institutions by my Department is for teaching and research purposes only.

In the case of Stranmillis University College, which is a Non-Departmental Public Body, I have referred the question to the Director of the College, who will respond directly to the Member.

Further Education Colleges

The Department for Employment and Learning does not hold the information requested in respect of further education. I have therefore referred the question to the Directors of the six further education colleges, who will respond directly to the Member.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the action he has taken following each public petition presented to the Assembly and forwarded to his Department.

(AQW 34851/11-15)

Dr Farry: Two public petitions have been presented and forwarded to my Department.

In April 2013 a public petition was presented by Pat Ramsey MLA expressing concern at the proposed closure of the crèche facilities at the University of Ulster. The petition referred to job losses, the inconvenience to parents and the adverse impact of the closure on widening participation in higher education.

My officials contacted the University and received assurances that the majority of students with childcare needs choose to avail of the direct financial support available in order to source childcare services closer to their homes and that this financial assistance would continue to be available at current levels.

They were also assured that staff members at the crèche were to be offered alternative employment within the University, with redundancy as a last resort.

Given the continuing levels of financial assistance to student parents there was no recognised detriment to my Department's widening participation agenda. However, in my response to the petition I advised that as part of the delivery of the Access to Success strategy my Department will require each higher education provider to produce a detailed Widening Access and Participation Plan annually which will clearly set out its activities and expenditure to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds and that my officials will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that the closure does not impact adversely on my Department's objectives to widen participation in higher education.

In June 2013 a public petition entitled "Magee Expansion: Time to Make it Happen" was presented by Maeve McLaughlin MLA. This called for the expansion of the Magee campus along the lines of the vision set out in the regeneration plan, "One City, One Plan, One Voice". You will know that there is an interim target within the "One Plan" for an additional 1,000 undergraduate places by 2015. I have worked to increase the number of undergraduate places throughout the Northern Ireland higher education sector. By June 2013 I was able to secure an additional 572 places for the Magee campus. In the 2013-14 academic year I was able to increase this to 625 and in the coming year that number will increase to 652. I believe that this represents good progress towards the 2015 target.

I remain fully committed to the expansion of higher education provision in Northern Ireland and continue to seek opportunities to secure the resources necessary to increase the numbers further. I believe that my approach to the expansion of the Northern Ireland higher education sector, together with the University of Ulster's commitment to deploy its additional places at the Magee campus will benefit all institutions, our economy, and best assist Magee in realising the interim target of 1,000 additional places by 2015.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, in relation to the Graduate Acceleration Programme, to detail (i) the number of applications received; and (ii) the number of graduates who have taken up positions in each of the last two years; and how many places are currently available.

(AQW 34859/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Graduate Acceleration Programme is an integral part of the Department's Steps to Work programme. The Department does not capture information on the number of referral made to or the number of places available on these aspects of Steps to Work provision.

A total of 510 graduates commenced the Graduate Acceleration Programme in the last two years i.e. 250 between April 2012 and March 2013, and 260 between April 2013 and March 2014.

Referrals to the Steps to Work programme, including the Graduate Acceleration Programme, ceased on 30 May 2014. Those graduates referred to the provision up to and including the 30 May 2014 can commence a Graduate Acceleration Programme opportunity until Tuesday 26 August 2014.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the funding that his Department, and its arm's-length bodies, invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014.

(AQW 34883/11-15)

Dr Farry: The tables below set out quantifiable Departmental funding invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014, or as close to these dates as possible. The figures reflect payments made to suppliers, companies and individuals located within the Belfast North Constituency, and can be separated into Programme Spend, Further Education recurrent Grant Funding, and, ESF-Funded Projects.

Programme Spend:

	£
Training for Success	8,821,424
ApprenticeshipsNI	4,108,300
Skills Solutions Customised Training	58,108
Management Leadership Development Programme	51,518
INTRO Graduate Management Development Programme	27,950
Management Analysis & Planning Programme	16,182

Further Education recurrent Grant Funding:

Figures for the Further Education Colleges relate to recurrent grant funding generated by students domiciled in the Belfast North constituency. These figures are not available for the precise months requested but are given for academic years (NB: the 2013/14 figure is provisional at this stage):

	£
2010/11	6,250,559
2011/12	6,881,830
2012/13	7,062,806
2013/14	6,904,207

ESF-Funded Projects:

Priority 1 of the Northern Ireland ESF Programme 2007-13 is entitled 'Helping People into Sustainable Employment' and aims to reduce unemployment and economic inactivity among unemployed people. Of the 95 projects currently funded under Priority 1, thirteen projects are specifically located in North Belfast. The total eligible project cost is detailed below for each relevant project during the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2015. In addition, the Department funds support activity under Priority 3, the technical assistance strand of the ESF programme. This activity is delivered by PROTEUS, an organisation based in North Belfast - funding for this is also listed below.

	£
Ashton Community Trust: Women's Training Project	524,844
Ashton Community Trust: Progress to Employment	1,270,356
Ashton Community Trust: North Belfast Works	1,022,243
Insight Accessibility: Skills to Succeed	421,596
North Belfast Employment Centre: Re-Start	787,570
North Belfast Employment Centre: Improving Your Future Prospects	762,019
North Belfast Partnership: Local Employment Access Partnership (LEAP)	461,711
North City Business Centre: The E-Skills Programme for North Belfast	299,845
North City Training: Young Person's Employability Initiative	1,048,893
North City Training: Grey Workers Programme	475,439

	£
Visual Access NI (Ltd): Skills for Future Employability	228,774
Women's Tec: Extending Training in Communities	1,034,077
Groundwork: REACH	399,455
Proteus: Essential	428,224

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 27940/11-15 and AQW 27938/11-15, what date Queen's University, Belfast first become aware that the chapter, Personalised Classroom Learning by School of Education lecturer, Dr Ron Smith and Professor Tony Gallagher published in the book Education for Inclusion & Diversity did not exist; and to outline the steps taken to address conduct in relation to policy on the use of the research portal and conduct and integrity in research given the assurances he has provided.

(AQW 34908/11-15)

Dr Farry: As previously advised in my responses to AQW 27938/11-15 and AQW 27940/11-15, the accuracy of the bibliographical details contained in any academic publications and the investigation of cases of alleged academic misconduct are not within the remit of my Department.

This is an internal matter for Queen's University Belfast.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much her Department has spent on each of the main five Signature Projects since their introduction.

(AQW 34463/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The Northern Ireland Tourist Board's (NITB) Strategic Framework for Action 2004 – 2007 (SFA) identified five Signature Projects.

These projects were identified for their uniqueness to Northern Ireland, their potential to deliver world-class excellence, and their ability to draw visitors from home and overseas. These were major capital projects which required significant investment from a variety of sources and funding programmes supported and delivered by a wide range of stakeholders. These projects are now mostly complete.

Table 1

Signature Project:	Total Spend: (to the nearest million)
Titanic & Maritime Belfast (See Table 2 below)	£50m
Causeway Coast & Glens (including Giants Causeway Visitor Experience)	£14m
The Walled City	£11m
St. Patrick & Christian Heritage	£ 2m
The Mourne	£ 3m
Total:	£80m

Table 2

Titanic & Maritime Belfast:	Total Spend: ('million)
Titanic Signature Building (including Belfast Harbour Commissioners land donation)	£43.1m
Thompson Dock & Pump-House	£ 0.9m
Re-development of the SS Nomadic	£ 1.6m
Belfast Harbour Pontoon Mooring System	£ 0.5m
Titanic Trails	£ 0.2m
Lagan Legacy	£0.15m
Drawing Offices (on behalf of DETI)	£ 3.6m
Subtotal:	£50m

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what was the total cost of hospitality provided by InterTradelreland and its secretariat in 2013/14.

(AQW 34527/11-15)

Mrs Foster: In the financial year 2013-14, the total cost of hospitality provided by InterTradelreland amounted to £6,149.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department has received notification of the intention by Infrastrata to undertake exploratory drilling in County Antrim; and if so, to detail the content of the notification.

(AQW 34565/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Yes, the company has informed DETI that a prospect underlying Woodburn Forest has been chosen for an exploratory well on Northern Ireland Water owned land 3km northwest of Carrickfergus.

The exploratory drilling will be undertaken under Permitted Development Rights as approved by Department of Environment Planning and is expected to take place this coming Autumn/Winter.

There are three phases in the wellsite operations proposed under permitted development. A brief description and approximate timescales for each phase are as follows:

- (i) The construction of the wellsite and the improvement of the existing access track - expected to take up to 8 weeks;
- (ii) the assembly and installation of drilling equipment and facilities and drilling of the exploratory well - expected to take up to 8 weeks;
- (iii) the well will then be plugged and abandoned and the wellsite restored.

InfraStrata has not yet submitted an Application for Consent to Drill to my Department.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assessment has been made of the value of youth hostels to the economy; and how her Department is promoting and supporting youth hostels.

(AQW 34609/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA) does not hold any data on the number of visitors from outside Northern Ireland who stayed in youth hostels in Northern Ireland. However, the estimated number of overnight trips taken by Northern Ireland residents in hostels is available from the Continuous Household Survey. Due to small sample sizes, figures are subject to large confidence intervals.

In 2013, the estimated number of overnight trips by NI residents in NI hostels was 51,000 with an associated 100,000 nights and £4 million expenditure. Please note that the number of trips and nights are rounded to the nearest thousand and expenditure to the nearest £million.

The past two decades has seen a rise in the youth travel market (which incorporates but is not limited to backpacking) and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) recognises the importance of promoting and supporting youth hostels.

There are currently 46 Hostels certified in Northern Ireland all of which are advertised on the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's consumer website www.discovernorthernireland.com.

Hostel providers have the option to participate in the voluntary NITB quality star rating scheme, which is a useful source of business and marketing advice. The scheme offers a one to five star rating which the Hostels can use to promote their offering to potential guests. NITB has recently awarded the first five star rating to a Hostel in Portrush.

NITB has invested in Hostel quality development training for its advisory staff and is currently undertaking a series of advisory visits to Hostels throughout Northern Ireland to encourage participation in this scheme.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much core funding Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation has accessed in the last five years; and the source of the funding.

(AQW 34688/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation is a Local Enterprise Agency over which Invest NI has no financial or operational responsibility, no core funding has been provided from Invest NI over the past 5 years.

The Regional Start Initiative (RSI) is delivered by Enterprise Northern Ireland (ENI) on behalf of Invest NI, following a successful tender competition. RSI has been operational since October 2012 and CIDO delivers the programme in the Craigavon District Council area on a subcontract basis from ENI. Since the inception of RSI, CIDO have completed 214 business plans (to May 2014) at a total cost of £71,904 (including Vat).

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) for an update on the trade missions she has planned for the next twelve months; (ii) whether she will include the Strabane district as a priority area given the high levels of unemployment, lack of investment and the land available at the 40 acre InvestNI business park; and (iii) whether she will consider including key stakeholders in the economic regeneration of Strabane in any future trade missions.

(AQW 34740/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest Northern Ireland has scheduled over fifty Trade Missions on their current calendar for the fifteen months from Jan 2014 to March 2015 and publish an up to date list on their website. As Minister I seek to support these missions and travel on selected missions to support specific activities in the market.

I promote the whole of Northern Ireland as an attractive, viable location for inward investment opportunities in what is a very competitive global market. The Northern Ireland proposition is based on the availability of a talented workforce, advanced telecoms infrastructure, high skilled business clusters, a pro-business environment, competitive operating costs and proximity to major markets. Ultimately, the investor makes the decision as to where they visit and locate in Northern Ireland, based on their specific business needs and having considered all the options available to them.

The Trade Mission focus is the development of appropriate sales channels for local businesses to sell Northern Ireland products and services in international markets and so would not be the correct vehicle for stakeholders seeking to secure inward investment.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 34690/11-15, to detail why the information requested on InvestNI's performance in (i) AQW 32727/11-15; (ii) AQW 32720/11-15; (iii) AQW 32719/11-15; and (iv) AQW 32718/11-15 has not been provided.

(AQW 35117/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI has just released information on the regional breakdown of its 2013-14 end of year results. I have asked them to prepare responses to your questions and I will write to you separately with the information you requested.

Department of the Environment

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the external reports or consultations commissioned and funded by his Department in each of the last three years; and the cost of each report or publication commissioned.

(AQW 34077/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The Department's work involves regular consultation exercises and commissioning scientific and other research, some of which leads to the production of reports. Some of these reports may be internal, some circulated amongst specialists in the area concerned, and some published for wider availability. The tables attached provide a list of consultations and readily identifiable external research exercises which will have led to the production of reports, although not all of these reports would have been destined or designed for wider publication or circulation.

Also some of the research will have been carried out under the terms of composite research contracts with academic institutions and other research bodies. In these instances the costs are incorporated within the overall expenditure on the relevant contract(s).

In those cases where a consultation exercise was managed as an in-house exercise using departmental staff, the costs of these aspects of their work cannot be readily separated from their other work and thus have not been costed separately.

2011/12

Description	Type	Cost
Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy 2006 -2020 Addendum and Delivery Programme	Consultation	£998
Strangford Lough Byelaw	Consultation	£1,500
Invasive Species Strategy	Consultation	£2,000
Enabling Legislation National Parks	Consultation	£2,000
Access to Driver Licensing Records	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) (Amendment) Regulations 2012	Consultation	£1,000
Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Bill – Fixed Penalty Notices	Consultation	£1,750
Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Bill – Litter	Consultation	£1,240
Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Bill – Gating Orders	Consultation	£1,432
Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Bill – Noise & Statutory Nuisance	Consultation	£1,672
Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Bill – Dog Control Orders	Consultation	£1,060

Description	Type	Cost
Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Bill – Nuisance Parking and Abandoned Vehicles	Consultation	£1,966
Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Bill – Defacement Removal Notices	Consultation	£1,600
Proposals for a Charge on Single Use Carrier Bags	Consultation	£1,700
Review of and consultation on the Identification of Bathing Waters in Northern Ireland 2011	Consultation	£945
Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act (NI) 2010- Goods Vehicle Operator Fees	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Historic Street Conservation Area Draft Guide	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Clarendon Street Conservation Area Draft Design Guide	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act (NI) 2010- Transitional Arrangements	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
High Hedges Fee Regulations	Consultation	£1,000
High Hedges Act - Guidance	Consultation	£2,100
Consultation on the Waste Management Duty of Care Code of Practice	Consultation	£1,000
Environmental Governance in Northern Ireland Discussion Document	Consultation	Minimal in house costs.
Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2012	Consultation	£1,581
Pollution, Prevention and Control (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2011	Consultation	£1,512
Pollution Prevention and Control (Amendment) (No 2) Regulations (NI) 2011	Consultation	£1,360
Draft Policy HS 3 (Amended) Travellers Accommodation	Consultation	£776
Supplementary Planning Guidance - Policy PED 8: 'Development Incompatible with Economic Development Uses'	Consultation	£935
Clarendon Street Conservation Area Draft Design Guide	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Reform of the L and R Driver Schemes and on Graduated Driver Licensing	Consultation	£19,834
The EC Roadworthiness Directive – Proposed Changes to the MOT Test	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Fire Extinguishers in Motor Vehicles	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Proposal on Possible Exemption of Certain Categories of Historic Vehicles from MOT Testing	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Consultation on implementing EC Regulations 1071/2009, 1072/2009 and 1073/2009 on road transport operations and on new fitness and finance requirements for Own Account operators	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Consultation on Demolition and Development	Consultation	£1,000
Consultation on Taxi Vehicle Licensing, Powers of Seizure and Courtesy Transport licensing	Consultation	£8,945
Consultation on Maximum Fare and Taximeter regulations	Consultation	£2,859

Description	Type	Cost
PA Consulting Review of Taxi Tariffs Structure & Levels	External Research/Report	£73,960
Dr James Cooper's Review of Taxi Ranks & Exclusion Zones	External Research/Report	£9,999
Improving the Road Safety of Older People	External Research/Report	£15,305
Child Road Safety and Poverty	External Research/Report	£8,596
Children and Young People Rural Road Safety	External Research/Report	£4,229
Lagan Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Consultation	Under £250
Guidance on Councillors' Allowances	Consultation	£117
Local Government Pension Scheme(Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2012	Consultation	£60
Draft NI Marine Position Paper	Consultation	£1,886
Guide to Making Information Accessible	Consultation	Minimal in house costs
Equality Scheme	Consultation	Minimal in house costs
SGS O ISO Quality Assessment	External Research/Report	£5,366
Rural Design Guide	External Research/Report	£40,000
The Writing of Issue Papers for the Development of a new Outdoor Recreation Plan for NI	External Research/Report	£8,228
Mourne Strategic Path Review	External Research/Report	£18,060
Technical Review & Determination of PPC and PAD Applications	External Research/Report	£26,000
Landfill Monitoring Validation	External Research/Report	£28,650
Northern Ireland Litter Survey	External Research/Report	£14,630
Beach Litter Monitoring Report	External Research/Report	£37,800
Research into Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons	External Research/Report	£25,932
Air Pollution in Northern Ireland	External Research/Report	£12,136
Construction, Demolition and Excavation Waste Arisings, Use and Disposal in NI	External Research/Report	£81,624
Northern Ireland Commercial and Industrial Waste Estimates	External Research/Report	£10,000
NI Countryside Survey	External Research/Report	£90,000
UK Marine SPA Programme	External Research/Report	£12,425
Survey & Monitoring of Semi-Natural Habitats in NI. -	External Research/Report	£32,500
ES2K Magazine	External Research/Report	£5,000
Analysis of water quantity monitoring data: Fardrum & Roosky Turlough SAC/ASSI	External Research/Report	£11,000
Earth Science Condition Site monitoring methodologies	External Research/Report	£6,200
Identification and Survey of Nationally Important Marine Features (NIMF) 2009-2011	External Research/Report	£6,400
Irish Whales & Dolphin Group ISCOPE III	External Research/Report	£7,886
Survey, Monitoring & Advisory Services for Species Features on Designated Sites	External Research/Report	£15,000
Seals thermal imagery	External Research/Report	£15,534
Rathlin Seabird monitoring	External Research/Report	£15,000

Description	Type	Cost
Bat Landscapes project	External Research/Report	£6,000
Pine Marten survey	External Research/Report	£5,000
Brent Goose Research Programme	External Research/Report	£7,500
Id of National important marine features 2011-14	External Research/Report	£20,000
Estimating economic value for ecosystems in coastal areas	External Research/Report	£35,000
Monitoring methods contract	External Research/Report	£7,093
Study on genetic composition of red grouse on the island of Ireland	External Research/Report	£2,000
Assessment of the Reproductive Capacity of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel in Northern Ireland	External Research/Report	£231,000
Using morphometrics to choose optimal captive brood stock for the Freshwater Pearl Mussel	External Research/Report	
Freshwater Pearl Mussel Survey of Northern Ireland 2011	External Research/Report	
Hen Harrier Satellite Tracking Pilot Survey	External Research/Report	
Methodology for Digitally Abstracting the Belfast Harbour Tide Gauge Record	External Research/Report	
Protocols for the Ex-Situ Conservation and Reintroduction of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel in Northern Ireland	External Research/Report	
Factors Limiting Reproductive Success of the Common Gull at the Copeland Island SPA	External Research/Report	
Post Mortem Examination of a Wild Muntjac from Northern Ireland	External Research/Report	
European hare invasion ecology; implications for the conservation of the endemic Irish hare	External Research/Report	
Modelling distributional trends to develop management strategies for endangered species	External Research/Report	
The pitfall with PIT tags: marking freshwater bivalves for translocation induces short-term behavioural costs	External Research/Report	
Applying species distribution modelling to identify areas of high conservation value for globally endangered species: a case study using <i>Margaritifera Margaritifera</i>	External Research/Report	
Developing strategies for introductions of captive-bred <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> into the wild	External Research/Report	
Localised control of an introduced predator ; creating problems for the future?	External Research/Report	
Absence of effects of predator control on nesting success of Northern Lapwings <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> : implications for conservation	External Research/Report	
Changes in the prevalence of badger persecution in Northern Ireland	External Research/Report	

Description	Type	Cost
Stable breeding despite variable feeding in two sympatric auk species	External Research/Report	£231,000
Monitoring and population estimation of the European badger in Northern Ireland.	External Research/Report	
Quantifying forage specialisation in polyphagic insects: the polylectic and rare solitary bee	External Research/Report	
Invasional meltdown : evidence for unexpected consequences and cumulative impacts of multispecies invasions	External Research/Report	
Multicolony tracking reveals the winter distribution of a pelagic seabird on an ocean basin scale	External Research/Report	
Foraging trip time-activity budgets and reproductive success in the black-legged kittiwake.	External Research/Report	
Ageing slipper limpet (<i>Crepidula fornicata</i>) shells from Belfast Lough	External Research/Report	
Gizzard contents and morphometrics of overwintering diving ducks shot at Lough Neagh	External Research/Report	(incl. in £231k above)
The importance of population genetic information in formulating ex-situ conservation strategies for the freshwater pearl Mussel in Northern Ireland	External Research/Report	

2012/13

Description	Type	Cost
Consultation on Revising the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy	Consultation	£4,000
Proposed Snares Order	Consultation	£1,500
Proposed Amendment to Driving Licence Fees	Consultation	Minimal in house costs.
The Draft Single Use Carrier Bags Charge Regulations (NI) 2012	Consultation	£1,500
2012 Review of Shellfish Water Designations Under The Shellfish Waters Directive; and The Protection of Shellfish Waters Beyond 2013	Consultation	£943
Review of Regulatory Charging Policy 2010-2013	Consultation	Minimal in house costs
The Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions – NIEA) Charging Scheme (NI) 2012	Consultation	£4,000
The consolidated Greenhouse Gas Emissions Charging Scheme (NI) 2013	Consultation	£1,500
Consultation on the timetable of the work programme for the production of the second cycle of river basin management plans.	Consultation	£2,500
The draft Waste (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013	Consultation	£1,000
The Controlled Waste and Duty of Care Regulations (NI) 2013	Consultation	£1,000
Noise Mapping Action Planning, Technical Guidance for Roads, Railways and Airports	Consultation	£1,161
Pollution, Prevention and Control Regulations (NI) 2012	Consultation	£1,161
Road Traffic (Drink Driving) (Amendment) Bill and Additional Measures to tackle drink and drug driving in Northern Ireland	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Consultation on Proposed Changes to Permitted Development Rights for Agricultural Buildings and Plant	Consultation	£1,000

Description	Type	Cost
Mutual Recognition of Penalty Points Between Northern Ireland and Ireland	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Proposal for Mandatory Wearing of Helmets on Quadricycles	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Consultation on Special Occasion and Novelty Vehicle Licensing	Consultation	£6,688
Consultation on Taxi Operator Licensing Fixed Penalties	Consultation	£6,228
Consultation on Goods Vehicle Operator Licensing Fixed Penalty	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Review of the Cycling Proficiency Scheme	External Research/Report	£25,240
Improving the Road Safety of Older People	External Research/Report	£4,850
Marine Strategy Framework Directive Consultation	Consultation	£1,000
Statement of Public Participation	Consultation	£2,520
Draft NI Marine Litter Strategy	Consultation	£1,115
Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2013	Consultation	£25
DFP – Public Service Pensions Bill - Policy consultation	Consultation	£350
Review of Local Government Staff Commission	Consultation	Minimal in house costs
Guide to making Information Accessible	Consultation	Minimal in house costs
Draft Urban Design Guide	External Research/Report	£50,000
State of the Environment Report	External Research/Report	£13,550
Economic Value of Outdoor Recreation in NI	External Research/Report	£19,520
Causeway Coast Way and Ulster Way Dooninnish Path Restoration	External Research/Report	£10,000
Report on a Alleged Public Right of Way	External Research/Report	£2,937
Ciulcagh Path Trail Design	External Research/Report	£8,757
Mourne Wildlife Survey	External Research/Report	£2,500
Economic Report into the Value of the Historic Environment	External Research/Report	£28,886
Technical Review of Derg and Bradan	External Research/Report	£4,878
Landfill Monitoring Validation	External Research/Report	£22,920
Northern Ireland Litter Survey	External Research/Report	£19,360
Beach Litter Monitoring Report	External Research/Report	£30,000
Air Pollution in Northern Ireland	External Research/Report	£12,501
Survey, Monitoring & Advisory Servs for Species Features on Designated sites	External Research/Report	£15,000
ID of National Important Marine Features 2011-2014	External Research/Report	£27,000
Micro-lepidopetra	External Research/Report	£15,000
Breeding Wader Assessment ASSIs	External Research/Report	£12,500
Brent Goose Research Programme	External Research/Report	£7,500
Seabird Research Co-Ordinator	External Research/Report	£13,618
Earth Science 2k Magazine	External Research/Report	£5,000
Invasive Species Phase 2	External Research/Report	£48,000
Copeland Tearn Monitoring	External Research/Report	£9,920

Description	Type	Cost
L Neagh Great Crested Grebe monitoring	External Research/Report	£7,250
Marsh Fritillary Survey	External Research/Report	£30,000
Fish Reports Article 17 Reporting	External Research/Report	£10,650
Lakes Reports Article 17 Reporting	External Research/Report	£3,575
Bat Reports Article 17 Reporting	External Research/Report	£8,915
Woodlands Reports Article 17 Reporting	External Research/Report	£4,109
Uplands Reports Article 17 Reporting	External Research/Report	£5,789
Daubenton's Bat Waterway monitoring & Car based Bat monitoring	External Research/Report	£4,786
British Mycological Society Fungi Survey 2012	External Research/Report	£5,000
Dragonfly Guide	External Research/Report	£15,000
Bird Atlas GB and Ireland - Data analysis & text preparation	External Research/Report	£6,400
ISCOPE111	External Research/Report	£6,000
Economic Benefit of Outdoor Recreation	External Research/Report	£3,750
Crayfish	External Research/Report	£873
NI Breeding Bird Survey	External Research/Report	£19,000
Wetlands Field guide	External Research/Report	£2,000
Rapid Marine Survey for invasive alien species in NI	External Research/Report	£9,640
Nitrogen deposition/management	External Research/Report	£3,205
Funding for IUCN Peatland Work	External Research/Report	£7,500
Quantitative monitoring and water quality analysis Fardrum & Roosky Turloughs SAC	External Research/Report	£53,000
Sediment monitoring of Strangford Lough	External Research/Report	£10,000
Wildfire Management	External Research/Report	£5,000
Zebra Mussels survey of Lough Neagh	External Research/Report	£3,000
ESCR site monitoring	External Research/Report	£17,302
Chalara Ash die-back research funding	External Research/Report	£14,000
Foraging ecology and reproductive success of the black-legged kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> , common guillemot <i>Uria aalge</i> and razorbill <i>Alca torda</i> .	External Research/Report	£285,000
National Otter Survey of Ireland 2010/12.	External Research/Report	
Squirrelpox virus in Northern Ireland: quantifying the risk to red squirrels.	External Research/Report	
Bat Survey of Crom Estate 2012, Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland.	External Research/Report	
Potential swarming sites for bats in Northern Ireland.	External Research/Report	
Assessing the impact of shore-based shellfish collection on under-boulder communities in Strangford Lough.	External Research/Report	
Intertidal seagrass survey of Strangford, Carlingford and Killough, Northern Ireland 2012.	External Research/Report	
Conservation genetics of the Yellow Marsh Saxifrage (<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>) in Ireland.	External Research/Report	
Protocols for the ex-situ conservation and reintroduction of the freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> in Northern Ireland.	External Research/Report	
Post-mortem examination of a wild muntjac from Northern Ireland.	External Research/Report	

Description	Type	Cost
Conservation genetics of Ireland's sole population of the River water crowfoot (<i>Ranunculus fluitans</i> Lam.).	External Research/Report	
Rapid climate driven shifts in wintering distributions of three common waterbird species.	External Research/Report	
Conservation status and reproduction of the critically endangered freshwater pearl mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>).	External Research/Report	
Assessing the extent to which temporal changes in waterbird community composition are driven by either local, regional or global factors.	External Research/Report	
Ecological impacts of an invasive predator explained and predicted by comparative functional responses.	External Research/Report	
Diet of Black-legged Kittiwakes (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) feeding chicks at two Irish colonies highlights the importance of clupeids.	External Research/Report	
Foraging trip time-activity budgets and reproductive success in the black-legged kittiwake.	External Research/Report	
Multicolony tracking reveals the winter distribution of a pelagic seabird on an ocean basin scale.	External Research/Report	
Range expansion in an invasive small mammal: the influence of life-history and habitat quality.	External Research/Report	

2013/14

Description	Type	Cost
Amending Directive 2012/36/EU - Consultation on Further European Changes to Driving Licences and Driving Test Requirements	Consultation	£100
Consultation on the Carriage and Consumption of Alcohol on Public Service Vehicles	Consultation	£1,200
Consultation on Single Tier Taxi Licensing	Consultation	£6,978
Consultation on Taxi Driver Test and Periodic Training	Consultation	£1,288
Consultation on Wheelchair Accessible Taxis	Consultation	£2,369
Consultation on Amendments to the Vehicle Test Certificate as required by the Roadworthiness Directive 2010/48/EU	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Consultation on proposed exemption for police use of in-car screens	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Consultation on HGV Road User Levy	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Consultation on EU regulation 181/2011	Consultation	Minimal in-house costs
Integrated Transport Planning report on Wheelchair Accessible Taxis	External Research/Report	£129,988
DVAL – Oxford Economics – Economic Impact Assessment	External Research/Report	£9,950
Councillors' Remuneration Panel for Northern Ireland	External Research/Report	£55,000
Town Centre Research Report	External Research/Report	£70,000
Strategic Environmental Assessment for Single Planning Policy Statement.	External Research/Report	£25,000
	External Research/Report	
A Review of Waste Disposal at the Mobyuoy Site	External Research/Report	£30,900
Baseline Survey on the condition of Listed Buildings	External Research/Report	£77,840

Description	Type	Cost
Scoping Study for Technical Support Services for Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species	External Research/Report	£14,880
West Belfast Urban Fringe Study	External Research/Report	£5,000
Northern Ireland Seascape Character Assessment	External Research/Report	£28,700
Landfill Monitoring Validation	External Research/Report	£17,400
Northern Ireland Litter Survey	External Research/Report	£19,630
Feasibility Study at Dundrum Castle	External Research/Report	£23,440
Air Pollution in Northern Ireland	External Research/Report	£12,876
Generic Learning Outcomes : Dunluce Project	External Research/Report	£2,961
Restoration and Long Term Monitoring of Modiolus Modiolus in Strangford Lough	External Research/Report	£297,614
Feasibility Study at Tullaghogue Fort	External Research/Report	£24,915
Breeding Wader Assessment ASSIs	External Research/Report	£19,150
Brent Goose Research Programme	External Research/Report	£7,500
Seabird Research Co-Ordinator	External Research/Report	£13,618
Earth Science 2K Magazine	External Research/Report	£5,000
NWCU	External Research/Report	£5,000
Daubenton's Bat Waterway monitoring & Car based Bat monitoring	External Research/Report	£7,000
Quantitative monitoring and water quality analysis Fardrum & Roosky Turloughs SAC	External Research/Report	£36,800
NI Seascape character assessment	External Research/Report	£28,700
Sediment monitoring of Strangford Lough	External Research/Report	£25,188
NI Peatland Survey Pilot	External Research/Report	£29,000
NI Breeding Wader Survey	External Research/Report	£29,910
NI Breeding Bird Survey 2013	External Research/Report	£22,142
Freshwater monitoring surveillance	External Research/Report	£10,000
Survey of Marsh Frit Webs	External Research/Report	£29,000
Raptor Study	External Research/Report	£30,000
Micro-lepidoptera Survey of NI	External Research/Report	£18,817
Zebra Mussel Survey	External Research/Report	£2,500
Article 17 Report Bats	External Research/Report	£6,500
EU Nature Conservation Law and Single Farm Payments.	External Research/Report	
Squirrelpox virus in Northern Ireland: quantifying the risk to red squirrels.	External Research/Report	
The causes of diving duck population declines on Lough Neagh, Northern Ireland.	External Research/Report	
Confirmation of swarming sites for bats in Northern Ireland.	External Research/Report	
Population genetics of ash trees (Fraxinus excelsior) in Ireland.	External Research/Report	
Scoping of marsh fritillary genetic markers.	External Research/Report	
Scoping of white-clawed crayfish Austroptamobius pallipes detection using environmental or eDNA.	External Research/Report	
A review of the impacts of wind energy developments on biodiversity.	External Research/Report	

Description	Type	Cost
Quantifying the impact of wildfires in Northern Ireland: Interim Report 2014.	External Research/Report	
Muntjac Deer Survey 2013-14, Ards Peninsula, Northern Ireland.	External Research/Report	
Determining the value of peatland in Northern Ireland.	External Research/Report	
Quantifying the impact of grazing by wild rabbits and conservation grazing by cattle on sand dunes in Northern Ireland.	External Research/Report	
Identifying optimal feeding habitat and proposed Marine Protected Areas (pMPAs) for the Blacklegged kittiwake (<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>) suggests a need for complementary management approaches.	External Research/Report	
Ageing slipper limpet (<i>Crepidula fornicata</i>) shells from Belfast Lough.	External Research/Report	
Gizzard contents and morphometrics of overwintering diving ducks shot at Lough Neagh.	External Research/Report	
Ringling and recovery data provide little utility in detecting migratory short-stopping of diving ducks throughout Europe.	External Research/Report	
Detecting detectability: identifying and correcting bias in binary wildlife surveys demonstrates their potential impact on conservation assessments.	External Research/Report	
Retrospective genetic monitoring of the threatened Yellow marsh saxifrage (<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>) reveals genetic erosion but provides valuable insights for conservation strategies.	External Research/Report	
Chlorophyll-a concentrations and macroinvertebrate declines coincident with collapse of overwintering diving duck populations in a large eutrophic lake.	External Research/Report	
Historical data reveal power-law dispersal patterns of invasive plant species.	External Research/Report	
Combining global climate and regional landscape models to improve invasion risk models.	External Research/Report	
Assessment of commercial sand barge radar for enumerating overwintering diving ducks at Lough Neagh.	External Research/Report	
Squirrelpox Virus: Assessing Prevalence	External Research/Report	£390,000
Covering over the cracks in conservation assessments at EU interfaces: a cross-jurisdictional ecoregion scale approach using the Eurasian otter (<i>Lutra</i>)	External Research/Report	(incl. in £390k above)

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration was given to Driver and Vehicle Agency staff with cardiac and severe respiratory conditions, when determining exemption from transfer to other areas of work.
(AQW 34427/11-15)

Mr Durkan: All surplus staff affected by the decision to centralise vehicle licensing services in Swansea were given the opportunity to submit a DOE Relocation Disability Assessment form if they believed they had a disability or significant medical condition which might restrict their mobility in a redeployment situation.

The assessment form made clear that up-to-date medical evidence should be provided which would identify the individual's specific medical condition and support a claim for restricted mobility.

In most cases the medical evidence was provided in sealed envelopes which were passed on to the Occupational Health Service (OHS) to allow it to carry out the assessments. My Department would not therefore be able to comment on the consideration given to specific medical conditions as the assessments were carried out by an independent body.

However in the assessment form it was confirmed that the OHS adviser's assessment will be based on the specific medical evidence submitted by the employee assessed against set criteria. I am satisfied that this process ensures that assessments are carried out on a consistent basis.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33483/11-15, to set out the legacy and systemic issues referred to in his answer.

(AQW 34537/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The issues referred to relate to structures, resources and procedures within and between parts of my Department. As set out in the previous answer I am taking measures to address these issues.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33483/11-15, whether his proposal to include a review of extant permissions on a phased basis is because the approach set out in his answer to AQW 29460/11-15 did not comply with the Habitats Regulations; and whether this review will be completed for all European sites before planning responsibilities are passed over to the new local authorities.

(AQW 34538/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department's approach to the timing and phasing of a review has been a consequence of constraints around the availability of resources within the Department. As set out in my previous answer, I am taking measures to address these issues.

It is unlikely that the review will be completed before the transfer of planning powers to Councils. The Department is currently working through the arrangements around the transfer of particular functions to councils, including the Minerals function.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33483/11-15, why his Department did not comply with its own Habitats Regulations which required the review of extant planning permissions likely to affect European sites; and what assurances he can give that no liabilities will be placed on the new local authorities as a result of this legacy.

(AQW 34539/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department's approach to the timing and phasing of a review has been a consequence of constraints around the availability of resources within the Department. As set out in my previous answer, I am taking measures to address these issues.

The Department is currently working through the arrangements around the transfer of particular functions to councils, and this issue forms part of that consideration.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment how he will address the needs of non-farming rural dwellers under the new Strategic Planning Policy Statement.

(AQW 34592/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In recognition of the continued interest on this issue I agreed to reconsider it as part of the consultation on the new single Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS). I aim to ensure that the rural planning policy set out in that document will adequately manage growth in the countryside to achieve appropriate and sustainable patterns of development that meet the needs of current and future generations of farming and non-farming rural dwellers.

The consultation on the SPPS has now closed and my officials are currently analysing the responses that have been received, including those that raise rural planning policy issues. When this work is concluded I will advise members on my policy position as regards non-farming rural dwellers.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment how many schools in each constituency are yet to be enrolled in the Eco-Schools programme.

(AQW 34598/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Eco-Schools Programme is now operating in 1,159 schools across Northern Ireland, which represents 96.5% of all schools. By constituency, the number of schools still to register is shown in the table below:

Number of Schools to Register	Constituency
0	East Londonderry
1	Belfast North
1	Newry and Armagh
1	East Antrim
1	Upper Bann
1	Belfast East
1	Belfast West
2	West Tyrone
2	South Down

Number of Schools to Register	Constituency
2	Mid Ulster
3	South Antrim
3	Fermanagh & South Tyrone
3	Belfast South
3	Lagan Valley
4	Foyle
4	North Down
5	North Antrim
5	Strangford

Work will continue in September when the new school year commences to encourage the remaining 42 schools to register with the Programme.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the relationship between the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency and the Driver and Vehicle Agency, including accountability mechanisms on governance, operational independence and recruitment.

(AQW 34625/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) and the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) are operationally independent organisations with separate accountability mechanisms, governance structures and recruitment practices. However, both organisations co-operate on issues of mutual interest, including the application of similar driver and vehicle testing standards, where appropriate.

The DVA Chief Executive is responsible for the day to day delivery of services, including driver and vehicle testing, driver and operator licensing and related enforcement activities. DVA's Chief Executive is accountable through the Department of the Environment's Permanent Secretary to the Minister of the Environment. DVA staff are employees of the DOE and are recruited in accordance with the Northern Ireland Civil Service recruitment policies and procedures.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment, following the introduction in January 2015 of the Power of Seizure regulations regarding taxi licensing, what additional resources and posts will be required to implement these new powers.

(AQW 34666/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Powers of Seizure regulations will be administered through the Driver and Vehicle Agency's existing Public Service Vehicle enforcement teams in Belfast and Newbuildings. There are no immediate plans to increase resources or to create additional posts, however, DVA will continue to monitor and review its wider resourcing requirements as the remaining aspects of the Taxi Act are implemented.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, further to his statement on the proposed taxis amendment, how he intends to enhance facilities for the consumer, when some providers will be affected and suffer loss.

(AQW 34669/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The changes that will be made in implementing the provisions of the Taxis Act (NI) 2008 include:

- the reform of the taxi licensing regime, including single tier licensing throughout Northern Ireland, replacing the current differing provisions in Belfast;
- the reintroduction of a taxi test for new drivers and new periodic training for all taxi drivers;
- a mandatory requirement for taxis to have taximeters and printers installed and also adhere to a new maximum fare; and
- a new, improved, specification for wheelchair accessible taxis.

The proposals will have many benefits for the consumer, including:

- increasing choice for consumers in terms of which taxi they can use;
- improving the availability of taxis in Belfast city centre, particularly at peak times;
- lessening public confusion as to which taxis can be hailed in different circumstances;
- raising standards through testing and periodic training, with a mandatory requirement to undertake training in disability awareness;
- more transparent pricing and protection against overcharging; and
- more accessible wheelchair accessible taxis.

The proposed changes will enhance the reputation of the taxi industry as a whole, increasing the confidence of the public in Northern Ireland using taxis.

I am convinced that any sector of the industry that provides a good quality and price-competitive service will be able to thrive in the improved regulatory regime that the Taxis Act provides for.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment what are the consequences of a tour bus operator habitually departing from the route specified in its licence.

(AQW 34672/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Any changes to the licensed services by a tour bus operator are required to be approved in advance by the Department otherwise the operator would be in breach of a condition of their licence.

In the event of such breaches, there are a range of measures available to the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA), commencing with interviewing the operator regarding compliance issues. The DVA can take prosecution actions on foot of licence breaches, and ultimately may curtail, or revoke operator licences.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of his Department's responsibility for issuing route-specific licences to tour bus operators, what consultation the Department of Finance and Personnel held with his Department before it was determined that tour buses could no longer enter and leave the Stormont Estate by the Massey Avenue entrance.

(AQW 34673/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Driver & Vehicle Agency was not consulted on this issue. However I can confirm that discussions between my Department and the Department of Finance and Personnel have resolved this issue and the decision to stop tour buses entering and leaving the Stormont Estate by the Massey Avenue entrance has been rescinded.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of the Environment why it is not possible to pay vehicle excise duty fees for vehicles which have a Statutory Off Road Notification at all Post Office branches.

(AQW 34674/11-15)

Mr Durkan: By way of background, vehicle licensing is an excepted matter, and is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport. It is administered in Northern Ireland by the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) under a formal agreement between the Department of the Environment and the Department for Transport (DfT). The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is responsible for vehicle licensing policy matters across the United Kingdom and provides the necessary funding for the vehicle and registration services delivered by DVA in Northern Ireland.

Indefinite SORN was introduced on 16 December 2013 and removed the requirement for customers to renew a SORN every year. A SORN declaration now remains in force until the vehicle is taxed, sold, permanently exported or scrapped (via an Authorised Treatment Facility (ATF)). This change was introduced throughout the United Kingdom and removed the need to send out renewal reminders for vehicles with a SORN declaration in force.

While the introduction of Indefinite SORN removed the unnecessary burden of annual renewal, this also means that customers who wish to licence a vehicle with a SORN declaration must do so using a 'V10 (NI) – Vehicle Licence Application' form. This service is currently available from any DVA local motor tax office, by post to Coleraine or from a limited number of Post Office branches.

The DVA has, for many years, pressed DVLA to provide funding to develop online and other improved services for motorists in Northern Ireland, including enhanced Post Office services, to bring them into line with what is available in Great Britain. However, DVLA has robustly resisted such changes and believes the most effective and economical way to deliver these services in Northern Ireland is by developing a fully integrated IT system for the whole of the United Kingdom.

You will be well aware that the Department for Transport in London is introducing new arrangements for vehicle licensing and registration services in Northern Ireland. After 17 July 2014 the DVA in Northern Ireland will no longer tax and register vehicles. This will become the responsibility of the DVLA in Swansea from Monday 21 July 2014. From this date customers will be able to tax a SORNed vehicle using DVLA's online relicensing facility, via its automated telephone system or at all Post Office branches that offer vehicle relicensing services.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment whether training concerning driving in close proximity to cyclists will be included in the new taxi driver test and future taxi driver training requirements.

(AQW 34675/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A taxi driving test for new taxi drivers is scheduled to be introduced in October 2014. The test will be in two parts, a theory test and a practical driving test. These tests have been developed to take account of a candidate's knowledge of driving theory, the rules of the road, best driving practice and a candidate's ability to cope with all on-road situations encountered during the practical test. The tests are designed to assess a driver's knowledge, ability and skills to drive safely. Both the theory test and practical driving test place a high importance on cyclist safety.

Taxi periodic training is scheduled to be introduced in September 2015 and will require all taxi drivers to complete 21 hours periodic training every three years. The training will be delivered by approved training providers who will develop and register

their training courses with the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA). One of the subject areas to be covered by the training is 'vulnerable road users' and as such, training providers can develop courses to include driving in close proximity to cyclists.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of the Environment how many illegal taxis were detected in (i) Limavady; and (ii) Coleraine in each of the last three years; and what action was taken in each case.

(AQW 34708/11-15)

Mr Durkan: DVA Enforcement Officers inspected 3331 taxis for compliance with legal requirements in the Limavady and Coleraine areas in the last three years. The tables below identify numbers of vehicles detected and the nature of the enforcement action taken.

Limavady

Sanction Imposed	11/12 (Apr-Mar)	12/13 (Apr-Mar)	13/14 (Apr-Mar)
Prosecution	1	0	0
Fixed Penalty Notice	0	4	3
Prohibition Notice*	2	1	5
Defect Notice**	4	8	9
Total Inspections	17	38	46

Coleraine

Sanction Imposed	11/12 (Apr-Mar)	12/13 (Apr-Mar)	13/14 (Apr-Mar)
Prosecution	2	1	3
Fixed Penalty Notice	5	2	5
Prohibition Notice*	1	2	5
Defect Notice**	7	10	15
Total Inspections	48	81	103

1 Figures are DOE Official Statistics.

* A Prohibition Notice is issued where one or more serious defects are identified in order to restrict the continued use of the offending vehicle on a road.

** A Defect Notice is issued where minor defects are identified and requires the owner of the vehicle to present it at a Vehicle Testing Centre within 14 days for further inspection.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment for his definition of the term 'mini fall off' as used by Rathlin Energy.
(AQW 34729/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A 'mini fall off test' is a method for determining potential oil and gas reservoir properties, such as the permeability of a reservoir.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has had any discussions with UNESCO on the future designation of the Giants Causeway as a world heritage site should planning application E/2013/0093/F be approved.
(AQW 34730/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I have had no discussions with UNESCO concerning this planning application or the designation of the Giant's Causeway as a world heritage site. The application is in respect of a site some 10 kilometres from the Giants Causeway and would not therefore be expected to have any implications for the designation of the world heritage site.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the recent transfer of public sector jobs within DOE to Coleraine and Derry, what plans he has to transfer posts within his Department to the Strabane area.
(AQW 34747/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The recent transfer of posts to the Coleraine and Derry area is primarily to meet the immediate needs of those DVA staff directly affected by the decision of the Westminster government to centralise vehicle licensing work in Swansea. These DVA job losses will have a detrimental effect to the economy in Coleraine and further afield. To alleviate this I have arranged to relocate 70 jobs to Coleraine and 24 posts from DOE Planning, including the Chief Planner, DOE Marine Division, and some posts from my own Private Office to Ebrington in Derry.

My Department has no offices in Strabane to which staff could be located and currently has no plans to open offices in Strabane. However, my Department will continue to seek to relocate Civil Service jobs out of the Greater Belfast area,

including to Strabane and west of the Bann, so ensuring that a larger proportion of the north of Ireland can benefit from the economic prosperity that local jobs can bring for local people.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 34143/11-15, whether full compliance was found on both occasions; if so, (ii) why a second visit was required so soon, but none since; and if not (iii) to detail the nature of any issues, including how they were addressed.

(AQW 34751/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The first visit was conducted at the operator's premises on 3 October 2013, during which a number of booking records were inspected to establish how taxi arrangements were being conducted at Ravenhill Rugby Ground. The operator was deemed to be compliant with legal requirements.

The second visit conducted on 6 February 2014 was to undertake a general compliance audit and was scheduled as part of the Agency's annual compliance audit programme.

Given that the operator was deemed fully compliant on 6 February 2014 it will not be necessary to carry out a further visit until the next round of compliance audits are planned.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment, given that he told a resident of Ballinlea that any attempt at exploratory drilling, which is necessary in advance of hydraulic fracturing should be subject to a full Environmental Impact Assessment, whether planning application E/2013/0093/F constitutes exploratory drilling in advance of hydraulic fracturing; and whether this planning application will be subject to a full Environmental Impact Assessment.

(AQW 34800/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The development proposed under application E/2013/0093/F constitutes a conventional borehole and is not for the unconventional exploration of hydrocarbons, neither does it propose to use any unconventional testing techniques.

The application is currently being screened against the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (NI) 2012 and a determination from the Department will be issued imminently.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment whether he is aware of any inaccurate comments made by Planning Service or Rathlin Energy to statutory consultees or members of the public during the planning process for application E/2013/0093/F.

(AQW 34802/11-15)

Mr Durkan: DOE Planning operates an open and transparent policy in relation to the processing of any planning application.

DOE Planning has sought clarification from RPS, the agent acting on behalf of Rathlin Energy, with regards to information submitted originally with the planning application. All the information received has been placed on the Planning Portal which is available to both the public and consultees to view at any time.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment whether Planning Service has informed any statutory consultees that planning application E/2013/0093/F does not contain any proposals for hydraulic fracturing.

(AQW 34803/11-15)

Mr Durkan: DOE Planning did advise consultees that the proposal was not an application to undertake hydraulic fracturing.

This statement was provided in the covering letter which was submitted with the application and was understood to be in reference to 'unconventional high volume' hydraulic fracturing.

The development proposed under application E/2013/0093/F constitutes a conventional borehole and is not for the unconventional exploration of hydrocarbons, neither does it propose to use any unconventional testing techniques.

At the extended testing phase, should the operator have difficulty obtaining the natural flow of the gas/oil, a conventional hydraulic stimulation fracture may need to be conducted.

Information on the extended testing phase and proposed works have been detailed in the Operational Statement provided by the company which has been uploaded onto the Planning Portal for consultees to review and comment on.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment how much money was released to Ballymena residents from the flooding relief scheme for the flooding that occurred in June 2014.

(AQW 34809/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Flooding in the Toome Road and Galgorm Road areas of Ballymena was reported to my department on 8 June 2014. I activated the Scheme of Financial Assistance to Councils immediately.

Ballymena Borough Council has until 8 September (three months after the incident) to seek reimbursement for any payments it has made under the Scheme. To date no claims have been received.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33970/11-15 and given that the Minister for Regional Development's answer to AQW 33656/11-15 states that figure was based on estimates provided by traffic attendants and that in carrying out their duties, traffic attendants do not record the nature of business in which vehicles are involved, and given that the answer to AQW33644/11-15 states that the nature of business that any particular vehicle may be involved in, including taxis, is not recorded, (i) how this purports to support what his officials told the Committee for the Environment, when all the information is based on estimates and there is no evidence to substantiate that all such alleged vehicles involved were taxis; and whether he is content to bring forward proposals or amend legislation using estimates as evidence in lieu of recorded fact.

(AQW 34810/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I would refer the member to my answer to AQW 34047/11-15.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33401/11-15, (i) how many times in previous years the issue of unregulated sand extraction from Lough Neagh Special Protection Area has been raised with his Department; (ii) who raised the matter; (iii) for what reasons did his Department not pursue enforcement action; and (iv) who is responsible for taking the decisions not to pursue enforcement action.

(AQW 34826/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department's records indicate that the matter was discussed during the production of the Lough Neagh Development Study Report in 1991.

It is unclear from the Department's records what decisions were made concerning the pursuit of any potential enforcement action and who was responsible for taking decisions concerning this.

You will be aware that I am now engaged with officials to regulate this development.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of the Environment what environmental protection permissions are required before instigating a test borehole for oil or gas.

(AQW 34835/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The environmental protection permissions required for an exploratory oil or gas borehole are decided on a case by case basis, specific to each individual operator's proposed working practices and location.

As a minimum, a Groundwater Authorisation is usually required.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33267/11-15, to detail the 17 applications still to be reviewed; and given that an immediate review was ordered a year and a half ago, why the environmental impact assessment determinations for these cases have not been re-examined.

(AQW 35050/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department has identified 16 applications which now remain to be reviewed. (Please see the table in annex one.) Of these remaining 16 applications, 8 applications are nearing completion of the review process. The review of Environmental Impact Assessment Determinations is an ongoing process. Extra resources have recently been allocated to Minerals Management and Compliance as part of the process of re-structuring for RPA. This exercise is now largely complete so that the review of applications may be concluded.

Annex One

Application Reference

■ A/2000/0445/F	■ A/2011/0671/F
■ A/2001/0294/F	■ B/2008/0405/F
■ A/2004/1032/F	■ K/2009/0920/F
■ A/2008/0397/F	■ K/2011/0031/F
■ A/2011/0115/F	■ K/2011/0476/F
■ A/2011/0638/F	■ K/2011/0674/F
■ A/2011/0636/F	■ K/2011/0676/F
■ A/2011/0640/F	■ S/2011/0659/F

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 25467/11-15, how many times, since 2000, minerals permissions have been reviewed to assess the environmental impact on a newly declared candidate for Special Area of Conservation or other designations of international importance.

(AQW 35052/11-15)

Mr Durkan: While no applications have been assessed to date, as set out on previous responses to you I am taking measures to address this issue which include putting the correct structure, resources and processes in place that will ensure compliance with obligations to assess any environmental impact on a newly declared candidate or other designations of international importance.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33267/11-15, how many of the 103 applications reviewed have been issued as (i) approvals; and (ii) refusals.

(AQW 35116/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department does not have the required information easily to hand. My officials are currently reviewing the relevant statistics and a response will be issued as soon as this information is available.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much (i) Peace III; and (ii) departmental funding has been allocated to the Bushmills Trust in each of the last three years.

(AQW 33794/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): No PEACE III or DFP departmental funding has been allocated to the Bushmills Trust in the last three years. There is no record of the organisation having applied for PEACE III funding.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel when rates were last paid on the commercial property at Bryan Street, Ballymena which last traded as What Everyone Wants.

(AQW 34267/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Under the Data Protection Act, LPS cannot release the information requested.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the First Minister or deputy First Minister have made him aware of the difficulty which their Department is facing in honouring successful applications submitted by groups for funds under £75,000 for the 2014/15 financial year through the Victims and Survivors Service.

(AQW 34518/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: While I have not been directly approached by the First Minister or the deputy First Minister on this issue, OFMDFM did submit a bid for additional funding for the small grants element of the Victims Support Programme as part of the June Monitoring exercise.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why permission has been withdrawn from the operators of the open top bus tours of Belfast to access Stormont Estate by the Massey Avenue entrance.

(AQW 34607/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: This was an operational decision made to control the traffic flow on Massey Avenue. However, due to licensing issues with the Tour Operators, we have withdrawn this restriction and are again allowing entrance via Massey Avenue.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many visitors have stayed in youth hostels in each of the last three years, broken down by visitors from within and from outside of Northern Ireland.

(AQW 34610/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: NISRA does not hold any data on the number of visitors from outside Northern Ireland who stayed in youth hostels in Northern Ireland. However, the estimated number of overnight trips taken by Northern Ireland residents in hostels is available from the Continuous Household Survey. Due to small sample sizes, figures in the attached table are subject to large confidence intervals.

The estimated number of overnight trips taken by Northern Ireland (NI) residents within NI in hostels over the last three years is detailed in the attached table.

Overnight trips by Residents in NI Hostels (2011-2013)

	Overnight Trips
2011	38,000
2012	24,000
2013	51,000

Source: Continuous Household Survey, 2013

Data is rounded to the nearest thousand

Background Note

- Information on the number of visitors to youth hostels in NI is not readily available from either the hostels themselves or the HINI (Hostelling International Northern Ireland). However, NISRA's CHS measures the number of overnight trips by NI residents in NI and what type of accommodation they stayed in during this trip.

- 2 The Continuous Household Survey is a voluntary sample survey carried out by interviewing individuals in private households. One module of the interview relates to overnight trips and day trips taken by Northern Ireland residents.
- 3 Figures taken from the CHS are subject to an associated sampling error that decreases as the sample size increases. It is the nature of sampling variability that the smaller the group whose size is being estimated, the (proportionately) less precise that estimate is. The estimates in this answer are based on small sample sizes and therefore should be treated with caution.
- 4 The CHS asked all those aged 16 and over if they took a trip over the last four weeks and what accommodation was used during this trip. The estimates in this answer relate to those who stated they stayed in 'hostels' during their trip. It is not possible to distinguish how many such visits related to 'youth hostels'.

Drafted by: Patricia Wyers (NISRA)

Cleared by: Norman Caven (NISRA)

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what engagement he has had with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development on conditions in the Reservoirs Bill that will allow her Department not to pursue full cost recovery for services delivered.

(AQW 34643/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I have not had any engagement with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development on the specific conditions in the Reservoirs Bill that will allow her Department not to pursue full cost recovery for services delivered.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the visitor numbers for each local country park over the last twelve months.

(AQW 34657/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Visitor numbers to Northern Ireland country parks are collected by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) Visitor Attraction Survey. This is a voluntary survey and the results are based solely on the visitor numbers provided by the country parks choosing to participate. The estimated number of visitors to responding country parks or forest parks during the calendar year 2013 is listed overleaf.

Visitor Numbers in Participating Country Parks/Forest Parks/Parks/Gardens (2013)

Country Parks/Forest Parks/Parks/Gardens	Number of visitors (2013)
Lagan Valley Regional Park (incorporating The Lagan Towpath)	1,131,821
Lurgan Park	442,874
Roe Valley Country Park	300,000
Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park	300,000
Delamont Country Park	246,823
Dungannon Park	224,060
Carnfunnock Country Park	202,427
Scrabo Country Park	161,412
Tollymore Forest Park	134,707
Castlewellan Forest Park	119,974
Loughgall Country Park	105,000
Peatlands Park	90,000
Rowallane Garden	52,920
Gosford Forest Park	51,606
Silent Valley Mountain Park	44,090
Ness Country Park	30,000
Glenariff Forest Park	28,356
Creggan Country Park	22,000
Drum Manor Forest Park	10,285
Portglenone Forest Park	9,222
Joey and Robert Dunlop Memorial Gardens	6,500

Country Parks/Forest Parks/Parks/Gardens	Number of visitors (2013)
Ballyrobert Cottage Garden	4,900
Gortin Glen Forest Park	4,232
Ballypatrick Forest Park	2,606
Greenmount Nature Trail	2,359
Irvinestown Centenary Sculpture Garden	2,000
Old Barrack House Garden	900
Orchard Acre Farm	284

Source: NISRA Visitor Attraction Survey 2013

Please note the table excludes those who wished their information to remain confidential or who did not respond.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consultation was held with the Department of the Environment, which issues route-specific licences to tour bus operators, before the edict was issued that tour buses could no longer enter and leave the Stormont Estate by the Massey Avenue entrance.

(AQW 34670/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: No consultation with the Department of the Environment took place.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consultation was held with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given its tourism responsibilities, before the edict was issued that tour buses could no longer enter and leave the Stormont Estate by the Massey Avenue entrance, in order to check if the resulting addition to the duration of City tours would reduce the number of such daily tours on offer.

(AQW 34671/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: No consultation with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment took place.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the regional variations in lung cancer mortality rates in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 34719/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: the attached table details (i) the number of registered deaths due to lung cancer (2013); and (ii) the death rate per 1,000 population due to lung cancer (2013) for each local government district.

Table: Number of deaths due to lung cancer¹ and lung cancer death rate per 1,000 population by Local Government District, 2013P

Local Government District	Number of deaths due to lung cancer	Lung cancer death rate per 1,000 population
Antrim	31	0.57
Ards	49	0.62
Armagh	29	0.48
Ballymena	43	0.66
Ballymoney	13	0.41
Banbridge	18	0.37
Belfast	201	0.71
Carrickfergus	22	0.56
Castlereagh	39	0.57
Coleraine	34	0.58
Cookstown	21	0.56
Craigavon	45	0.47
Derry	54	0.50
Down	35	0.49

Local Government District	Number of deaths due to lung cancer	Lung cancer death rate per 1,000 population
Dungannon	29	0.49
Fermanagh	21	0.34
Larne	24	0.74
Limavady	13	0.38
Lisburn	44	0.36
Magherafelt	17	0.37
Moyle	8	0.47
Newry & Mourne	44	0.43
Newtownabbey	51	0.60
North Down	45	0.57
Omagh	23	0.44
Strabane	16	0.40
Northern Ireland	969	0.53

1 Lung cancer deaths are defined using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) codes C33-C34

p Provisional

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to what extent HM Treasury is supplementing structural funds in Northern Ireland in the period 2014-2020; and by how much EU structural funding has been cut for the same period.
(AQW 34737/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: HM Treasury are not supplementing EU structural funds in Northern Ireland.

EU structural funding to Northern Ireland has been cut by €46m, which is 4.49% of the value of the 2007-2013 programmes at 2013 prices.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has had any discussions with HM Treasury on the likely impact on Northern Ireland of the devo-max option for Scotland.
(AQW 34738/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I have not had any specific discussions with HM Treasury on this matter.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQO 4245/11-15, for an update on his Department's review of the recommendations of the Law Commission in respect of the regulation of apartment management agencies.
(AQW 34748/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The recommendations in the Commission's final report are wide-ranging and the Executive has established an Apartments Report Implementation Group, which is comprised of senior officials from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Department of Finance and Personnel, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Justice and the Department of Social Development. The Group has been considering how a regulation scheme for managing agents would operate in this jurisdiction and it has gathered sufficient information to allow for the preparation of the final policy proposals, which will have to be agreed by the Executive.

In due course the Group will be turning its attention to the broader recommendations in the Commission's report. However, at this stage, I should point out that an initial assessment has suggested that some of those broader recommendations could be more difficult to implement, particularly where they envisage the revision of existing property rights.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what has been the expenditure by the Special EU Programmes Body on hospitality in 2013/14.
(AQW 34913/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The response to the Member in AQW 34139/11-15 dated 1st July 2014 provides the requested information.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has been alerted to any issue around proposed contract undercharging by G4S in relation to security provision for local courts.

(AQW 35001/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I have not been made aware of an issue of proposed contract undercharging by G4S in relation to the contract for security services for local courts.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the action he has taken following each public petition presented to the Assembly and forwarded to his Department

(AQW 35061/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: No public petitions have been referred to my Department.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to his response to AQO 6287/11-15, for an update on the issue of equal pay for NIO and PSNI staff.

(AQW 35099/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: As I have previously stated, it has been clearly established that there is no valid equal pay claim upon which to base a settlement for this group, so this is not an 'equal pay issue'. However, I hope that the paper I circulated to Executive colleagues a number of weeks ago recognises the moral argument put forward and will satisfactorily resolve the issue for this group of staff. I now await the agreement of Executive colleagues for the paper to be brought forward for discussion since my recommendation and any expenditure will require their agreement. While I appreciate the frustration of staff affected, the matter is now in the hands of the Executive.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people in the (i) Coleraine; (ii) Limavady; (iii) Ballymoney; and (iv) Moyle council areas were in rates arrears in the last full rating year.

(AQW 35136/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: As at 31 March 2014, the number of occupancies with an outstanding rating debt for properties in each of the (i) Coleraine; (ii) Limavady; (iii) Ballymoney; and (iv) Moyle Council areas are provided in the table attached. An occupancy represents a liable ratepayer at a property at a given time. The figures include occupancies with domestic or non-domestic debt.

District Council	Number of Occupancies in Debt as at 31 March 2014
Coleraine	3,334
Limavady	2,113
Ballymoney	1,310
Moyle	805

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many tenants are being pursued for rates payments when their rental agreement has stipulated that rents would have been inclusive of rates and that rates would have been payable by the landlord.

(AQW 35140/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of prescriptions issued in (i) 2009; and (ii) 2013.

(AQW 34199/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The published cost of prescriptions, as provided on the Business Services Organisation (BSO) website (<http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/1806.htm>), is as follows:

- In 2009, the published cost was £412.5m before discounts were applied; and
- In 2013, the published cost was £409.0m before discounts were applied.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the progress made in the delivery of Supported Living schemes.

(AQW 34468/11-15)

Mr Poots: Supported Living encompasses a range of health and care provision, health-related adaptations, housing accommodation and housing support services that are designed to help vulnerable people to retain their independence in the community

Planning for supported living schemes takes place within three to five year periods, with the current period ending in March 2016. The numbers of proposed developments are driven by trusts' assessments of local demand as part of ongoing service delivery.

This is a process which in my assessment is working well, with needs identified locally and schemes delivered in order to meet those needs.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the expenditure on hospitality by the Food Safety Promotion Board and its secretariat in 2013/14.

(AQW 34529/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Food Safety Promotion Board's financial year is the calendar year rather than the British financial year. The hospitality element of the costs of FSPB meetings in 2013 amounted to £2,385. The hospitality element of the costs of FSPB meetings in 2014 to date amounts to £2,448.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33961/11-15, (i) how many patients attended the Renal Unit at the Belfast City Hospital over the last twelve months; (ii) how many consultant's patients are attached to the unit; and (iii) given that all transplant surgery takes place at the Belfast City Hospital, why records are not kept of those patients who are repatriated from these consultants to renal units within other Health and Social Care Trusts.

(AQW 34544/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of patients who have attended the Belfast City Hospital and the number of consultants attached to the unit has been provided by the Belfast HSC Trust.

- (i) In the twelve months from April 2013 to March 2014, a total of 615 patients attended the renal unit transplant clinic at the Belfast City Hospital.
- (ii) There are a total of 5 consultants attached to the unit transplant clinic.
- (iii) Since the Belfast HSC Trust's previous response to AQW 33961/11-15, a manual review of all patients who have attended the Belfast City Hospital from April 2012 until March 2014 has been completed. In total, 101 renal transplant recipients have been repatriated to other units from Belfast City Hospital (BCH). This is always by agreement of all parties (patient, BCH consultant, non-BCH consultant).

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to introduce the small prescription charge which he has indicated would raise sufficient resources for the establishment of a cancer drugs fund; and if so, when the charge will be introduced.

(AQW 34546/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have indicated that I do not consider it unreasonable for those who can afford it, to make a small contribution towards the cost of their prescriptions, particularly in light of the challenges of funding high cost specialist medicines including cancer drugs.

As recently as last month, I made this view known to the Assembly because the reintroduction of a small prescription charge in Northern Ireland, which could be directed towards a new specialist drugs fund, would require Executive approval and would be subject to full public consultation.

There has been substantial lobbying for a fund similar to the Cancer Drugs Fund available in England. I am sympathetic to the establishment of a Specialist Drugs fund which would not only be available for Cancer Drugs but would apply to other serious conditions.

I could only establish such a fund by cutting existing services or raising money. One means I am considering is a prescription charge. This would be subject to public consultation and Executive approval. Any charge should be modest and not punitive to individuals who are sick.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has conducted an Equality Impact Assessment on access to cancer drugs under the current exceptionality clause.

(AQW 34548/11-15)

Mr Poots: The equality screening of the Individual Funding Request (IFR) policy, concerning access to cancer drugs, is the responsibility of the Health and Social Care Board as commissioner of specialist drugs. The Board has carried out an equality screening of the IFR policy. The screening document was published in April 2012 and is available at this website: <http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/2263.htm>

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on plans to implement staff car parking charges at the Causeway and Antrim Area Hospitals.

(AQW 34556/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are no immediate plans to implement staff car parking charges at the Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital sites.

Earlier this year, the Northern Health and Social Care Trust carried out a consultation on its proposed introduction of staff car parking charges at both Hospital sites and has been considering the responses received.

The outcome of this consultation exercise will also be subject to Trust Board approval and therefore until this process is complete, decisions on the introduction of staff car parking charges will not be finalised.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the recent appointment of the (i) Chief Executive; and (ii) Chairman of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust; and how many people (i) applied for the posts; and (ii) were interviewed for the posts.

(AQW 34562/11-15)

Mr Poots: The process for the recruitment of the Chief Executive of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust was managed by an external recruitment agency on behalf of the Trust. Seven applications for the post were received of which two, following a preliminary process, were brought forward to final interview. A successful candidate was identified and Dr Tony Stevens will take up this position in August 2014

The post of Chair of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust was advertised in February 2013, in response to which four applicants were received. The post was re-advertised in August 2013 resulting in a total of eight applications for consideration. Three applicants assessed as having met the criteria being sought were invited for interview in October 2013. I appointed Mr Bob McCann as non executive Chair of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust with effect from 20th January 2014.

The appointment competition was carried out in accordance with the Code of Practice issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps are being taken by Health and Social Care Trusts to respond to the reports of increasing dementia cases.

(AQW 34581/11-15)

Mr Poots: The increase in the numbers of persons being diagnosed with dementia in Northern Ireland is reflective of demographic trends and improved interventions by professionals' working within dementia services.

For example, a key objective for the regional Dementia Strategy Implementation Group and the agencies involved would be to raise diagnosis rates to 75% and above, across all Trusts. This objective has been built into the frail elderly specification for Integrated Care Partnerships and will be monitored as part of that process.

All five Trusts are committed to providing timely diagnosis and services are being developed to include pre and post diagnostic counselling, comprehensive assessment, support and education. Work is also on-going with GPs to enhance referrals to memory clinics which will, in turn, contribute to an increase in diagnostic rates.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why expectant mothers with elevated BMI or diabetes are being advised to transfer their care from the South West Acute Hospital in Enniskillen to Altnagelvin Hospital.

(AQW 34593/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Western Health and Social Care Trust has advised that there have been recent changes to the criteria in the South West Acute Hospital following the receipt of a Safety and Quality Learning Letter on Patient Selection and Intrapartum Care in Maternity Units issued by the Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board.

Given the above evidence it was agreed that women with a BMI greater than 40 were at high risk and not suitable for delivery at the South West Acute Hospital and should be referred to Altnagelvin Hospital at booking.

Type 1 insulin dependent women with diabetes have and will continue to deliver in Altnagelvin Hospital. Women with gestational diabetes will continue to have their antenatal care and to deliver in the South West Acute Hospital.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he has taken in the last three years to support people diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy.

(AQW 34616/11-15)

Mr Poots: I fully support the recommendations contained in the Report of the All Party Group on Muscular Dystrophy. The Health and Social Care Board and Public Health Agency are taking forward the implementation of the Report's recommendations.

Progress has been made in a number of areas and I attach at Annex A information in respect of the services available to people with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy and details of planned service improvements.

Annex A**Services for people with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy**

Services for people with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy are provided by Health and Social Care Trusts on the basis of assessed need and may involve hospital and/or community based services.

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust provides a regional neuromuscular clinic for all age groups at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast. As the management of neuromuscular conditions also requires input from other specialties such as cardiology, orthopaedics and respiratory medicine, a one-stop-shop with these specialties present has been piloted at Belfast City Hospital.

A specialist paediatric neuromuscular nurse is now in post within the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. This post provides specialist nursing skills and knowledge in the management of those affected by a neuromuscular condition, their families and the professionals working with them.

Planned Service Improvements

Plans to improve services for people with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy include:

- The appointment of two care advisors in the Belfast Trust to provide advice, support and information to people living with neurological conditions including neuromuscular conditions.
- The development of clinical networks with specialist centres in other parts of GB is a priority for specialist children's services including formalising links with a specialist neuromuscular service so that clinicians can develop expertise in neuromuscular conditions and experts from the specialist centres can provide input into the service in Belfast.
- The modernisation of adult neurology services to include: review medical capacity development of 'one-stop-shops'/ multidisciplinary clinics for patients accessing a range of specialist services in Belfast Trust; the development of referral protocols linked to care pathways including GP referrals; and the use of telemedicine and virtual clinics. Any additional investment required will be subject to prioritisation within the resources available.
- The development of a patient journey for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy which will focus on patients and their carers before and after diagnosis. The patient journey will be informed by the forthcoming GAIN care standards for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy.
- The development of the NI Implementation Plan in response to the UK Strategy for Rare Disease. Any additional investment required will be subject to prioritisation within the resources available.
- The HSC Board has commenced a review of the regional eligibility criteria for the provision of wheelchairs through the Northern Ireland Wheelchair Service and steps have been taken to ensure the views of people with muscular dystrophy and neuromuscular conditions are considered as part of this review.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the locations of the local alcohol and drug rehabilitation centres; and whether there is capacity to increase the number of such centres.

(AQW 34621/11-15)

Mr Poots: Inpatient (Tier 4) alcohol and drug services – encompassing detoxification, stabilisation, and rehabilitation – are currently available at the following locations: Holywell Hospital in Antrim; Downshire Hospital in Downpatrick; St. Luke's in Armagh; and the Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital in Omagh. It should be noted that there is variation between these units in terms of hours of operation, role/function, and focus upon detoxification and/or rehabilitation. These services are only for the most vulnerable/difficult cases and they are accessed through the local Trust Community Addiction Teams. In addition, Tier 4 rehabilitation services are commissioned by the HSC from Carlisle House in Belfast and Northlands in Londonderry.

The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) recently consulted on the future of Tier 4 service provision. Subsequent to this, the HSCB has announced that current Tier 4 provision will be reconfigured over three sites with a total of 30 beds (all full time), encompassing both inpatient detoxification and rehabilitation provision. The existing contracts with the independent sector for inpatient rehabilitation service will be maintained. HSCB's commissioning intentions are summarised at: www.hscboard.hscni.net/news/Health%20and%20Social%20Care%20Board%20approves%20Revised%20Plans%20for%20the%20Future%20Development%20of%20Inpatient%20Based%20Addiction%20Treatment%20Services.html#TopOfPage

A full range of addiction services is also available in each Health and Social Care Trust area covering prevention, early intervention, harm reduction and treatment and support (including rehabilitation). Details of these services, broken down by Trust area, can be found on the Public Health Agency's website at the following link:

<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/drug-and-alcohol-directories-services>

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the 15 recommendations contained in the McCollum report.

(AQW 34627/11-15)

Mr Poots: I attach at Annex A an update from the Health and Social Care Board on each of the 15 recommendations contained in the McCollum Report.

AQW 34627/11-15 – Annex A

McCullum Report – Access to Specialist Neuromuscular Care in NI

Recommendation 1: A lead for muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions is appointed from within Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland to take overall control and be accountable for identifying and fixing the gaps in specialist multidisciplinary neuromuscular care, which require urgent service development.

Ms Michelle Tennyson, Assistant Director, Allied Health Professions and Public Patient Involvement at the Public Health Agency, has been identified as the lead for muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions in Northern Ireland.

Recommendation 2: The Northern Ireland Executive and HSC define and fully recognise neuromuscular services as specialist services in order to distinguish the complex muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions as requiring specialist support, which includes different specialisms.

Services for people with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy are provided by HSC Trusts on the basis of assessed need and may involve hospital and/or community based services.

There is a generic, regional neuromuscular clinic for all age groups provided by the Belfast Trust which is led by an adult neurologist and a paediatric neurologist with an interest in neuromuscular conditions. The clinic may also be attended by a clinical geneticist, neuro-physiotherapist, orthotist and occupational therapist. The management of neuromuscular conditions also requires input from other specialties such as cardiology, orthopaedics and respiratory medicine and a one-stop-shop with these specialties present is being piloted.

Where a clinical need has been identified for treatment which cannot be provided in Northern Ireland, appropriate patients may receive treatment outside Northern Ireland, subject to the HSC Board's approval via the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process.

Recommendation 3: The Northern Ireland Executive ensures that the care advisor post in Northern Ireland is secured long term within HSC, and takes urgent steps to create more of these posts. These steps will provide the best possible support and advice for people with muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions and will reduce unplanned emergency admissions by investing small amounts to save a large amount in the long term.

The HSCB / PHA are supportive of this recommendation and have secured funding to appoint two neurological care advisors during 2014/15. The care advisors will provide advice, support and information to people living with neurological conditions including neuromuscular conditions. The posts will be regional and will be based in Belfast Trust. The HSCB is working with Belfast Trust to finalise the investment proposals.

The need for the appointment of care advisors to support people living with neurological conditions has also been highlighted as a result of HSCB / PHA engagement with services users and carers and other key stakeholders.

A specialist paediatric neuromuscular nurse is in post within the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. This is a regional post which provides specialist nursing skills and knowledge in the management of those affected by neuromuscular conditions, their families and the professionals working with them.

The provision of a neuromuscular nurse specialist for adults is supported by HSCB but is subject to the identification of appropriate additional funding as well as competing priorities regarding services for people living with neurological conditions

Recommendation 4: Health and Social Care Board and the Northern Ireland Executive create a steering group for developing specialised neuromuscular services which incorporates the views of people affected by muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions, health professionals, commissioners and the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign.

A priority for the Health and Social Care Board's Neurological Conditions Subgroup is to establish robust engagement mechanisms with service users and carers, clinical staff, Trust management, voluntary and community organisations and other statutory organisations. This is in acknowledgement of the fact that people with muscular dystrophy, related neuromuscular conditions and also neurological conditions require access to a range of services that can cross boundaries between health and social care, employment and benefit services, housing and education.

In support of this the HSCB established a Neurological Conditions Advisory Group with membership from a service users and carers; voluntary and community organisations; health professionals; commissioners and Trust management. As part of this process nominations have been sought from the Northern Ireland Rare Disease Partnership which includes the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign. The first meeting of the Group took place early in 2013 and it will continue to meet on at least an annual basis.

The HSCB/PHA have also put in place arrangements to meet with Action Duchenne and the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign on a quarterly basis and will continue to engage with people living with neuromuscular conditions, health and social care professionals and other interest groups.

Recommendation 5: Health and Social Care Board initiate steps to ensure that a network approach for muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions is formally developed for adult services, following the announcement of increased coordination of paediatric services.

The Health and Social Care Board agreed 3 year funding for a fixed term clinical network manager to develop and formalise network arrangements both at local, regional and national level. Neuromuscular conditions are covered within this role. The network manager took up post in September 2012.

It is acknowledged that adult neurology services require further modernisation. In support of this the HSCB is planning a process of clinical engagement to:

- benchmark services with other providers in the UK;
- consider the need for additional staff both in terms of medical, nursing and AHP staff in order that specialist neurological expertise can be fully utilised;
- consider the development of 'one stop shops' / multidisciplinary clinics for patient accessing a range of specialist clinics in Belfast Trust;
- develop the referral protocols linked to care pathways including GP referrals; and,
- extend the use of telemedicine and virtual clinics.

Any additional investment required will be subject to prioritisation within available resources. Opportunities will also be identified to develop and formalise network arrangements at local, regional and national level.

Recommendation 6: Health and Social Care Board and Health and Social Care Trusts use the specialist expertise within Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to develop further a 'hub and spoke' model of service provision, with Belfast Trust at the centre of the set-up at which core specialists are located.

A hub and spoke model for specialist neuromuscular and neurological care already exists with Belfast Trust at the centre. Local services are also in place in each of the local hospitals for general neuromuscular care. The Health and Social Care Board will continue to explore opportunities to further develop these hubs and spoke arrangements.

Recommendation 7: Health and Social Care Trusts appoint transition workers to facilitate patients' transition from paediatric to adult services.

This is being considered as part of the work of the Health and Social Care Board's Neurological Conditions Subgroup. However, delivery will be subject to the identification of appropriate additional funding.

Recommendation 8: Health and Social Care Board and Social Care Trusts develop a more streamlined and efficient genetic testing system to reduce delays.

Northern Ireland gains access to specialist genetic testing for muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular disorders via the UK Genetic Testing Network (UKGTN). This network provides advice throughout the UK on genetic testing and aims to ensure the provision of high quality equitable genetic testing services.

One of the challenges in diagnosing neurogenetic disorders is that there can be a clinical overlap between many conditions and it can be difficult to distinguish them on the grounds of clinical features alone. In addition, conditions that appear clinically identical can have a large number of genetic causes. For example, the condition hereditary motor sensory neuropathy (Charcot Marie Tooth disease) can be caused by mutations in a number of different genes. Until now it has been difficult to get a genetic diagnosis for many of these patients as it would have involved doing a number of single gene tests each of which would cost several hundred pounds and it was often difficult to know which gene to test first.

There has been a recent change in this process in the form of panel tests. This is a result of the introduction of Next Generation Sequencing which enables a number of genes to be looked at together. This includes panel tests for Charcot Marie Tooth (hereditary motor sensory neuropathies) and congenital myopathy.

The panel test for Charcot Marie Tooth will enable genetic diagnosis to be established which will assist in the prognosis and future management of the patient and their family. This group of conditions can be inherited in a number of different ways and so establishing the exact diagnosis is important for giving advice to at risk family members. Being able to make a definitive diagnosis will provide information about the natural history of the condition and may avoid the need for other tests. At present patients are reliant on sequential single gene testing which may take up to one year to complete. The new panel test will provide a more rapid result with a much greater chance of finding a diagnosis.

The main benefits of the panel test for congenital myopathies are to provide an overall higher mutation detection rate in a faster time for patients with a congenital myopathy, compared with the current service. The higher detection rate will be as a result of testing a more comprehensive repertoire of genes, as well as the potential for the detection of large rearrangements, which is currently unavailable for the majority of these genes. The faster turn-around time is based on the simultaneous analysis of the gene set, as opposed to the previous strategy of sequential analysis. In addition, this test is predicted to provide an overall reduction in costs per patient, which will help to provide additional resources to other areas of the service. The cost of providing this service is predicted to decrease with time as the next generation sequencing reagents become less expensive. By doing the panel tests earlier in the patient pathway may reduce the need for further invasive tests.

The new UKGTN tests for 2014 have been available from 1 April 2014 and have been endorsed by Health and Social Care Board Specialist Services Commissioning Team.

Recommendation 9: Health and Social Care Trusts address the need to increase clinical time dedicated to specialist neuromuscular care

The Health and Social Care Board and Public Health Agency will consider this as part of the planned clinical engagement exercise to explore opportunities to reform and modernise services.

Recommendation 10: The Health and Social Care Board develops a neuromuscular registry for both the paediatric and the adult services in Northern Ireland to ensure the most efficient delivery of specialist care.

The HSCB/PHA are working with the HSC Online project team to establish how a high level directory of services for people with muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular services can be developed and integrated into HSC Online.

Recommendation 11: The Duchenne Standards of Care guidelines are made widely available to those commissioning, planning and delivering services so that high quality standards of care are achieved in a multidisciplinary approach for all muscular conditions. As new guidelines emerge for other neuromuscular conditions, these should also be made widely available so that commissioning, planning and delivery of these services can be improved.

The Duchenne Standards of Care Guidelines do not have any official status here in Northern Ireland but rather they might be regarded as good practice. In the future, in the event that DHSSPS endorses any NICE guidance in this area, this status may change.

Recommendation 12: The Northern Ireland Executive addresses the inequalities of wheelchair service provision so that there is consistency and that people with muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions are not forced to resort to private purchases of suitable wheelchairs.

The HSC Board has commenced a review of the regional eligibility criteria for the provision of wheelchairs through the Northern Ireland Wheelchair Service.

This Review has been commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) on behalf of DHSSPS to consider the current Eligibility Criteria for the Provision of Wheelchairs.

The Terms of Reference for the Project are:

- To review current Eligibility Criteria in collaboration with key stakeholders to take into account other 'best' practice models of provision both nationally and internationally; and,
- Analyse current Eligibility Criteria and consider opportunities for further standardisation, improved efficiency/ effectiveness and quality improvement.

It is anticipated that the findings of the review will be finalised in Summer 2014. Steps have been taken to ensure the views of people with muscular dystrophy and neuromuscular conditions are considered as part of this review.

Recommendation 13: The Northern Ireland Executive, in conjunction with HSC, improves the level of recognition and knowledge of muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions at GP level.

HSCB/PHA will fund and host a training event for health and social care professionals to raise awareness of living with a neuromuscular condition in 2014. The HSCB/PHA will work in partnership with Action Duchenne and the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign to plan and deliver event.

HSCB / PHA will work with Integrated Care Directorate to explore opportunities to raise awareness amongst GPs of living with a muscular dystrophy, related neuromuscular disorders and wider neurological conditions.

Recommendation 14: The Health and Social Care Board implements a structured long term succession planning system so that key neuromuscular posts are recruited for and appointed quickly to prevent a detrimental gap in services for people with muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular condition.

Every effort is made to ensure effective succession planning for doctors across a range of specialties. Generally, where possible, medical posts where the post holder is approaching retirement age are highlighted and identified to the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency in order for them to allocate a junior doctor to a specialist training programme. Similarly, where it is apparent that a specialist nurse/AHP is approaching retirement, steps can be taken to begin to train staff with generic skills.

However, as specialist medical training can take up to 5 years and retirement age is not fixed, it can prove challenging to coordinate the completion of training with the retirement of a senior consultant in specialties where the number of consultants is small. Both the Health and Social Care Board and Trusts are aware of these challenges and aim to address via advance planning where possible.

Recommendation 15: Health Trusts and Northern Ireland Councils develop structured joint planning provision so that there is a seamless transition and coordination between health and social care services.

This recommendation is not relevant in a NI context as an integrated health and social care system exists here.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on implementation of the 18 recommendations of the Review of Children's Palliative Care and End of Life Care; and whether a funded strategy will be produced for this implementation within a set timescale.

(AQW 34629/11-15)

Mr Poots: Public consultation on the 18 recommendations in the review document closed on 28 March 2014. My Department is currently analysing the responses to the recommendations. When this work is completed a final strategy for 'Children's Palliative Care and End of Life Care' will be published. We are aiming to publish the strategy by autumn 2014.

The Health and Social Care Board, as commissioner of healthcare services, will lead on the implementation of the strategy in partnership with key stakeholders. The cost of implementing the strategy is likely to require new funding. I expect to be in a position to announce decisions on funding for the strategy when I launch it this autumn subject to the overall consideration of allocations for the healthcare budget, when this is finalised, and approval of the business case for any service developments.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 34273/11-15, what steps he took to inform patients that they had been supplied by a product manufactured by ITH Pharma, and that they had no need for concern.

(AQW 34639/11-15)

Mr Poots: As I stated in my response to AQW 34273/11-15, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), which is the body for regulating all medicines in the UK and ensuring their safety, has allowed ITH Pharma to continue production and supply of their products.

Those Trusts that use ITH Pharma products have continued to supply them to patients. They have not advised patients that they are receiving products produced by ITH Pharma as none of the products they are supplying were affected by the Drug Alert notice issued by the MHRA which only applied to one batch of a particular product.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the level of concern about lack of privacy at GP reception areas, which was raised in a recent Patient and Client Council report, will result in discussions with GPs to try and resolve this issue.

(AQW 34667/11-15)

Mr Poots: All GP Practices within Northern Ireland are required to ensure that their practice premises meet the minimum standard set by The Health and Personal Social Services General Medical Services – Premises Costs Directions NI 2004. Paragraph 8 of the Minimum Standard Schedule states that there should be "the facility for patients to communicate confidentially with reception staff, including by telephone". It must be noted that there is a large variation in the size and age of practice premises across the region and as a result the layout of older premises may restrict practices in addressing the issue of confidentiality in the waiting area.

A significant number of practices in Northern Ireland have received self-service check in screens funded by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB). This facility provides patients with the ability to check in without having to approach the reception area. For any new or improved premises the HSCB ensures that the contractor meets the minimum standards as set down in the Premises Directions.

On an annual basis the HSCB offers practices the opportunity to submit applications for improvement grants. Practices may use these grants to improve the waiting area to install, for example, privacy screens.

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many ward rounds are carried out on a daily basis in each local hospital in order to discharge patients.

(AQW 34682/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of ward rounds carried out on a daily basis in order to discharge patients varies greatly between each hospital site and is dependent on the ward of treatment and the condition of the patient.

The following table details information submitted by each HSC Trust on the number of ward rounds carried out each day. Belfast Trust does not routinely collect this information and it could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

HSC Hospital	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Antrim ¹	At least twice daily					At least once daily	
Causeway ¹	At least twice daily					At least once daily	
Mid Ulster ¹	At least twice daily					At least once daily	
Whiteabbey ¹	At least twice daily					At least once daily	

HSC Hospital	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Dalriada	Under the care of a GP						
Robinson	Under the care of a GP						
Moyle	Under the care of a GP						
Ross Thompson	Daily zoning meetings to identify patients' progress for discharge						
Holywell	Daily zoning meetings to identify patients' progress for discharge						
Lagan Valley ^{2,5}	Daily or 2-3 times weekly					1	1
Downe ^{3,5}	Daily or 2-3 times weekly					1	1
Ulster ^{4,5}	Daily or 2-3 times weekly					1	1
Thompson House ⁶	Discharges planned and take place on Tuesdays						
Craigavon Area ⁷	At least once daily						
Daisyhill ⁷	At least once daily						
Bluestone	Acute Mental Health Wards - Planning meeting every morning & 1 ward round per week						
	Psychiatric Intensive Care - 2 ward rounds per week						
	Assessment and Treatment Unit - 3 ward rounds per week						
St Luke's Hospital Gillis Memory Centre	3 ward rounds per week						
Loane House ¹⁰	Daily meetings focussing on discharge and one weekly ward round					As agreed by patient/family and the multi-disciplinary team	
South Tyrone ¹⁰	Daily meetings focussing on discharge and one weekly ward round					As agreed by patient/family and the multi-disciplinary team	
Lurgan ^{8,9}	Daily meetings focussing on discharge and at least one daily ward round					As agreed by patient/family and the multi-disciplinary team	
	At least once daily					At least once daily	
	At least once daily					At least once daily	
Grangewood ¹¹	-	4 ward rounds	-	4 ward rounds	-	-	-
Tyrone & Fermanagh ¹¹	4 ward rounds	-	-	4 ward rounds	-	-	-
Lakeview	Weekly						

Notes:

- 1 Paediatric wards will normally have one ward round daily.
- 2 Ward 12 has 4 ward rounds on a daily basis Monday – Thursday.
- 3 Mental Health Inpatient Unit has 1 ward round on a daily basis Monday – Thursday. Elderly psychiatrists separately conduct 2 ward rounds on each Monday.
- 4 Ward 27 has 2 wards on a Monday and Thursday. Elderly psychiatrists separately conduct 2 ward rounds on each Tuesday.
- 5 On the days in between full consultant ward rounds there are senior doctor reviews by staff grades or Registrars.
- 6 A ward round is not undertaken on the day of discharge; however if there is concern regarding a patient's discharge, this would be reviewed to agree actions to ensure safe discharge.
- 7 General Surgery, Cardiology and Medical Assessment Unit – 2 ward rounds per day. All other specialties – 1 ward round per day.
- 8 Ward 1 has 2 wards rounds per week.

- 9 Wards 2 and 3 have 1 ward round per week.
10. Ward 8 (Specialist surgery) has 3 senior decision rounds per day, Monday – Friday and 2 on a Saturday and Sunday.
11. The purpose of a ward round is not to discharge patients but rather to plan patients' care which may result in their discharge from hospital.

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether seven day working exists for all hospital teams and services; and to detail (i) the hospital teams in each Health and Social Care Trusts who have seven day working; and (ii) the working patterns of the radiology teams in each Trust.

(AQW 34684/11-15)

Mr Poots: Seven day working currently exists across many, but not all, hospital teams and services.

- (i) Information on the hospital teams in each HSC Trust who have seven day working can only be provided at a disproportionate cost.
- (ii) Radiology teams in each HSC Trust provide a full range of diagnostic modalities (e.g. plain film, computerised tomography (CT), ultrasound (US) and MRI) during core hours across the hospital network. In the out-of-hours period including Saturdays and Sundays these services are provided on an on-call basis across the various main hospital sites.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any future capital works planned for the Ulster Hospital, Dundonald.

(AQW 34698/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are a number of capital works planned for the Ulster Hospital during 2014/15 including:

- Work on the Phase B redevelopment (£232m in total), incorporating an Inpatient Ward block and an Acute Services Block;
- Provision of additional Car parking on the former Tor Bank School site; and
- Installation of a new high voltage supply and Amendment to the Electrical Infrastructure.

Additionally, the South Eastern HSC Trust plans to spend within its delegated limit (below £500k) on a number of smaller projects including:

- The Refurbishment of the McDermott Unit;
- the Refurbishment of the Children's Maynard Ward;
- Paediatric Block works to fire alarms, electrical infrastructure and medical gases;
- Replacement windows in the Old Maternity Block;
- Kelly Court HMO Fire Safety Works; and
- Clinical Environment Funding minor works.

Proposed projects beyond 2014/15 are dependent upon the outcome of the 2015/16 budget exercise.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any future plans to introduce new services to the Ulster Hospital, Dundonald.

(AQW 34699/11-15)

Mr Poots: The delivery of healthcare services is a matter for the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to agree with the Health and Social Care Board. I am advised by the Trust that it currently has no imminent plans to introduce new services at the Ulster Hospital; however the Trust will continue to work with the South Eastern Local Commissioning Group and Integrated Care Partnership to provide any new services that may be commissioned in the future.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any future plans to introduce new services to the Bangor Hospital.

(AQW 34700/11-15)

Mr Poots: The delivery of healthcare services is a matter for the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to decide in agreement with the Health and Social Care Board. I am advised by the Trust that it currently has no plans to introduce new services at Bangor Community Hospital; however the Trust will continue to work with the Integrated Care Partnership and the South Eastern Local Commissioning Group to provide any new services that may be commissioned in the future.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many women were diagnosed with breast cancer in (i) 2003; and (ii) 2013.

(AQW 34703/11-15)

Mr Poots: The latest information provided by the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry (NICR) indicates that 1,034 women were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2003. Figures for 2013 are not currently available however 1,272 women were diagnosed in 2012.

Information on cancer incidence and survival rates in NI are available on the NICR website at <http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/nicr/CancerData/>. Cancer incidence figures for 2013 will be available in March 2015.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to make it compulsory for GPs to obtain training for dealing with patients subjected to domestic violence.

(AQW 34722/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are currently no plans to make it compulsory for GPs to obtain training for dealing with patients subjected to domestic violence.

GPs are independent contractors who are expected to undertake self directed learning on an annual basis as part of a compulsory appraisal system to maintain their professional registration. Domestic violence may be an educational area identified by an individual GP as part of their appraisal.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what initiatives he is introducing to raise awareness of domestic violence; and what measures he is putting in place to reduce the number of cases of domestic violence.

(AQW 34723/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department is working with the Department of Justice to develop a new Joint Strategy on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse. Key delivery priorities of the draft Strategy include an integrated Information Plan to promote a greater understanding of domestic and sexual abuse and awareness training, on how to recognise and respond to disclosure and how to signpost victims and witnesses to appropriate services, advice and support.

My Department, in association with the Department of Justice, also funds a regional perpetrator programme for alleged perpetrators of domestic violence. The programme has been developed and will be delivered by the Probation Board NI with support from Women's Aid. The introduction of this programme will improve support for victims of domestic abuse whilst also providing alleged perpetrators with effective interventions to enable them to change their behaviour.

Whilst the vision of the proposed new Strategy is to ultimately stop all domestic and sexual violence and abuse in Northern Ireland; it is expected that the ongoing work in raising awareness, educating and supporting victims to disclose may result in an increase in the number of incidents reported in the short term.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many reports of domestic violence have been made to health workers in the each of the last three years.

(AQW 34724/11-15)

Mr Poots: This information is not available and could only be provided at disproportionate costs.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, further to his Written Statement to the Assembly on 2 July 2013 on potential malpractice in the procurement and management of building maintenance in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, what has been the outcome of all such investigations.

(AQW 34757/11-15)

Mr Poots: I made a further Written statement on 24 January 2014 to the Assembly on this issue following the publication of the report into the investigations which were carried out by BSO Internal Audit, BSO Counter Fraud Unit and the Procurement Policy and Compliance Unit in my Department, under the oversight of officials in my Department..

The report identified a significant number of weaknesses in the implementation of procurement controls within the Trust and contained some 72 recommendations to be implemented. However, the BSO Counter Fraud and Probity Unit concluded there was no clear evidence of fraudulent activity.

Arising from the procurement breaches which were identified, the Trust commissioned an independent review of the governance and management control arrangements within the Estates Services Department which has now concluded. The independent review has identified a number of concerns about these governance arrangements and has also made recommendations regarding individual accountability which arise from the findings of the original audit report. The Trust has accepted all the recommendations and will take these matters forward within its normal disciplinary processes.

The Trust Board, through its Audit Committee, will be overseeing implementation of the recommendations from both the Internal Audit report and the independent review. The Department continues to monitor the progress on this issue and the implementation of the recommendations through its oversight role.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department is taking to warn people of the dangers of tombstoning.

(AQW 34761/11-15)

Mr Poots: Tombstoning can be a highly dangerous activity, and it attracts mostly young males. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) has published figures showing 12 deaths in the United Kingdom during the five-year period 2004-2008 as a result of tombstoning.

In its summer safety appeal issued in June, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service advised people to take all the basic safety precautions and to act responsibly in the vicinity of water highlighting the dangers of currents, changing conditions and other hidden dangers that may arise.

HM Coastguard, PSNI and the Bangor Marina and Harbour Manager jointly issued a press release on Wednesday 18 June warning people about the specific dangers of tombstoning. I support these messages wholeheartedly.

At UK level RoSPA has highlighted the dangers and published safety advice for anyone who may be thinking of tombstoning. RoSPA recommends that the best way to learn about the risks and have a good experience is to try 'coasteering', which is a combination of scrambling, climbing, traversing and cliff-jumping around the coast with a professional guide.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what schemes or support exist within the Carryduff area for children (i) under two years old; and (ii) with developmental needs.

(AQW 34777/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department's Families Matter strategy, published in 2009, highlights the importance of early intervention family support services, including those targeted at children under 2 years old. It provided funding for a range of parenting education and support programmes which are delivered across Northern Ireland. In addition, the Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy and Action Plan published on 22 February 2012 recognises the importance of early intervention for a child or young person with a communication disability to receive the appropriate help and support in an early and ongoing timely manner.

Carryduff intersects the Belfast and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts. Both Trusts have a statutory responsibility to provide services to children who meet the child in need threshold under Article 18 of The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

In the South Eastern Trust a specific health plan will be developed in partnership with parents which may include advice and support for parents and carers on positive parenting, routines, behaviour management and stimulation. The Health Visiting Service will provide early intervention in the form of a targeted programme of care at Level 2, 3 or 4 to a child with developmental needs; the level of service provided will depend on the assessed needs of the child.

Other services provided for families in the area include: advice and support in relation to maximising developmental potential in relation to gross and fine motor development; and speech and language and social development through play and parent/child interaction.

The Family Support Hub in the area provides a Family Support Worker to assist parents by providing practical help and support. The Family Support Worker can, for example, provide 1:1 work with a child in his/her own home. They can provide help and support for parent/carers, can support families to attend local parent and toddler groups, and can transport and support parents to medical appointments for the child.

In the Belfast HSCT provision for children in need includes: safeguarding; parenting support services; referrals to specialist services including Behaviour Supports, Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology; and short breaks and respite care. The Trust also provides: a Health Visiting Service; multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral family support provision through its Family Support social work teams; and the services of a Children's Disability Team, where a diagnosis of a physical or learning disability has been made or there is a substantial sensory impairment.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what measures are in place to ensure that effective and timely developmental assessments are carried out on children under two years old.

(AQW 34778/11-15)

Mr Poots: DHSSPS commissioned a review of the provision of the Child Health Promotion Programme within Northern Ireland in 2009 to ensure provision of high-quality preventative programmes in childhood as a foundation to a healthy society. This was based on the need to adapt to new knowledge, advances in neuroscience and genetics and an understanding of how early childhood development can be both promoted and damaged and the imperative for programmes to begin in early pregnancy. The review was taken forward based on evidence from 'Health for All Children', 4th Edition (Hall and Elliman), the recommendations of the National Screening Committee, guidance from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) and the Northern Ireland Autism Spectrum Disorder review and action plan. A range of Northern Ireland experts were engaged in updating the programme.

An updated programme for 0-19 year olds, known as 'Healthy Child, Healthy Future: A Framework for the Universal Child Health Promotion Programme in Northern Ireland', was issued in June 2010.

The framework strengthened the existing programme and is central to securing improvements in child health for all children aged 0-19 years, across a range of issues. The framework sets out a core programme of child health contacts that every family can expect, wherever they live in Northern Ireland and every child and parent has access to a universal or core programme of preventative care with additional or targeted services for those with specific needs and risks.

The Child Health System which holds details of every child in Northern Ireland is programmed to schedule children for appointments for health and development reviews as specified within the 'Healthy Child, Healthy Future' framework. It can also provide information within each Trust on provision of the child health promotion programme across each of the timescales within the core programme.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the time frame in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust within which a referral appointment for a developmental assessment should be given for children under two years old. **(AQW 34779/11-15)**

Mr Poots: My Department has a framework in place known as 'Healthy Child, Healthy Future' which delivers the universal child health promotion programme for all children, young people and families from birth and throughout the school years. The programme includes a specific set of Health and Development reviews delivered by health visitors in the preschool period as follows:

- A new baby review (between 10-14 days old).
- At six to eight weeks of age.
- At 14-16 weeks of age.
- At one year old.
- At 2-2 1/2 years of age

The Child Health System which holds details of every child in Northern Ireland is programmed to schedule children for appointments within the timeframe above for health and development reviews as specified within the 'Healthy Child, Healthy Future' framework.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the process for transferring referrals for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service units between Health and Social Care Trusts, when a patient changes address. **(AQW 34780/11-15)**

Mr Poots: If a patient in receipt of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) changes address, the Health and Social Care Trust currently providing care will refer the case to the appropriate receiving Trust. Appropriate information on the case will be shared with the receiving Trust. The patient, his/her family and other professionals involved with the patient will be informed of the transfer arrangements.

In some cases, depending on the stage in their treatment or where the programme of intervention is short term, a patient may continue to receive care from the current Trust after they change address rather than be transferred to another Trust. Each case will be considered by clinicians and decisions will be based on what is best for the patient.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether it is the policy within Health and Social Care Trusts to discharge a patient from a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service units due to a change of address. **(AQW 34781/11-15)**

Mr Poots: There is no policy within the Trusts to discharge a patient from CAMHS due to a change of address. Discharges are determined by clinical considerations and patient choice, and not on the basis of a change of address. If a patient changes address and there is continuing need for clinical involvement, the case is transferred to the appropriate Trust.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how he will implement the Children's Palliative Care review's recommendations; (ii) what is the timescale for implementation; and (iii) whether this will involve a funded strategy. **(AQW 34782/11-15)**

Mr Poots: Consultation on the review's 18 recommendations closed on 28 March 2014. My officials are currently analysing the responses and will shortly be finalising the strategy, having taken into account the views expressed by consultees, for my consideration and approval. I expect to be in a position to publish the final document by autumn 2014.

The Health and Social Care Board, as commissioner of healthcare services, will lead on the implementation of the strategy in partnership with key stakeholders. The cost of implementing the strategy is likely to require new funding. I expect to be in a position to announce decisions on funding for the strategy when I launch it this autumn, subject to the overall consideration of allocations for the healthcare budget, and approval of the business case for any service developments.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that HMRC should be notified by an employer of a new employee's details within 35 days of commencing employment, of those employees that have been working for the Health Service for more than 35 days as of 26 June 2014, how many have yet to have their details sent to HMRC. **(AQW 34786/11-15)**

Mr Poots: Since 6 April 2013, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) requires all employers to report pay as you earn (PAYE) in real time.

With the introduction of the Real Time Information (RTI) software, the 35 day rule is no longer a requirement. Instead, employers must send details of new employees to HMRC when they make their first payment to them.

HSC organisations have reported that they have been experiencing technical problems with RTI submissions. This has resulted in a number of staff (including new employees) yet to have their details forwarded to HMRC. The number of new employees affected can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

HSC IT departments are working with the supplier to resolve these issues as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) what was the annual expenditure on food in Health Service facilities for each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last three years; (ii) of this total expenditure, what was the expenditure on food produced in Northern Ireland; and (iii) whether this food is clearly identified as having been produced in Northern Ireland on menus and at point of service.

(AQW 34787/11-15)

Mr Poots: The annual expenditure on food in Health Service facilities per Health and Social Care Trust (HSC Trust) for the last three years is set out in the table below:

HSC Trust	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Belfast	£6,205,965	£6,074,590	£5,959,619
Northern	£2,666,145	£2,720,305	£2,791,218
South Eastern	£3,071,877	£3,170,539	£2,969,600
Southern	£2,881,000	£2,551,000	£2,611,000
Western	£2,392,419	£2,548,490	£2,584,199
Total`	£17,217,406	£17,064,924	£16,915,636

Information about expenditure on food produced in Northern Ireland is not readily available and it is therefore not possible to identify point of origin on menus and point of service. I can however advise that produce of Northern Ireland origin accounts for approximately 40% of the value of food procured through the BSO central procurement contracts over the three year period.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much money his Department expects to receive through the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme in each of the next three years.

(AQW 34806/11-15)

Mr Poots: The 2014 PPRS is a UK-wide scheme that has been developed to deliver stability and predictability in the branded medicines economy over the next five years.

Under the scheme PPRS payments will only be made available to ensure that the allowed growth in medicines spend, on a UK-wide basis, is not exceeded and to enable the DHSSPS to meet its policy and operational objectives, as stated in the PPRS agreement. As any "payments" apportioned to Northern Ireland under the Scheme will depend on the UK-wide growth rate in the cost of branded medicines, it is not possible to estimate how much will be apportioned to Northern Ireland in the next three years.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the proposed 40 new emergency nursing posts in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast.

(AQW 34807/11-15)

Mr Poots: The figures below have been provided directly from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust as at 1ST July and provide a breakdown of the 40 additional Nurses who have been recruited to Emergency Department (ED) and Acute Medical Assessment Unit (AMAU).

Month of Start (2014)	AMAU	ED	Total
February	2	2	4
March	5	7	12
April	6	4	10
May	3	5	8
June	2		2
Total	18	18	36

Of the outstanding 4 appointments:

- (i) 1 has a start date arranged in July;
- (ii) 1 is currently on Maternity leave and will take up post on return; and
- (iii) 2 are still undergoing pre-employment checks. .

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much time is allocated for home help staff in each Health and Social Care Trust to carry out (i) meal time; and (ii) personal care visits.

(AQW 34813/11-15)

Mr Poots: In Northern Ireland, domiciliary care is provided on the basis of assessed need, in accordance with Departmental Circular ECCU 2/2008: Regional Access Criteria for Domiciliary Care. The length of time allocated to a visit is the result of this professional assessment of need.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department is ensuring that elderly people's home care packages are adequate to meet the needs of each individual.

(AQW 34814/11-15)

Mr Poots: All older people are given individual comprehensive needs assessments which are carried out by health professionals. The time and services allocated to each individual home care package are determined by the outcome of these assessments and are regularly reviewed thereafter.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will direct Health and Social Care Trusts to increase the amount of time allocated to each care worker for home visits to elderly people.

(AQW 34816/11-15)

Mr Poots: In Northern Ireland, domiciliary care is provided on the basis of assessed need, in accordance with Departmental Circular ECCU 2/2008: Regional Access Criteria for Domiciliary Care. The length of time allocated to a visit is the result of this professional assessment of need.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 34318/11-15, whether he has the power to issue a policy direction to lift the restraints on new admissions to statutory care homes.

(AQW 34818/11-15)

Mr Poots: Under Article 4 of the Departments (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 and Section 6 of the Health and Social Care Reform Act (NI) 2009, directions may be given to HSC Trusts in relation to any functions undertaken by Trusts.

In the case of admissions to statutory residential homes, I am confident that the current process, which will see admission policies for homes where there is a strong case for continued residential care provision reviewed, is an appropriate way forward.

As we have already asked the Trusts to further consider this in a holistic way. It would be inappropriate to give direction at this point.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the locations of the MRI scanners in Northern Ireland; and what is the role of the mobile scanner located at Antrim Area hospital.

(AQW 34819/11-15)

Mr Poots: A list of the MRI scanners that are owned, operated and located within the hospitals of the Health and Social Care Estate is provided at TAB A.

The mobile scanner currently situated within Antrim Area Hospital is utilised by the Northern and Belfast Trusts to provide patient and clinician access to additional MRI scanning capacity when required to meet waiting list initiatives.

TAB A

HSC MRI Scanners.

Trust	Location
Belfast	Belfast City
Belfast	Belfast City
Belfast	Mater
Belfast	Musgrave Park
Belfast	Musgrave Park

Trust	Location
Belfast	Royal Victoria
Belfast	Royal Victoria
Northern	Antrim Area
South Eastern	Ulster
South Eastern	Ulster
Southern	Craigavon
Western	Altnagelvin
Western	South West

Independent Sector Mobile MRI Scanners located on HSC Estate.

	Location
Independent Sector	Musgrave Park
Independent Sector	Antrim Area

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department has expended on interpreters in the last financial year.

(AQW 34820/11-15)

Mr Poots: Expenditure by each Health and Social Care Trust on interpreters, in the last financial year, is set out in the table below.

2013/14	£
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	755,307
Northern Health & Social Care Trust	435,605
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust	158,931
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	1,309,514
Western Health & Social Care Trust	246,952
NI Ambulance Service Health & Social Care Trust	658
Total	£2,906,967

Interpreters are required for all patients who do not speak English as a first or second proficient language. Comprehensive training is delivered across the Health and Social Care sector to ensure that staff and professionals are aware of when an individual requires an interpreter.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the plans to refurbish the Balloo Day Centre, Bangor.

(AQW 34824/11-15)

Mr Poots: The South Eastern Trust has recently submitted a revised Outline Business Case to the Department in which the preferred option is now the replacement of the three existing Day Resource Centres within Balloo, Ravara and Ards with two new build facilities located at the Ards Hospital site and on the existing Balloo Day Resource Centre site in Bangor. Departmental officials are currently reviewing this revised Business Case, which will also require DFP approval.

The timing will be dependent on business case approval and availability of funding. In the interim the Trust Estates Department will continue to maintain the existing facilities.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to ensure that patients in Northern Ireland have equal access to cancer drugs as those in Great Britain.

(AQW 34829/11-15)

Mr Poots: Access to effective treatments for the population of Northern Ireland, including access to cancer drugs and other specialist medicines, is an important priority for me and for my Department.

In Northern Ireland the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) is responsible for commissioning drugs and treatments. Both the HSCB and the NHS in England are guided by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in determining

which cancer drugs should be routinely available. All NICE approved cancer drugs that are available in England are either recurrently funded or available via a cost per case mechanism in Northern Ireland.

The HSCB has a clear process by which unapproved drugs (including drugs and therapies not limited to cancer) can be made available to patients in Northern Ireland. Around 98% of the applications for unapproved drugs for cancer are approved. I have recently instructed my Department to evaluate this process, and to take account of measures that other devolved administrations are considering in their approach towards access to specialist drugs.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what research is being undertaken to ascertain the causes of, and preventative measures for, epilepsy.

(AQW 34838/11-15)

Mr Poots: Research on epilepsy is taking place in four HSC Trusts. There are thirteen current studies on the genetics of epilepsy, anti-epileptic drugs, and the effects of those drugs if taken during pregnancy.

The UK and Ireland Epilepsy and Pregnancy Register is based at the Belfast Trust. With information on over 7000 pregnancies and around 800 new cases each year, substantial internationally-recognised and funded research takes place.

The EU-funded European Surveillance of Congenital Abnormalities (EUROCAT) study, co-ordinated by the University of Ulster, draws information from registries across Europe for research on the causes of congenital illnesses including those that may involve drugs, such as anti-epileptics, taken during pregnancy.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the average time for community dietetic referrals in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 34842/11-15)

Mr Poots: For the period 1st April to 30th June 2014, the average waiting time for community dietetic referrals was 32 days for adults and 62 days for children in the South Eastern HSC Trust.

For 2014/15, the target waiting time between referral and commencement of Allied Health Professional (AHP) treatment, including dietetics, is nine weeks in all HSC Trusts.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the waiting time targets for community dietetic referrals within each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 34843/11-15)

Mr Poots: For the period 1st April to 30th June 2014, the average waiting time for community dietetic referrals was 32 days for adults and 62 days for children in the South Eastern HSC Trust.

For 2014/15, the target waiting time between referral and commencement of Allied Health Professional (AHP) treatment, including dietetics, is nine weeks in all HSC Trusts.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to outline the delays experienced to date with the supported living project for Ballycastle; (ii) whether the project will be completed prior to the closure of Rathmoyle Residential Home; and (iii) when the project will be completed.

(AQW 34862/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust has advised that there have been delays in securing the commitment of a housing association to take the project forward; however, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive continues to try and identify a suitable partner for the scheme.

As the new build will cover the same footprint as the existing home, it will have to close prior to any development commencing. It has not been possible to set a completion date for the project yet as this will depend on a number of mitigating factors such as the identification of a housing association to take the work forward, design of the build, planning permission and transfer of the site.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) number; and (ii) value of unfilled prescriptions in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34864/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not available. Data relating to the number of prescription items prescribed but not dispensed is not recorded.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many full time equivalent epilepsy specialist nurses are employed in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 34867/11-15)

Mr Poots: The current whole-time equivalent (WTE) numbers of epilepsy specialist nurses in each HSC Trust are shown in the table below.

Health & Social Care Trust	Whole-Time Equivalent
Belfast	2.4
Northern	2.0
South Eastern	1.8
Southern	3.67
Western	0.5

Notes:

- 1 These figures were provided by the Health & Social Care Trusts, and have not been validated by the Department.
- 2 Belfast Trust's paediatric epilepsy patients are managed by a further 2.0 WTE Paediatric Neurology Nurse Specialists.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients have attended an Emergency Department in each Health and Social Care Trust due to an epileptic seizure, in each of the last five years. (AQW 34868/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on attendances at emergency care departments due to an epileptic seizure is not available, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the current waiting time for a Neurological Epileptic Review appointment. (AQW 34869/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the current waiting time for a Neurological Epileptic review appointment is not available. Technically patients do not 'wait' for a review; rather a review appointment is scheduled for a 'clinically appropriate' time, which can range from weeks to years depending on the patient's individual case.

The Department however does collect waiting times information for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment. Quarterly data relating to outpatient waiting times are published on the DHSSPS website at the following link:

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

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the annual cost to the Health Service of work, that could be carried out by a dental hygienist, being carried out by a dentist. (AQW 34873/11-15)

Mr Poots: This information is not collected at this level of detail.

There is only a very limited range of care and treatment that dental hygienists can carry out when compared to that which can be carried out by a dentist. There are different parts of the health service delivering dental care and treatment and these are funded in different ways.

There has only been a very limited need to utilise dental hygienists when commissioning services in the Hospital Dental Services and Community Dental Services.

For General Dental Services, where most primary dental care is provided to our population from High Street dental practices, contracts are held by dentists as independent practitioners. The regulations allow them to delegate the small range of treatment items that hygienists can provide. This particular data could be calculated but the fees charged to patients and cost to the HSCB are, in fact, exactly the same. Ultimately the proposal for dental hygienists to carry out treatment rather than dentists depends on what business model the practice owner wants to use. Whilst the majority chose not to, some dentists do use dental hygienists within their teams to various extents. However, analysis by my officials shows that, when hygienists are utilised, it is predominantly in a minor part-time capacity and almost exclusively for the private market.

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether a cost benefit analysis of treatment by (i) dentists; and (ii) dental hygienists has been carried out. (AQW 34894/11-15)

Mr Poots: A cost-benefit analysis has not been carried out.

Dental Hygienists can only carry out a very limited range of care and treatment when compared to that which can be carried out by dentists. There are also different parts of the health service delivering dental care and treatment. These are funded in different ways, and have different mechanisms for remuneration in place.

HSC Trusts are responsible for delivering Hospital Dental Services and Community Dental Services. Only a very limited need has been found to utilise dental hygienists when delivering these commissioned services. Whilst dental hygienists may have a lower unit cost in a salaried position, a dentist can carry out the widest range of care and treatment.

For General Dental Services (GDS), where most primary dental care is provided to our population from High Street dental practices, the cost to the HSCB and the fees charged to patients for this limited range of treatments are, in fact, exactly the same. As such, there is no benefit to the GDS budget if hygienists are used.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the Bexsero vaccine will be made available to patients.

(AQW 34921/11-15)

Mr Poots: I refer to my answer of 10 April 2014. Negotiations regarding procurement of the Men B vaccine are being conducted by the Department of Health in England on behalf of all the UK Health Departments. The timing of the introduction of a Men B vaccination programme will now depend primarily on the outcome of the negotiations and on the availability of a sustainable supply of the vaccine required to allow a programme to begin.

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the impact on the Health Service of local dental and dental hygiene students who have to go to Britain for training and do not return here to work.

(AQW 34934/11-15)

Mr Poots: This data is not monitored but there are over 1050 dentists working in general dental practices and providing health service dentistry. I am pleased to report that access is no longer the problem it once was for many patients and supply appears to meet service demand. Some dental students may choose to train elsewhere, but often return home to work in Northern Ireland in due course with new skills and valuable experience. It is also important to note that the HSC benefits when dentists from outside of Northern Ireland who, as students, have trained elsewhere in Great Britain, and indeed the EU, chose to come here to work. These dentists represent a significant contribution to HSC service delivery. My assessment is, therefore, that the impact you describe would be likely to be negligible, if any at all.

For dental hygienists I would also assess the impact on the HSC as likely to be negligible, if any at all. Most of our population accesses dental care and treatment in general dental practices and analysis by my officials shows that the majority of practices do not utilise hygienists. Where they do, it is predominantly in a minor part-time capacity and almost exclusively for the private market. Dentists can provide any of the treatments available from hygienists, and at no additional cost to the HSC.

No training programmes exist in Northern Ireland for Dental Therapists, Orthodontic Therapists and Clinical Dental Technicians and so prospective students have to go elsewhere to train for these roles. The General Dental Council publishes regional registrant data and the latest available, for June 2014, shows 30 Dental Therapists, 13 Orthodontic Therapists and 8 Clinical Dental Technicians, who must have completed their training elsewhere, as being registered in Northern Ireland.

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of dental students who are trained locally remain here to practice; and what percentage of their practice is (i) Health Service; and (ii) private treatment.

(AQW 34935/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA), which delivers our postgraduate Dental Foundation Training programme, have advised that of 38 final year dental students at Queen's University (QUB) for the 2013-14 year, 26 have been successful (following a competitive process) in being offered a place on the Northern Ireland Dental Foundation Training Programme from August 2014. Completion of this programme will enable those trainees to subsequently practice independently within the health service. Of these 26 places, 2 students did not pass their final exams, and another that did has deferred their entry to the programme for this year. As such, 23 will commence the course in August 2014. The remaining 12 graduating QUB students were appointed to programmes of training elsewhere in the UK.

There are a total of 35 places on the 2014 Northern Ireland Dental Foundation Programme and 9 of the originally available places have been offered to trainees who have completed their undergraduate education elsewhere in the UK.

NIMDTA do not track trainees following completion of the programme, nor those who have completed Dental Foundation Training elsewhere, and do not maintain a database of who is practising where. Similarly, data relating to the percentage of their subsequent practice that is Health Service or private is not held, and is not available.

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explain the difference between an SEA and SAI inquiry undertaken in Health and Social Care Trusts.

(AQW 34939/11-15)

Mr Poots: A Serious Event Audit (SEA) is part of The Serious Adverse Incident (SAI) investigation process; the regionally agreed approach to the reporting, management and follow-up of serious adverse incidents; designed to identify and share learning in a meaningful way, with a focus on safety and quality, ultimately leading to service improvement for service users.

Revised procedures on the management of SAIs were published on 1 October 2013 which included replacing a single investigation process for all SAIs with three levels of investigation. The first level of investigation is the SEA.

Most SAI notifications will be investigated as an SEA with an immediate assessment of what has happened and why, followed by agreement on follow up actions and any learning identified. This will result in the closure of The SAI. However, if the SEA determines the SAI is more complex and requires a more detailed investigation, it will be pursued as either a Level 2 or Level 3 investigation.

A copy of the HSCB Procedure for the Reporting and follow up of Serious Adverse Incidents can be accessed at -

http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/publications/Policies/102%20Procedure_for_the_reporting_and_followup_of_Serious_Adverse_Incidents-Oct2013.pdf

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) SEA; and (ii) SAI inquiries are currently taking place in each Health and Social Care Trust; and how many have taken place over the last two years. **(AQW 34940/11-15)**

Mr Poots: Revised procedures on the management of Serious Adverse Incidents (SAIs) were published on 1 October 2013 which included replacing a single investigation process for all (SAIs) with three levels of investigation. The first level of investigation is the Serious Event Audit (SEA).

A copy of the revised procedure can be accessed at -

http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/publications/Policies/102%20Procedure_for_the_reporting_and_followup_of_Serious_Adverse_Incidents-Oct2013.pdf

Information on the number of SAI and SEA investigations which are currently being carried out by Trusts is outlined in the table below.

	Total no of current SAI investigations including SEAs	*No of SEA investigations
BHSCT	119	49
NHSCT	185	64
NIAS	2	1
SEHSCT	72	25
SHSCT	72	29
WHSCT	78	16
Totals	528	184

*Information on the number of SEA investigations is only available from 1 October 2013.

The total number of SAI inquiries, including SEAs that have taken place in each Trust during the period 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2013 is outlined below.

	Total no of SAI Investigations 1/1/12-31/12/12	Total no of SAI investigations including SEAs 1/1/13-31/12/13	*No of SEAs 1/10/13-31/12/13	Total
BHSCT	77	84	19	161
NHSCT	63	130	19	193
NIAS	4	3	0	7
SEHSCT	47	57	6	104
SHSCT	41	57	9	98
WHSCT	37	53	4	90
Totals	269	384	57	653

Breast and Urological Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialists

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) breast cancer; and (ii) urological cancer Clinical Nurse Specialists are employed in Health and Social Care Trusts. **(AQW 34944/11-15)**

Mr Poots: Headcount and whole-time equivalent (WTE) numbers of breast and urological cancer specialist nurses in each HSC Trust are shown in the table below.

HSC Trust	Breast Cancer Specialist Nurses		Urological Cancer Specialist Nurses	
	HC	WTE	HC	WTE
Belfast	6	5.8	1	1.0
Northern	4	2.8	0	0.0
South Eastern	3	2.8	1	1.0
Southern	3	2.6	0	0.0
Western	4	3.6	3	2.6

Notes:

- 3 These figures were provided by the Health & Social Care Trusts, and have not been validated by the Department.
- 4 Belfast HSC Trust note that 2.0 WTE of their Breast Cancer Specialist Nurses are currently charitably funded, and that a further 1.0 WTE post for a Urological Cancer Specialist Nurse is currently vacant, to be filled in October 2014.
- 5 Northern Trust note that a further 0.32 WTE breast cancer nurse is currently in training, and that it is currently working with Macmillan to recruit a urological cancer nurse specialist.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how he will address the issue of the 49 recent Serious Adverse Incidents in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.
(AQW 34962/11-15)

Mr Poots: I expect the Boards of any HSC organisation to consider aspects of patient and client safety at every Board meeting. HSC trusts should present an analysis of adverse incidents to their Boards on a regular basis. This analysis was an example of an organisation committed to learning and improvement with a considered approach to its responsibilities for quality and safety.

The purpose of the SAI reporting system is to provide a clear, regionally agreed approach to the reporting, management and follow up of serious adverse incidents; and to effectively share learning in a meaningful way, with a focus on safety and quality, ultimately leading to service improvement for service users. These incidents will be investigated appropriately and learning will be captured and shared to improve services.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he intends to implement any of the recommendations of the Whistleblowing Commission Report by Public Concern at Work.
(AQW 34963/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Department's whistleblowing policy and procedures are currently under review. The recommendations and findings of all relevant reports, including the Whistleblowing Commission's Report, will be considered in the context of this review.

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Chief Dental Officer has provided the General Dental Council with information relating to the future of the School of Dental Hygiene; and if so, when the information was provided.
(AQW 34983/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Chief Dental Officer has not formally written to the GDC. The Acting Chief Dental Officer continues to work closely with colleagues in Human Resources Directorate who lead on this matter on my behalf. My officials also continue to work jointly with key stakeholders from Queen's University Belfast and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust on a working group which is considering the programme for dental hygienist training. The GDC has been made aware, through communication and correspondence from Professor Donald Burden who holds a senior position with both Queen's University and the Trust, of the ongoing situation at the School of Dental Hygiene.

Consideration has been given to the core options on the way forward and my officials will soon be presenting me with an options appraisal. When I make my decision on the most viable and sustainable way for students from Northern Ireland to train as dental hygienists the Acting Chief Dental Officer will advise the GDC.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 34297/11- 15, when the new Omagh Community Fire Station was first occupied; and when the necessary certification was obtained.
(AQW 34985/11-15)

Mr Poots: The new Omagh Community Fire Station was first occupied in 26 April 2014 and became fully operational providing emergency response on 30 May 2014.

While the final Building Control Certificate is awaited the Design team confirmed, on 18 April 2014, that all necessary certification is in place for the safe occupation of the building.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the expected date for the restoration of full Accident and Emergency services at Downe Hospital.

(AQW 34986/11-15)

Mr Poots: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust took the decision to temporarily reduce the opening hours of the Downe Hospital emergency department from 4 January 2014 because of a shortage of suitably qualified middle grade doctors. I am advised by the Trust that despite repeated efforts to recruit doctors, including a number of recruitment campaigns over the past six months, this position has not improved and the Trust is therefore at present unable to give a date for resumption of the previous opening hours. I have made it clear to the Trust that I expect to see the restoration of the opening hours as soon as possible.

The Trust has taken a number of actions to mitigate the effects of the temporary reduction in the emergency department's opening hours, including direct admission by GPs to the Downe Hospital at times when the department is closed and provision of a nurse-led minor injuries service from 9am to 5pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the second and third stage of the Reform of Adult Care and Support.

(AQW 35002/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department is currently taking forward a number of workstreams to drive the development of proposals for reform as part of the second stage of the Reform of Adult Care and Support. These proposals will extend both to changes to the type of support that should be available and how those services are funded, taking into consideration the issues raised during the first stage consultation on "Who Cares? The Future of Adult Care and Support in Northern Ireland".

The stage two proposals paper will be subject to full public consultation in due course, which will inform the development of a final (stage 3) strategic document outlining the agreed changes to the care and support system. Further work will then be required to implement the agreed reforms.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 32933/11-15, when the pilot to train Emergency Unit doctors, nurses and radiographers to recognise, respond to and report incidents of domestic violence will begin.

(AQW 35021/11-15)

Mr Poots: Officials from my Department are currently working with representatives from the two pilot Trusts (South Eastern and Western Health and Social Care Trusts) and the Clinical Education Centre to finalise the pilot programmes for domestic violence targeted enquiry in Emergency Departments. The intention is for the pilots to begin by Spring 2015.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 32933/11-15, what is the completion date for the joint strategy on Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse; and when the strategy will be implemented.

(AQW 35022/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department is working with the Department of Justice to develop the new Joint Strategy on Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse. The intention is for the Strategy to be published by the end of 2014.

Following the publication of the Strategy, the RSG will commence implementation of the delivery of priorities through the development of Action Plans by stakeholder-led sub-groups and working groups. This work will be ongoing throughout the lifetime of the Strategy.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there was an increase in the use of branded medicines in the first three months of 2014; and if so, by how much usage increased.

(AQW 35024/11-15)

Mr Poots: The table below shows the figures for the number and cost of branded medicines prescribed in primary care for the first three months of 2013 and for the first three months of 2014.

Period	Items	Cost
Jan-13	946k	£21.0m
Feb-13	870k	£19.2m
Mar-13	895k	£19.9m
Jan-14	945k	£21.6m
Feb-14	860k	£20.0m
Mar-14	895k	£20.4m

Figures from Corporate Services HSCB

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) number; and (ii) total cost of anti-depressant drug prescriptions (a) issued; and (b) dispensed, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35025/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number and ingredient cost before discount of anti-depressant drug items dispensed by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment in 2011, 2012 and 2013 are shown below.

Data relating to the number of prescription items prescribed but not dispensed is not recorded.

Number and cost of anti-depressant prescription items dispensed in each of the last three years

Calendar Year	Number of anti-depressant prescription items dispensed	Total cost of anti-depressant prescription items
2011	2,118,159	£18,490,634
2012	2,297,093	£13,368,984
2013	2,445,986	£15,699,817

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.

Note: BSO prescribing data extract for Antidepressants as classified as BNF Chapter 4, Section 3.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety under what circumstances visitors from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland, who are charged for their prescriptions, become entitled to a refund from his Department; and to detail the cost of such refunds in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35027/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Department does not make refunds for any prescriptions charged to Northern Ireland visitors to the Republic of Ireland. Any refunds that may be due are dealt with centrally for all UK residents by the Overseas Healthcare Team based within the Department of Work and Pensions, and at no cost to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list any items that have been removed from the General Practice prescribing data in the last three years; and to outline the reason for any removals.

(AQW 35028/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information is not available in the format requested.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action is being taken to adequately resource Emergency Departments and to encourage people to use GP Out of Hours service, rather than Emergency Departments, when appropriate.

(AQW 35029/11-15)

Mr Poots: The funding allocated to emergency departments has increased significantly in recent years, from £74.4 million in 2007/08 to £103.3 million in 2012/13, an increase of 38.8%.

It is important that people use emergency departments appropriately. In November 2013 I launched the 'Choose Well' campaign which is aimed at increasing public awareness of the whole range of urgent care services available, including the GP Out of Hours Service (GPOOHS), and educating people on using the services appropriately. The NI Direct website provides information about unscheduled care services and how to access them at <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/health-and-well-being/health-services/how-to-use-your-health-services.htm>.

Over the past 5 years GPOOHS activity has increased by 18% with 606,000 calls to GPOOHS in 2012/13. I recently approved a 'Regional Strategic Framework for GP Out of Hours Services' which will focus on further simplifying access, improving organisational efficiency and improved alignment with other healthcare services.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to detail the average cost per prescription item in Northern Ireland; (ii) how this compares with (a) England; (b) Scotland; and (c) Wales; and (iii) how the cost has changed in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35031/11-15)

Mr Poots: The average ingredient cost per prescription item where a prescription was written, dispensed by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment in 2011, 2012 and 2013 for Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, and the changes between the years is shown below.

Average ingredient cost per prescription item in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales 2011-2013

Calendar Year	Average ingredient cost per prescription item (year on year change)			
	Northern Ireland	England	Scotland	Wales
2011	£11.76	£9.16	£10.65	£8.14
2012	£10.80 (-£0.96)	£8.52 (-£0.64)	£9.80 (-£0.85)	£7.55 (-£0.59)
2013	£10.58 (-£0.22)	£8.37 (-£0.15)	£9.87 (+£0.07)	£7.40 (-£0.16)

Source: Prescription Cost Analysis, Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to address the waiting times of post-transplant patients at the Renal Clinic in the Belfast City Hospital.

(AQW 35039/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am advised that the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has reviewed the patient pathway for these clinics; additional staff and new equipment have been introduced and this has improved the waiting times for patients.

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department will commission a dental workforce review and take account of the Adult Dental Health Survey of 2013 prior to making any decisions on the future training and work patterns of dental hygienists.

(AQW 35044/11-15)

Mr Poots: My officials are not aware of the 'Adult Dental Health Survey 2013'.

There have been significant concerns relating to the Belfast School of Dental Hygiene for several years and, as a result, the student intake has had to be suspended. Officials from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Queen's University Belfast and my Department have tried to resolve these matters and have recently been considering options on the way forward. My officials are preparing an options appraisal and I expect to receive their advice in due course.

Effective workforce planning remains a priority for my Department. There are a range of complex workforce planning issues across health and social care and it is not possible to resource formal workforce reviews for all professions concurrently. At present, a dental workforce review is not underway however other data relating to the dental workforce has been considered. No decision will be taken in respect of the future training of Northern Ireland students for dental hygiene without considering available relevant evidence. Whilst I recognise the importance of formal workforce review data, there may be other reasons to lend or withdraw support for a training programme. Such a review should not preclude a decision being taken when serious concerns exist, when the status quo is untenable, and when I am considering other budgetary pressures and seeking the best use of public money.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of anti-depressant medication to the Health Service in each year since 2007; and how these costs compare to the rest of the UK.

(AQW 35059/11-15)

Mr Poots: The ingredient cost of anti-depressant drug items dispensed in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment in 2007 - 2013 are shown below.

Drugs prescribed and dispensed in hospital cannot be captured centrally due to the use of different hospital IT systems.

Ingredient cost of anti-depressant prescription items dispensed in 2007 – 2013 across the UK

Year	Ingredient cost before discount of anti-depressant prescription items dispensed			
	Northern Ireland	England	Scotland	Wales
2007	£18,978,564	£276,107,572	£40,467,469	£21,489,354
2008	£17,788,364	£247,355,066	£35,820,996	£18,839,068
2009	£17,620,368	£230,062,853	£32,215,632	£16,954,844
2010	£18,806,959	£220,372,789	£30,595,487	£16,087,393
2011	£18,490,634	£270,177,163	£31,413,645	£19,424,401
2012	£13,368,984	£211,145,435	£29,568,045	£15,171,488
2013	£15,699,817	£282,121,595	£40,056,459	£20,239,051

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.

Note: BSO prescribing data extract for Antidepressants as classified as BNF Chapter 4, Section 3.

PCA data refers to calendar year except for Scottish data which is financial year; 2012 refers to year ending at March 2013 etc.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of prescriptions issued for anti-depressant medication in each year since 2007; and how these numbers compare to the rest of the UK.

(AQW 35060/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of anti-depressant drug items dispensed in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment in 2007 - 2013 are shown below.

Number of anti-depressant prescription items dispensed in 2007 – 2013 across the UK

Year	Number of anti-depressant prescription items dispensed			
	Northern Ireland	England	Scotland	Wales
2007	1,525,497	33,839,594	3,827,449	2,725,876
2008	1,599,063	35,960,539	4,008,875	2,922,708
2009	1,722,746	39,140,459	4,312,177	3,182,344
2010	1,919,733	42,787,966	4,662,366	3,471,005
2011	2,118,159	46,677,813	5,015,323	3,806,140
2012	2,297,093	50,167,201	5,220,431	4,089,673
2013	2,445,986	53,326,550	5,495,580	4,370,305

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.

Note: BSO prescribing data extract for Antidepressants as classified as BNF Chapter 4, Section 3.

PCA data refers to calendar year except for Scottish data which is financial year; 2012 refers to year ending at March 2013 etc.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the action he has taken following each public petition presented to the Assembly and forwarded to his Department.

(AQW 35062/11-15)

Mr Poots: Twelve public petitions have been presented to the Assembly and forwarded to me within the current mandate, as detailed in the attached list.

My Department considers the detail of each public petition received when taking forward related policy matters.

Tab A

Public Petitions presented to the Assembly and forwarded to DHSSPS

Received	Subject	Laid
5th December 2011	Impact on local residents of the reduction in funding for community pharmacies	29th November 2011 by Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA
24th May 2012	Unison Causeway Branch Petition to Save Acute Services Including Accident and Emergency	22nd May 2012 by Mr Adrian McQuillan MLA
22nd June 2012	Suicide Awareness and Prevention Project, Poleglass	18th June 2012 by Ms Jennifer McCann MLA
14th May 2013	Opposition to cuts to Health Service dental care	13th May 2013 by Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA
29th May 2013	Cushendall Fire Station	28th May 2013 by Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
12th June 2013	Campaign for the Meningitis B vaccine to be made available in Northern Ireland	11th June 2013 by Mr Jim Wells MLA
2nd July 2013	Westland Home, Cookstown	1st July 2013 by Mrs Sandra Overend MLA
11th September 2013	Pinewood Residential Care Home	11th September 2013 by Mr Paul Frew MLA
10th March 2014	Ovarian Cancer Awareness Campaign	3rd March 2014 by Mr Chris Lyttle MLA
2nd July 2014	Detoxification Provisions: Foyle	30th June 2014 by Mr Pat Ramsey MLA

Received	Subject	Laid
2nd July 2014	ME: Full Adoption of the Canadian Consensus Criteria	30th June 2014 by Mr Dominic Bradley MLA
2nd July 2014	Loane House, Dungannon	1st July by Ms Bronwyn McGahan MLA

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail what the money received through the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme was spent on, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35071/11-15)

Mr Poots: I refer the Member to the answer I gave to AQW 34337/11-15.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the total number of prescription forms issued; (ii) the average cost of a prescription item; and (iii) the average number of prescription items issued per person, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35077/11-15)

Mr Poots: The (i) the total number of prescription items; (ii) the average ingredient cost per prescription item and (iii) the average number of prescription items per person, where a prescription was written, dispensed by a community pharmacist, dispensing doctor or appliance supplier, and presented for payment in 2011, 2012 and 2013 is shown below.

Number of Prescription Items, Average ingredient cost per prescription item & average number of prescription items per person 2011-2013

Calendar Year	Number of Prescription Items	Average ingredient cost per prescription item	Average prescription items per person
2011	36,322,851	£11.77	20.02
2012	37,841,141	£10.80	20.75
2013	38,661,481	£10.58	21.13

Source: Prescription Cost Analysis, Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.
Mid-Year Population Estimates - Population and Migration Estimates Northern Ireland, NISRA.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why eligible patients for IVF are only entitled to one full cycle of treatment under the Health Service, unlike patients in either England, Scotland or Wales.

(AQW 35079/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department recognises that some regions across the UK provide a greater number of treatment cycles than the available resources currently permit in Northern Ireland. Access criteria in Northern Ireland, which were developed following public consultations in 2006 and 2009, are however wider than in some other regions of the UK, e.g. offering treatment to couples who already have a child, thus allowing more people to avail of publicly funded treatment.

NICE Clinical Guideline CG156 on fertility has been considered and endorsed by my Department and it is now the responsibility of the HSC Board, as commissioner of services, to set out its approach to implementing the guidance within the context of currently available resources and other HSC priorities.

Full implementation of the revised guideline is expected to have significant financial implications and, until my Department's budget allocations for 2014/15 are finalised, the Board is unable to give definitive plans for implementation.

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the findings of the review of the School of Dental Hygiene have not been made public.

(AQW 35080/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department commissioned a review of the Belfast School of Dental Hygiene in 2012 when serious concerns came to light on the delivery of the programme to train dental hygienists. Its aim was to determine whether changes could be enacted so that training could continue. The review was part of my Department's examination of the events and issues in the School of Dental Hygiene. This process is still ongoing. Unlike reviews that precede formal public consultations relating to HSC service delivery, it was not intended for general publication.

Consideration has been given to options on the way forward and my officials will soon be presenting me with an options appraisal. When I make my decision on the most viable and sustainable way for students from Northern Ireland to train as dental hygienists my decision, and the reasons that support it, can be made available to appropriate stakeholders.

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department is working towards implementing the recommendations of the McCollum report, required to improve the lives of people diagnosed with Muscular Dystrophy.

(AQW 35081/11-15)

Mr Poots: I support most of the recommendations contained in the McCollum report. The Health and Social Care Board and Public Health Agency are taking forward the implementation of the Report's recommendations.

Progress has been made in a number of areas and I attach at Annex A an update from the Health and Social Care Board on each of the 15 recommendations contained in the Report.

Annex A

McCollum Report – Access to Specialist Neuromuscular Care in NI

Recommendation 1: A lead for muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions is appointed from within Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland to take overall control and be accountable for identifying and fixing the gaps in specialist multidisciplinary neuromuscular care, which require urgent service development.

Ms Michelle Tennyson, Assistant Director, Allied Health Professions and Public Patient Involvement at the Public Health Agency, has been identified as the lead for muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions in Northern Ireland.

Recommendation 2: The Northern Ireland Executive and HSC define and fully recognise neuromuscular services as specialist services in order to distinguish the complex muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions as requiring specialist support, which includes different specialisms.

Services for people with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy are provided by HSC Trusts on the basis of assessed need and may involve hospital and/or community based services.

There is a generic, regional neuromuscular clinic for all age groups provided by the Belfast Trust which is led by an adult neurologist and a paediatric neurologist with an interest in neuromuscular conditions. The clinic may also be attended by a clinical geneticist, neuro-physiotherapist, orthotist and occupational therapist. The management of neuromuscular conditions also requires input from other specialties such as cardiology, orthopaedics and respiratory medicine and a one-stop-shop with these specialties present is being piloted.

Where a clinical need has been identified for treatment which cannot be provided in Northern Ireland, appropriate patients may receive treatment outside Northern Ireland, subject to the HSC Board's approval via the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process.

Recommendation 3: The Northern Ireland Executive ensures that the care advisor post in Northern Ireland is secured long term within HSC, and takes urgent steps to create more of these posts. These steps will provide the best possible support and advice for people with muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions and will reduce unplanned emergency admissions by investing small amounts to save a large amount in the long term.

The HSCB / PHA are supportive of this recommendation and have secured funding to appoint two neurological care advisors during 2014/15. The care advisors will provide advice, support and information to people living with neurological conditions including neuromuscular conditions. The posts will be regional and will be based in Belfast Trust. The HSCB is working with Belfast Trust to finalise the investment proposals.

The need for the appointment of care advisors to support people living with neurological conditions has also been highlighted as a result of HSCB / PHA engagement with services users and carers and other key stakeholders.

A specialist paediatric neuromuscular nurse is in post within the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. This is a regional post which provides specialist nursing skills and knowledge in the management of those affected by neuromuscular conditions, their families and the professionals working with them.

The provision of a neuromuscular nurse specialist for adults is supported by HSCB but is subject to the identification of appropriate additional funding as well as competing priorities regarding services for people living with neurological conditions

Recommendation 4: Health and Social Care Board and the Northern Ireland Executive create a steering group for developing specialised neuromuscular services which incorporates the views of people affected by muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions, health professionals, commissioners and the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign.

A priority for the Health and Social Care Board's Neurological Conditions Subgroup is to establish robust engagement mechanisms with service users and carers, clinical staff, Trust management, voluntary and community organisations and other statutory organisations. This is in acknowledgement of the fact that people with muscular dystrophy, related neuromuscular conditions and also neurological conditions require access to a range of services that can cross boundaries between health and social care, employment and benefit services, housing and education.

In support of this the HSCB established a Neurological Conditions Advisory Group with membership from a service users and carers; voluntary and community organisations; health professionals; commissioners and Trust management. As part of this

process nominations have been sought from the Northern Ireland Rare Disease Partnership which includes the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign. The first meeting of the Group took place early in 2013 and it will continue to meet on at least an annual basis.

The HSCB/PHA have also put in place arrangements to meet with Action Duchenne and the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign on a quarterly basis and will continue to engage with people living with neuromuscular conditions, health and social care professionals and other interest groups.

Recommendation 5: Health and Social Care Board initiate steps to ensure that a network approach for muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions is formally developed for adult services, following the announcement of increased coordination of paediatric services.

The Health and Social Care Board agreed 3 year funding for a fixed term clinical network manager to develop and formalise network arrangements both at local, regional and national level. Neuromuscular conditions are covered within this role. The network manager took up post in September 2012.

It is acknowledged that adult neurology services require further modernisation. In support of this the HSCB is planning a process of clinical engagement to:

- benchmark services with other providers in the UK;
- consider the need for additional staff both in terms of medical, nursing and AHP staff in order that specialist neurological expertise can be fully utilised;
- consider the development of 'one stop shops' / multidisciplinary clinics for patient accessing a range of specialist clinics in Belfast Trust;
- develop the referral protocols linked to care pathways including GP referrals; and,
- extend the use of telemedicine and virtual clinics.

Any additional investment required will be subject to prioritisation within available resources. Opportunities will also be identified to develop and formalise network arrangements at local, regional and national level.

Recommendation 6: Health and Social Care Board and Health and Social Care Trusts use the specialist expertise within Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to develop further a 'hub and spoke' model of service provision, with Belfast Trust at the centre of the set-up at which core specialists are located.

A hub and spoke model for specialist neuromuscular and neurological care already exists with Belfast Trust at the centre. Local services are also in place in each of the local hospitals for general neuromuscular care. The Health and Social Care Board will continue to explore opportunities to further develop these hubs and spoke arrangements.

Recommendation 7: Health and Social Care Trusts appoint transition workers to facilitate patients' transition from paediatric to adult services.

This is being considered as part of the work of the Health and Social Care Board's Neurological Conditions Subgroup. However, delivery will be subject to the identification of appropriate additional funding.

Recommendation 8: Health and Social Care Board and Social Care Trusts develop a more streamlined and efficient genetic testing system to reduce delays.

Northern Ireland gains access to specialist genetic testing for muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular disorders via the UK Genetic Testing Network (UKGTN). This network provides advice throughout the UK on genetic testing and aims to ensure the provision of high quality equitable genetic testing services.

One of the challenges in diagnosing neurogenetic disorders is that there can be a clinical overlap between many conditions and it can be difficult to distinguish them on the grounds of clinical features alone. In addition, conditions that appear clinically identical can have a large number of genetic causes. For example, the condition hereditary motor sensory neuropathy (Charcot Marie Tooth disease) can be caused by mutations in a number of different genes. Until now it has been difficult to get a genetic diagnosis for many of these patients as it would have involved doing a number of single gene tests each of which would cost several hundred pounds and it was often difficult to know which gene to test first.

There has been a recent change in this process in the form of panel tests. This is a result of the introduction of Next Generation Sequencing which enables a number of genes to be looked at together. This includes panel tests for Charcot Marie Tooth (hereditary motor sensory neuropathies) and congenital myopathy.

The panel test for Charcot Marie Tooth will enable genetic diagnosis to be established which will assist in the prognosis and future management of the patient and their family. This group of conditions can be inherited in a number of different ways and so establishing the exact diagnosis is important for giving advice to at risk family members. Being able to make a definitive diagnosis will provide information about the natural history of the condition and may avoid the need for other tests. At present patients are reliant on sequential single gene testing which may take up to one year to complete. The new panel test will provide a more rapid result with a much greater chance of finding a diagnosis.

The main benefits of the panel test for congenital myopathies are to provide an overall higher mutation detection rate in a faster time for patients with a congenital myopathy, compared with the current service. The higher detection rate will be as a result of testing a more comprehensive repertoire of genes, as well as the potential for the detection of large rearrangements,

which is currently unavailable for the majority of these genes. The faster turn-around time is based on the simultaneous analysis of the gene set, as opposed to the previous strategy of sequential analysis. In addition, this test is predicted to provide an overall reduction in costs per patient, which will help to provide additional resources to other areas of the service. The cost of providing this service is predicted to decrease with time as the next generation sequencing reagents become less expensive. By doing the panel tests earlier in the patient pathway may reduce the need for further invasive tests.

The new UKGTN tests for 2014 have been available from 1 April 2014 and have been endorsed by Health and Social Care Board Specialist Services Commissioning Team.

Recommendation 9: Health and Social Care Trusts address the need to increase clinical time dedicated to specialist neuromuscular care

The Health and Social Care Board and Public Health Agency will consider this as part of the planned clinical engagement exercise to explore opportunities to reform and modernise services.

Recommendation 10: The Health and Social Care Board develops a neuromuscular registry for both the paediatric and the adult services in Northern Ireland to ensure the most efficient delivery of specialist care.

The HSCB/PHA are working with the HSC Online project team to establish how a high level directory of services for people with muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular services can be developed and integrated into HSC Online.

Recommendation 11: The Duchenne Standards of Care guidelines are made widely available to those commissioning, planning and delivering services so that high quality standards of care are achieved in a multidisciplinary approach for all muscular conditions. As new guidelines emerge for other neuromuscular conditions, these should also be made widely available so that commissioning, planning and delivery of these services can be improved.

The Duchenne Standards of Care Guidelines do not have any official status here in Northern Ireland but rather they might be regarded as good practice. In the future, in the event that DHSSPS endorses any NICE guidance in this area, this status may change.

Recommendation 12: The Northern Ireland Executive addresses the inequalities of wheelchair service provision so that there is consistency and that people with muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions are not forced to resort to private purchases of suitable wheelchairs.

The HSC Board has commenced a review of the regional eligibility criteria for the provision of wheelchairs through the Northern Ireland Wheelchair Service.

This Review has been commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) on behalf of DHSSPS to consider the current Eligibility Criteria for the Provision of Wheelchairs.

The Terms of Reference for the Project are:

- To review current Eligibility Criteria in collaboration with key stakeholders to take into account other 'best' practice models of provision both nationally and internationally; and,
- Analyse current Eligibility Criteria and consider opportunities for further standardisation, improved efficiency/effectiveness and quality improvement.

It is anticipated that the findings of the review will be finalised in Summer 2014. Steps have been taken to ensure the views of people with muscular dystrophy and neuromuscular conditions are considered as part of this review.

Recommendation 13: The Northern Ireland Executive, in conjunction with HSC, improves the level of recognition and knowledge of muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular conditions at GP level.

HSCB/PHA will fund and host a training event for health and social care professionals to raise awareness of living with a neuromuscular condition in 2014. The HSCB/PHA will work in partnership with Action Duchenne and the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign to plan and deliver this event.

HSCB / PHA will work with Integrated Care Directorate to explore opportunities to raise awareness amongst GPs of living with a muscular dystrophy, related neuromuscular disorders and wider neurological conditions.

Recommendation 14: The Health and Social Care Board implements a structured long term succession planning system so that key neuromuscular posts are recruited for and appointed quickly to prevent a detrimental gap in services for people with muscular dystrophy and related neuromuscular condition.

Every effort is made to ensure effective succession planning for doctors across a range of specialties. Generally, where possible, medical posts where the post holder is approaching retirement age are highlighted and identified to the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency in order for them to allocate a junior doctor to a specialist training programme. Similarly, where it is apparent that a specialist nurse/AHP is approaching retirement, steps can be taken to begin to train staff with generic skills.

However, as specialist medical training can take up to 5 years and retirement age is not fixed, it can prove challenging to coordinate the completion of training with the retirement of a senior consultant in specialties where the number of consultants is small. Both the Health and Social Care Board and Trusts are aware of these challenges and aim to address via advance planning where possible.

Recommendation 15: Health Trusts and Northern Ireland Councils develop structured joint planning provision so that there is a seamless transition and coordination between health and social care services.

This recommendation is not relevant in a NI context as an integrated health and social care system exists here.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much funding each Health and Social Care Trust has provided to independent residential and nursing care homes in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 35141/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is only possible to provide details of costs provided by Health and Social Care Trusts to independent residential and nursing homes from the establishment of the five new integrated HSC Trusts in April 2007. Costs from 2007/08 to 2012/13 are set out in the table below.

Financial Year	HSC Trust	Nursing Homes - Independent	Residential Homes - Independent	Total	Client Contributions	Total less Client Contributions
		£m				
2012/13	Belfast	66	20	86	32	54
	Northern	68	25	93	33	60
	South Eastern	47	22	69	23	46
	Southern	54	12	66	22	43
	Western	44	14	58	16	41
	Total	277	93	371	126	245
2011/12	Belfast	64	20	84	30	53
	Northern	69	22	91	32	59
	South Eastern	46	20	66	22	44
	Southern	50	12	62	20	42
	Western	41	14	55	16	40
	Total	270	89	358	121	238
2010/11	Belfast	62	21	83	29	54
	Northern	69	22	91	31	60
	South Eastern	45	20	64	20	44
	Southern	48	11	59	19	40
	Western	41	12	53	15	38
	Total	265	86	351	114	237
2009/10	Belfast	59	20	79	27	52
	Northern	64	21	85	27	58
	South Eastern	43	19	62	19	43
	Southern	47	11	58	17	42
	Western	35	12	47	12	35
	Total	249	83	332	101	230

Financial Year	HSC Trust	Nursing Homes - Independent	Residential Homes - Independent	Total	Client Contributions	Total less Client Contributions
		£m				
2008/09	Belfast	57	19	76	25	52
	Northern	62	21	83	25	58
	South Eastern	41	18	59	17	42
	Southern	47	10	57	15	42
	Western	33	12	45	11	34
	Total	241	79	320	93	228
2007/08	Belfast	54	19	74	23	50
	Northern	57	20	77	23	54
	South Eastern	38	18	56	16	40
	Southern	44	9	53	16	38
	Western	30	12	41	10	31
	Total	223	78	301	88	213

Source: Trust Financial Returns

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33982/11-15, to account for the inconsistency in the methods used by Health and Social Care Trusts to record the variation in the numbers and the proportion of residential and domiciliary care packages; and whether he has plans to regularise the methods.[R]

(AQW 35142/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are a number of administrative systems from which HSC Trusts extract information on residential and domiciliary care, including manual collation. Historically, these systems have been developed separately resulting in information being available in varying detail across the Trusts. Improvements in this area are being addressed through IT development and the establishment of a minimum dataset which will meet the regional information needs of the DHSSPS, HSCB and HSC Trusts.

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to Health Service dental work carried out by private service providers, whether the cost of having the same dental work done varies if it is carried out by a dentist or a dental hygienist.

(AQW 35150/11-15)

Mr Poots: The vast majority of health service dental care and treatment is provided in High Street practices. These practices are staffed by teams led by general dental practitioners, who are independent contractors, providing services on behalf of the HSCB. The regulations under which these dentists are contracted allow them, should they choose to do so, to utilise dental hygienists and therapists to provide care and treatment.

The range of health service treatments is set out in the Statement of Dental Remuneration and only a limited number of those treatments are within the scope of practice of dental hygienists. The cost to patients, and the HSCB budget, is exactly the same regardless of who provides the care.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have given blood in the North Down area over the last twelve months.

(AQW 35159/11-15)

Mr Poots: Over the period July 2013 to June 2014, a total of 2,269 people have given blood in the North Down area.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many blood donation events took place in North Down over the last twelve months.

(AQW 35161/11-15)

Mr Poots: Over the period July 2013 to June 2014, a total of 21 blood donation sessions took place in the North Down area.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the increasing use of private healthcare companies by each Health and Social Care Trust over the last ten years.

(AQW 35211/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is assumed that these questions relate to the use of Independent Sector healthcare providers in respect of elective care waiting list initiatives. The Health and Social Care Board, which commissions elective care services, is working with the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts to meet the waiting time targets set in my Department's annual Commissioning Plan Direction. The long term aim is to ensure that there is sufficient elective capacity across the HSC to match demand and to meet elective care access standards in delivering assessment and treatment. The Health and Social Care Board has invested significant resources to increase HSC capacity and reduce reliance on the Independent Sector. However at present there is a capacity gap and, in the short term, where additional capacity cannot be delivered in-house to meet elective care waiting lists, all HSC Trusts may utilise Independent Sector providers as necessary.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he is aware of any Health and Social Care Trust using private companies to deliver procedures and treatments to meet Departmental targets.

(AQW 35212/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is assumed that these questions relate to the use of Independent Sector healthcare providers in respect of elective care waiting list initiatives. The Health and Social Care Board, which commissions elective care services, is working with the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts to meet the waiting time targets set in my Department's annual Commissioning Plan Direction. The long term aim is to ensure that there is sufficient elective capacity across the HSC to match demand and to meet elective care access standards in delivering assessment and treatment. The Health and Social Care Board has invested significant resources to increase HSC capacity and reduce reliance on the Independent Sector. However at present there is a capacity gap and, in the short term, where additional capacity cannot be delivered in-house to meet elective care waiting lists, all HSC Trusts may utilise Independent Sector providers as necessary.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how the use of private healthcare companies to deliver Health Service procedures and treatments represents value for money.

(AQW 35213/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have set challenging targets for the HSC in respect of elective care and I am looking to the Health and Social Care Board to work with the Health and Social Care Trusts to deliver on these targets. The use of Independent Sector (IS) providers to treat patients is an acceptable interim measure while capacity is being built up within the HSC to reduce the number of patients referred to the IS.

The Health and Social Care Board negotiates and manages contracts with the Independent Sector on behalf of the five Health and Social Care Trusts. Contracts for the procurement of assessment and/or treatment services are negotiated through a competitive tendering process aimed at ensuring best value for money.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of incubators available for premature babies in each hospital.

(AQW 35214/11-15)

Mr Poots: The total number of incubators and the number of incubators available for use by premature babies in each hospital at midnight on 30th June 2014 is given in the table below.

HSC Trust	HSC Hospital	Total incubators	Incubators available for use ¹
Belfast	Royal Maternity	25	0
Northern ²	Antrim	14	1
South Eastern	Ulster Hospital	13	0
Southern	Craigavon	17	13
	Daisy Hill	7	6
Western ²	Altnagelvin	18	4
	South West Acute	6	3

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

Notes:

- 1 Incubators available for use have been defined as those incubators that were empty and available for new admission.
- 2 Northern and Western Trusts use the term 'cots' instead of 'incubators' therefore both Trusts have provided information on the number of cots for premature babies.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with the Health and Social Care Trusts regarding their increasing referral of procedures and treatments to private healthcare companies.

(AQW 35215/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is assumed that these questions relate to the use of Independent Sector healthcare providers in respect of elective care waiting list initiatives. The Health and Social Care Board, which commissions elective care services, is working with the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts to meet the waiting time targets set in my Department's annual Commissioning Plan Direction. The long term aim is to ensure that there is sufficient elective capacity across the HSC to match demand and to meet elective care access standards in delivering assessment and treatment. The Health and Social Care Board has invested significant resources to increase HSC capacity and reduce reliance on the Independent Sector. However at present there is a capacity gap and, in the short term, where additional capacity cannot be delivered in-house to meet elective care waiting lists, all HSC Trusts may utilise Independent Sector providers as necessary.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current occupancy rates of incubators for premature babies in each hospital.

(AQW 35216/11-15)

Mr Poots: The occupancy rate of incubators for premature babies in each hospital at midnight on 30th June 2014 is given in the table below.

HSC Trust	HSC Hospital	Occupancy Rate
Belfast	Royal Maternity	100.0%
Northern1	Antrim	92.9%
South Eastern	Ulster Hospital	100.0%
Southern	Craigavon	23.5%
	Daisy Hill	14.3%
Western ¹	Altnagelvin	77.8%
	South West Acute	50.0%

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

Notes:

- 1 Northern and Western Trusts use the term 'cots' instead of 'incubators', therefore both Trusts have provided information relating to the occupancy rate of cots for premature babies.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many staff are employed by (i) each Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) independent providers to deliver domiciliary care packages.

(AQW 35217/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) The number of Health & Social Care (HSC) staff graded as Home Help/Domiciliary Care workers as at 31st March 2014 is provided in the table below. This includes HSC staff with guaranteed hours, variable hours and 'as & when required' contracts, therefore an accurate whole-time equivalent number of staff, which would reflect the number of contracted staff hours, cannot be provided.

Headcount of Home Helps / Domiciliary Care Workers as at 31st March 2014

HSC Trust	Headcount
Belfast	779
Northern	1,109
South Eastern	553
Southern	1,081
Western	703

Source: Human Resources, Payroll, Travel & Subsistence system

- (ii) Independent providers are private companies; therefore the number of workers that they employ to provide domiciliary care packages is not collected. However, the DHSSPS statistical publication 'Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland (2013)' provides details domiciliary contact hours during a surveyed week, 15th to 21st September 2013, (inclusive) broken down by statutory / independent sectors.

**Estimated Number of Domiciliary Care Contact Hours Provided, by Sector and HSC Trust
(15th to 21st September 2013)**

HSC Trust	Statutory Sector		Independent Sector		All Sectors	
	Hours	Percentage	Hours	Percentage	Hours	Percentage
Belfast	14,721	31%	32,694	69%	47,415	100%
Northern	22,436	47%	25,564	53%	48,000	100%
South Eastern	8,908	15%	49,401	85%	58,309	100%
Southern	21,792	41%	31,758	59%	53,550	100%
Western	14,015	33%	28,092	67%	42,107	100%
Northern Ireland	81,872	33%	167,509	67%	249,381	100%

Source: Domiciliary Care Services for Adults in Northern Ireland 2013

Department of Justice

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33802/11-15, how many times the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) or any of its service providers throughout the stated timescale, have used CCTV evidence to assist in (i) criminal investigations against individuals attending court or during incidents in the area surrounding the courts estate; (ii) criminal investigations against NICTS staff or service providers; and (iii) disciplinary matters of NICTS staff or service providers, broken down per court division, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34602/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service provides CCTV footage to the Police Service of Northern Ireland and law enforcement agencies on request, within the terms of the NICTS CCTV Usage Guidance. It is for prosecutors to decide if the CCTV footage provided assists a criminal investigation. Since 2012 NICTS has provided CCTV footage to PSNI and other agencies on 117 occasions. Figures prior to 2012 are not available.

One NICTS service provider has used CCTV footage to assist in staff disciplinary action on 18 occasions, five times in 2013 in one court division and 13 times in 2014 in four court divisions.

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Justice what legislation he plans to introduce once the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence Treaty comes into force on 1 August 2014.

(AQW 34635/11-15)

Mr Ford: In May 2012, following consultation with Ministerial colleagues, I advised the Home Secretary that the Northern Ireland Executive supported the signing of the convention. The convention was subsequently signed by the United Kingdom Government as a member state.

A signature alone does not impose on the State obligations under the treaty and the UK has not expressed its consent to be bound by the treaty until it is ratified. Ratification is a process which requires the consideration of Parliament.

I am aware that the Treaty will come into force on 1 August 2014 for the eleven member states that have now ratified it. However the United Kingdom has yet to ratify the Treaty.

My Department will of course monitor progress.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases of extradition proceedings from Northern Ireland have been held in each of the last four financial years to date; and to detail the Legal Aid cost of each, including ongoing proceedings.

(AQW 34653/11-15)

Mr Ford: Prior to 2011/12 the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission (NILSC) did not record extradition proceedings as a specific case category and therefore is unable to provide details of the volume of certificates before 1 April 2011. The volume of Certificates registered from 2011/12 to 2013/14 is set out in the table below:

Volume of Certificates for Extradition Proceedings

Year	Volume of Certificates
2011/12	73
2012/13	68
2013/14	92

NILSC payments in Extradition Proceedings are made in respect of the Criminal Aid Certificates granted by the Court and not on a case by case basis. Details of the payments made by the Commission in respect of Criminal Aid Certificates granted in respect of extradition proceedings for the last three financial years are as follows:

Payments made for Extradition proceedings

Year	Volume of Payments (Full reports)	Gross Total	Average Cost
2011/12	25	£45,497	£1,820
2012/13	118	£176,050	£1,492
2013/14	191	£478,144	£2,503

It is important to note that Certificates granted in one financial year may not be paid in the same financial year.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how many cases of hate crimes against people with disabilities have been recorded in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34658/11-15)

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

I am, however, aware that the PSNI publication "Incidents and Crimes with a Hate Motivation Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland: Quarterly Update to 31 March 2014" is available on their website at the following location:

http://www.psni.police.uk/monthly_crime_bulletin_apr-mar_13_14.pdf.

This document includes the statistics requested on cases of hate crimes against people with disabilities.

Mrs Cameron asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the tendering process for Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) for the Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Clinic; and whether the role and function for the ISVAs has been confirmed.

(AQW 34679/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department recognises the importance of the provision of specialist support to victims of sexual violence and abuse and officials have undertaken a series of planned engagements with key stakeholders to scope what an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service for Northern Ireland might include. In addition officials have contacted counterparts in other jurisdictions to capture any relevant best practice regarding service provision to victims of sexual violence and abuse.

Operational data from The Rowan, alongside the information gathered in the exercises outlined above, will be used to inform and progress the business case and service specification for the role and function of ISVAs. This process is ongoing and it is anticipated that we will be in a position to source a service provider by October 2014.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33806/11-15, to detail the estimated cost, including Legal Aid and additional court staffing, should all eleven cases proceed.

(AQW 34720/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is not possible at this stage of proceedings to accurately estimate the cost should all eleven cases progress further as there are many possible ways in which each case could proceed.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the total cost in Legal Aid in the case of the individual in relation to a theft charge in 2011, shown by (a) legal firm/solicitor; (b) junior counsel; (c) senior counsel; and (d) all associated expenses claimed; and (ii) the case timeline from commencement to conclusion.

(AQW 34725/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Legal Services Commission has advised that it has no record of an application for legal aid on behalf the individual in question.

The Data Protection Act 1998 gives individuals certain rights in relation to personal information held on them by public authorities. The information requested in respect of the timeline of this case contains data not readily available in the public domain and disclosure would be contrary to the Data Protection Act.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Justice (i) what was the annual expenditure on food in (a) prison; and (b) court facilities, in each of the last three years; (ii) of this total expenditure, what was the expenditure on food produced in Northern Ireland; and (iii) whether this food is clearly identified as having been produced in Northern Ireland on menus and at point of service.

(AQW 34790/11-15)

Mr Ford:

(i) (a) and (b) The total expenditure on food for the last three financial years for Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) and Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is as follows:

(ii)

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
NIPS	1,689,656	1,866,583	2,071,942
NICTS	159,190	219,184	132,658

(ii) NIPS is unable to identify if food is produced in Northern Ireland and the Contractors for the supply of jurors meals in NICTS are not required to identify if food was produced in Northern Ireland.

(iii) NIPS and NICTS do not identify if food is produced in Northern Ireland on menus or at point of service.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 34470/11-15 and in relation to the decision to award an additional fee of £410 for solicitors and £400 for counsel applicable in cases including more than 750 pages of prosecution evidence, to detail (i) who made this decision; (ii) the date the decision was made; (iii) who made representations regarding the decision; and (iv) the consultation exercise completed.

(AQW 34794/11-15)

Mr Ford: I, as Minister of Justice, have responsibility for setting levels of remuneration for legal aid in the magistrates' court.

My Department undertook a public consultation on proposed changes to the Magistrates' Courts and County Court Appeals (Criminal Legal Aid) (Costs) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2009 (2009 Rules) which ended in February 2013. One of the proposals was the removal of provisions for Very High Cost Cases (VHCCs). The legal profession made strong representation that either the VHCC provisions be retained or at least some allowance be made for more difficult cases in the magistrates' courts. In response I decided to provide an additional fee where the number of pages of prosecution evidence exceeded 750 pages. The proposal was included in the Post Consultation report which was considered by the Justice Committee on 25 April 2013 and can be found at <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/public-consultations/archive-consultations.htm>.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 34470/11-15, to detail (i) how often an additional fee of £200 has been payable for preliminary enquiry proceedings; (ii) the number of such cases that lasted more than one day; and (iii) the total cost of Legal Aid supplements.

(AQW 34854/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below shows the volume and value of payments made for additional fees in preliminary enquiry proceedings for the financial years 2009/10 to 2013/14.

Year	No. of additional fees	Cost
2009/2010	0	0
2010/2011	25	£5,000
2011/2012	24	£4,800
2012/2013	12	£2,400
2013/2014	43	£8,600
Total	104	£20,800

While the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission has been able to provide the overall number of payments against certificates, it cannot provide information on the number of cases that last more than one day as it is possible to have more than one certificate issued in a case, particularly if there are multiple defendants in a case.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the current measures his Department is taking to protect the elderly.

(AQW 34878/11-15)

Mr Ford: In line with the Programme for Government requirements, and as part of the Community Safety Strategy, my Department is committed to tackling crime against older and vulnerable people and reducing the fear of crime amongst them. Consequently, my Department, working in partnership with others, has developed an Action Plan comprising a range of measures aimed at tackling fear of crime amongst older people. Progress on this Action Plan was provided to the Committee for Justice in February 2014.

As part of this Action Plan, my Department is currently funding projects delivered by Age Sector Platform and Linking Generations Northern Ireland to tackle fear of crime amongst older people. In addition my Department also funds a range of initiatives and schemes through Policing and Community Safety Partnerships. These schemes include:

- Agewell
- The four tier home security scheme
- The Good Morning scheme
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Quickcheck
- Safe as Houses programme
- Seasonal campaigns

Finally, my Department is working in partnership with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on a new adult safeguarding policy. The development of the adult safeguarding policy will complement the measures already in place to protect older people from abuse and enhance further the support available to all victims of crime.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 34244/11-15 and in light of his recent public condemnation of dissident republican threats to G4S, whether he will revise his decision not to comment on security matters, particularly when this question was not around personal security but of a general nature to staff providing an integral role on a contracted basis to a departmental agency.

(AQW 34937/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department does not comment on departmental security matters. My recent comments regarding G4S Secure Solutions (UK) Ltd were made in response to a publicly reported threat.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the dates of commencement and conclusion of the most recent unannounced inspect of Magilligan Prison; and (ii) when a report on the inspection will be published.

(AQW 34938/11-15)

Mr Ford: The full unannounced inspection of Magilligan Prison commenced on 27 May 2014 and concluded on 5 June 2014.

The publication date of the report will be determined by CJINI (Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland). The inspection report will be published on the CJINI website, www.cjini.org.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice on how many occasions the Pensions Ombudsman ruled against the Northern Ireland Policing Board in respect of its pension scheme and with what consequences in terms of change of approach by the Board.

(AQW 34970/11-15)

Mr Ford: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the independence of the Board and am therefore not in a position to provide the information you have requested.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the (i) costs to date; and (ii) estimated final costs in Legal Aid for all judicial proceedings taken by Brendan Conway in legal challenges against strip searching in Maghaberry Prison, shown by (a) approximate date; (b) law firm; (c) junior counsel; (d) senior counsel; and (e) any other associated costs.

(AQW 34977/11-15)

Mr Ford: Article 24 of the Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (NI) Order 1981 precludes the release of information in relation to civil cases in which Legal Aid has been granted.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 34383/11-15, whether he will introduce a further review mechanism in these instances.

(AQW 35055/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are no plans to introduce a further review mechanism. This case was reviewed independently as required under the current review mechanism within the Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the meetings that his Department have been involved in regarding animal cruelty issues, in 2014.

(AQW 35181/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department has had a total of five meetings with officials from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) to discuss the planned review of the implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and related matters.

Three of those meetings have been to develop the terms of reference for the review which will shortly be provided to me and to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The two other meetings were with my Causeway team to consider options for DARD to access information available from the Criminal History database regarding persons convicted of animal welfare offences.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the Legal Aid costs to date of the defendants in case numbers (i) 14/020711; (ii) 14/020713; (iii) 14/020714; and (iv) latterly collectively, 14/020710, at Dungannon Magistrates Court.
(AQW 35195/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission has advised that, to date, no legal aid payments have been made in respect of these defendants.

Department for Regional Development

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the new NI Railways Dog/Animal Policy.
(AQW 33901/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): Translink has advised that NIR's Conditions of Carriage contains information in relation to several policies. There is a short introductory paragraph stating that the following are in the interest of passenger safety, comfort and service efficiency.

The new Dog / Animal section states:

- Dogs/Animals will not be permitted on trains prior to 09:30 hours, Monday - Sunday (with the exception of assistance animals).
- Dogs/Animals may be carried free of charge after 09:30 hours, at the discretion of an authorised member of staff (maximum 1 per person).
- Dogs/Animals should be of a size that they can be kept under a seat or around the feet of the owner without causing an obstruction.
- Dogs/Animals must be clean, adequately controlled and kept on a leash at all times, unless contained in an appropriate container.
- If a dog/animal is found to occupy a seat, the owner will be liable to a penalty charge, and removal from the train.
- Dogs/Animals deemed as dangerous by an authorised member of staff will not be carried on any train service.

Translink has undertaken to carry out a review of the operation of the policy after six months and to further survey passengers on their views.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development why the NI Railways Dog/Animal Policy has changed.
(AQW 33902/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that following recent correspondence from Dog Lovers NI, challenging the existing NIR dog/animal conditions of carriage, consultation on the subject was included as part of the twice-yearly independent passenger monitoring process in order to gauge passenger opinion and inform any proposed change.

This consultation with customers supported a case for change.

Translink has undertaken to carry out a review of the operation of the policy after six months and to further survey passengers on their views about its application.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are any plans to attach conditions of sale to off street parking to dissuade councils from the disposal of potentially lucrative sites.
(AQW 34350/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In order to implement one of the Executive's proposals under the Review of Public Administration (RPA), to create stronger local government in Northern Ireland, my Department will shortly be seeking views on the content of a draft Off-Street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Bill.

The Bill presently contains no conditions regarding the retention of off-street car parks or their disposal. It is a matter for the new councils how they manage and operate those car parks. However, I would be quite happy to consider any proposal on this issue that is raised either during the forthcoming consultation on the Bill or as a result of amendments proposed during the Bill's Assembly passage.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration has been given to converting the old railway line from Ballymoney to Ballycasle to a greenway for pedestrians and cyclists.
(AQW 34586/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: You are aware that I am very keen to promote the development of greenways especially to encourage less confident and family cycling. The development of old track beds where available is especially attractive, as they tend to be interurban encouraging commuter cycling and a flat terrain which are easily navigated by all abilities.

Unfortunately, the majority of the track bed of the former Ballymoney to Ballycastle railway line was sold to numerous parties in and around the mid- to late-1950's. The only portion of the track now left in Translink ownership is the part which now houses the bus station in Ballycastle.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the success of the trial to allow more cyclists to use early morning trains.

(AQW 34587/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I understand Translink routinely carry passengers with cycles or early morning trains where space permits.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has liaised with the Minister of the Environment to ensure that the Review of Bus Operator Licensing will enable volunteers to continue to deliver transport services without financial or other barriers.

(AQW 34645/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department meets regularly with the Department of the Environment (DoE) on the Review of Bus Operator Licensing through DoE's Bus Forum meetings. In addition, my officials met directly with DoE on this issue on 8 May 2014.

My Department will continue to liaise with DoE to ensure any new operator licensing system will meet the service needs of users and, where possible, continue to encourage volunteering as part of the service provision.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the Rural Transport Fund and the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities will be merged in the next Programme for Government period and budget term.

(AQW 34646/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There are no plans to merge the Rural Transport Fund and the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities at present.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost, including legal costs, to his Department of successful compensation claims for (i) damage to motor vehicles; and (ii) personal injuries, as a result of potholes and other defects in roads and footpaths, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34649/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not hold the information in the format requested.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the age profile of all vehicles and plant machinery owned by Roads Service; and whether there is a replacement policy for vehicles and plant machinery.

(AQW 34661/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Transport NI currently has 2,230 items of fleet ranging from 26-tonne tipping lorries, gritters and specialised vehicles such as gully emptiers, to large plant items including tractors and rollers, down to smaller items such as pedestrian mowers, cement mixers and hedge trimmers.

Details of the age profile of Transport NI's vehicles and large plant items are set out in the table below:

Vehicle/Plant Group	Age					
	1 to 4 Years	5 to 8 Years	9 to 12 Years	13 to 16 Years	16 to 20 Years	>20 Years
Gritters	37	57	35	0	0	0
Snow Blowers	0	0	4	0	0	4
Lorries	20	59	97	78	0	0
Specialist Vehicles	10	28	33	10	0	0
Light Commercial	13	14	27	7	0	0
Sub-Total	80	158	196	95	0	4
Large plant & machinery	60	66	101	36	3	0
Overall Total	140	224	297	131	3	4

Similar information on the remaining small items of plant is not readily available.

My Department's policy on the replacement of its vehicle and plant items is dictated by the availability of funding. Replacement is prioritised depending on age, condition and operational need.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of maintaining Roads Service vehicles and plant machinery, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34662/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Transport NI currently has 2,230 fleet items. These range from 26-tonne lorries, specialised vehicles such as gritters, gully emptiers and road surface patchers, to pedestrian mowers, cement mixers and hedge trimmers. Details of maintenance costs over the last 5 years are set out in the table below:

Year	Cost of fleet maintenance (£M)
2009/2010	4.26
2010/2011	4.42
2011/2012	4.34
2012/2013	4.37
2013/2014	4.56

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the number of badges issued through the Blue Badge Scheme; and (ii) the number of (a) detections; and (b) prosecutions for abusing the Scheme, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34714/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The number of badges issued through the Blue Badge scheme in each of the last three years is as follows:

Financial Year	Number of Badges Issued
01/04/2011 – 31/03/2012	38391
01/04/2012 – 31/03/2013	36694
01/04/2013 – 31/03/2014	41244

There were no prosecutions during this period, but the number of Blue Badge Enforcement enquiries by the Traffic Attendants and resulting number of Penalty Charges Notices (PCNs) issued were as follows:

Financial Year	Number of Enquiries	Number of PCNs Issued
01/04/2011 – 31/03/2012	934	15
01/04/2012 – 31/03/2013	584	8
01/04/2013 – 31/03/2014	748	99

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the criteria used for prohibiting heavy vehicles from using minor roads where it is deemed to be unsafe or causing a high level of damage to road infrastructure.

(AQW 34715/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There is no formulaic approach to the decision making process used for prohibiting heavy vehicles from using minor roads. My Department's engineers assess each case separately taking account of engineering and traffic management factors.

Before prohibiting certain types of vehicles from using a road, other measures that could lead to voluntary control are considered, for example, reviewing existing direction signs to help direct general traffic, establishing preferred routes for commercial vehicles, or entering into dialogue with local transport operators.

There are a number of practical considerations which make it difficult to introduce and implement a prohibition, including, for example, the availability of a suitable alternative route/s. The potential impact on local businesses, which may be serviced by larger vehicles also must be given careful consideration.

My Department's approach is outlined in its Policy and Procedure Guide RSPPG E063 – 'Measures to Regulate Traffic', which can be accessed at the following web address:

<http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/publications/publications-details.htm?docid=9191>

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of reported cases of damage caused to roads and pathways by utility companies and other bodies carrying out necessary works in the last three years; and what steps have been taken to deal with those who do not reinstate roads and pathways in a satisfactory manner.

(AQW 34716/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Each third party report of damage caused to roads and footways by utility companies and other bodies carrying out necessary works is followed up with an inspection. My Department carried out 95 such 'third party report' inspections in 2011-12, whereas 102 were carried out in 2012-13, and 94 in 2013-14. These inspections form a small proportion of the average overall number of around 16,600 inspections of works in progress and completed reinstatements undertaken over this three year period.

When dealing with those companies which do not reinstate roads and footways in a satisfactory manner, the Department applies the procedures for inspection of reinstatements and for dealing with reinstatement failures set out in the Northern Ireland Road Authority and Utilities Committee (NIRAUC) Code of Practice for Inspections. Where a company fails to reinstate a road to an acceptable standard, the reinstatement defects are reported to the company responsible, for repair or replacement. Additional inspections are carried out by my officials, at the company's expense, to ensure the defects have been corrected.

Where a company's overall performance in terms of reinstatement is found to be unacceptable, the Department can increase inspection levels with the associated costs borne by that company, as part of an improvement plan, until the required level of improvement has been achieved.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail his Department's plans for upgrading Dundrum's Waste Water Treatment Works.

(AQW 34726/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Northern Ireland Water is working to develop options for the improvement of the wastewater treatment works in Dundrum. Sewer modelling has now been completed and options developed to improve the existing sewerage system. These include proposals to improve the location and volume of storm water storage to minimise the extent of overflow from the existing sewer system. Work has also commenced on the development of a marine model, following which options for the improvements to the existing works will be finalised.

Upgrading the sewer network and the wastewater treatment works is a high priority for NI Water and this has been included within its PC15 Business Plan.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development what action Northern Ireland Water is taking to ensure that sampling is carried out at the storm drain and downstream from Ballyclare Waste Treatment works.

(AQW 34784/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that Ballyclare Wastewater Treatment Works operates under a Water Order Consent (WOC) issued by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Compliance is assessed by NIEA using monitoring data supplied by NIW in accordance with an agreed sampling programme.

Details of the sampling carried out on behalf of NIW are included in my response to AQW 34785/11-15. The Works continues to be compliant and to treat effluent within its consented limits.

There is no regulatory requirement for quality monitoring at storm drains and NIW does not undertake sampling of the storm tank discharges from Ballyclare Wastewater Treatment Works. Monitoring of downstream river water quality falls outside the remit of NIW and is undertaken by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the work of Serco in collecting and transporting water quality samples at Ballyclare Waste Treatment works on behalf of Northern Ireland Water (NIW), including (i) how many, and how often, samples have been taken from the site; (ii) how many samples were referred to NIW; and (iii) the results of these samples.

(AQW 34785/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that wastewater compliance monitoring is undertaken in Northern Ireland under the Operator Self-Monitoring regime. This regime is standard industry practice, whereby the responsibility for compliance monitoring resides with the water company, in this instance NIW.

- (i) The sampling of wastewater discharges for regulatory purposes is undertaken by Serco, on behalf of NIW, under contract. Serco follow a pre-agreed sampling programme approved by the environmental regulator, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).

Ballyclare Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW) is monitored for compliance under the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive (UWWTD) and the Water Order Consent (WOC). UWWTD samples consist of composite samples collected using automatic sampling equipment over a 24 hour period. Both inlet and effluent samples may be collected, although it is not mandatory to collect inlet samples for this purpose. Samples are collected at a minimum frequency of 12 per year for compliance with UWWTD.

WOC regulatory samples are collected at a frequency of 24 per year and are discrete, spot samples, whereby a sample bottle is filled at a single point in time on the date of the sample. The number of regulatory samples collected by Serco is provided in the following table:

Calendar Year	UWWTD samples	WOC samples
2007	19	24
2008	24	24
2009	23	24
2010	23	24
2011	24	24
2012	24	24
2013	24	24
2014 to date	12	12

- (ii) Upon collection of regulatory samples at the site, they are transported by Serco to NIW for analysis. When analysis is completed all results are entered onto NIW's Laboratory Information Management System and reported to the NIEA on a monthly basis. Serco holds a United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) for sampling procedures and NIW holds UKAS accreditation for all regulatory wastewater parameters. NIEA undertake annual external audits of both the sampling and analytical procedures.
- (iii) It would not be practical to include in this Answer the volume of information requested in this response. I have therefore asked NIW to supply you with copies of all sample results in excel spreadsheet form. Ballyclare Wastewater Treatment Works continues to comply with its WOC and to treat effluent within its consented limits.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development why there has been a delay in weed spraying by Road Service and their contracted service providers in the Dungannon and South Tyrone areas; and to detail (i) when spraying will be completed; (ii) the contractors; (iii) when contracts were tendered and awarded; and (iv) whether there similar problems in other areas across Northern Ireland; and if so, to state the affected areas.

(AQW 34792/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A new Environmental Maintenance Contract, which includes the provision of weed spraying, for the Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon Council areas was advertised in mid December 2013. Tenders were returned on 11 February 2014, however, further discussions with the Preferred Tenderer were necessary to seek clarification on a number of technical issues and aspects of their pricing mechanism.

Following the conclusion of those discussions, a formal Tender Declaration was requested from the Preferred Tenderer on 2 May 2014, but they subsequently withdrew from the competition on 7 May 2014.

Price valuation recommenced on 8 May 2014 but similar discussions were then required with the new Preferred Tenderer. Once they were resolved, a notification of award was issued to all tenderers on 18 June 2014. The required standstill period associated with such notices ended on 30 June 2014 and the contract was awarded on 2 July 2014.

The contractor for weed spraying is Contract Services, Dungannon and the first treatment should be complete by the end of July. The contract was one of two competitions being run concurrently and similar difficulties were encountered with the contract for the Banbridge, Craigavon and Armagh Council areas.

Weed Spraying is ongoing in other areas across Northern Ireland and is progressing well. However, it should be noted that my Department is restricted by legislation governing the use of chemical weed sprays, to the use of sprays which do not contain a residual chemical element, and are foliar acting. For that reason it is necessary to have sufficient leaf growth present to allow the weed spray to sufficiently treat the plant, to ensure the chemicals can be absorbed and thus kill the weed.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the provision of a residents' parking scheme for Bangor.

(AQW 34795/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) identifies the centre of Bangor as being an area of parking restraint and it is my intention to progress Residents' Parking Schemes in some residential areas in due course.

However, the timing of schemes outside of Belfast will be dependent upon the progress of those being developed at present elsewhere in Northern Ireland and a future prioritisation of the remaining areas.

Legislation governing all Residents' Parking Schemes is currently being finalised with the Departmental Solicitor's Office and I am pleased to advise that publication of Notices for the first batch of residents' parking schemes, which are concentrated in Antrim, Londonderry and Belfast, is currently scheduled for autumn 2014, with the formal consultation stage following as

soon as possible thereafter. Subsequently, scheme implementation will be dependent upon the outcome of the consultation process, particularly with regard to whether objections are received.

These initial schemes, once implemented, are to be monitored for a period to gauge their success or otherwise. If these initial schemes prove to be successful, further consideration will be given to the introduction of schemes outside Belfast, including in Bangor.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the provision of a residents' parking scheme for Holywood.

(AQW 34796/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) identifies a number of areas of parking restraint where residents parking will be considered, including Bangor in the North Down area. Whilst Holywood is not specifically identified within the BMTP in this respect, I can confirm that a number of streets in Holywood have been added to a list of areas for future consideration, once all the areas identified within the BMTP have been addressed.

Legislation governing all Residents' Parking Schemes is currently being finalised with the Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO) and I can confirm that publication of Notices for the first batch of residents parking schemes, which are concentrated in Antrim, Londonderry and within Belfast, is currently scheduled for autumn 2014, with the formal consultation stage following as soon as possible thereafter. Subsequently, scheme implementation will be dependent upon the outcome of the consultation process, particularly with regard to whether any objections are received.

These initial schemes, once implemented, are to be monitored for a period to gauge their success or otherwise. If these initial schemes prove to be successful, further consideration will be given to the development of schemes outside Belfast, including in Holywood.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total (i) number; and (ii) value of compensation claims awarded in (a) Northern Ireland; and (ii) North Down due to road defects, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34822/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not hold details of the information in the format you have requested as the Northern Ireland Civil Service accounting system does not differentiate between defect types or accident locations.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total (i) number; and (ii) value of compensation claims awarded in (a) Northern Ireland; and (ii) North Down due to footpath defects, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34823/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to the answer provided to his previous question AQW 34822/11-15.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made in establishing a rail link and terminal between the existing rail line and Belfast International Airport.

(AQW 34828/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Within the recently published Railway Investment Prioritisation Strategy, establishing a rail link to Belfast International Airport is one of the network extensions that will require a feasibility study.

A previous study by Translink found that annual passenger numbers through the airport would need to rise to around 10 million to make a rail link economically viable. As passenger throughput in 2013 was just over 4 million a detailed feasibility study would be expected as passenger numbers grow towards 10 million by 2030, as is predicted by the airport operator.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the estimated annual change in the number in parking concessions in use via the Blue Badge scheme, despite their legal owners being deceased between 2008 and 2013.

(AQW 34836/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I understand officials have clarified that the question relates to how many deceased people were still registered as having Blue Badges between 2008 and 2013.

On 31 December 2013 there were 114,107 Blue Badge Holders in Northern Ireland. Figures from National Fraud Initiative Reports indicate the numbers of Blue Badges that were registered to deceased persons were as follows:

- June 2010 - 5,142;
- June 2012 - 7,319; and
- June 2014 - 5,074.

All these cases have been flagged on the Department's Blue Badge database as "not for renewal – deceased". This means a renewal notice will not automatically be generated and the badge is effectively cancelled.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department received in rental income from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure for the lease of Portavoe Reservoir.

(AQW 34839/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water currently receives no rental income for the lease of Portavoe Reservoir. In agreement with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, NI Water has forgone rental income in return for general maintenance and upkeep of the site.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department will complete an investigation of all sewerage works in the Seacourt Estate in Larne, given the current problems facing residents in the area.

(AQW 34946/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Northern Ireland Water (NIW) carried out an assessment of sewer related complaints within the Seacourt Estate in Larne on 1 July 2014. No significant problems were identified and the assessment indicated that the local infrastructure was working satisfactorily.

Investigations have established that a number of transient sewer blockages which occurred in the area have been caused by the disposal of inappropriate materials within the sewerage system. NIW intends to carry out a 'bag it and bin it' leaflet drop to all residents within the Seacourt Estate in the near future in an effort to educate and change customer behaviour to reduce any potential future blockages.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the action he has taken following each public petition presented to the Assembly and forwarded to his Department.

(AQW 35064/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A public petition submitted by Mr Conall McDevitt, then MLA for South Belfast, relating to a car parking scheme in College Park Avenue, Belfast was tabled on 7 February 2012 and laid in the Assembly on 13 February 2012.

I met on site with Mr McDevitt and a number of local residents on 13 June 2012, when the issue was discussed. Local residents were seeking the establishment of a Residents' Parking Scheme in a portion of College Park Avenue and I instructed officials to engage with them in order to develop a scheme for their area.

A series of discussions and meetings between officials and the Residents' Association subsequently took place to establish the type and extent of the scheme to be considered, and its residential, commercial and social composition. An outline scheme design was completed and agreed with the Association, following which an informal consultation exercise was carried out in November 2013 along the streets directly affected, in order to gauge the overall level of local support for the proposals. The results of that consultation indicated there was a sufficient level of support to proceed to the legislative stage when the proposal would be brought to the attention of the wider public.

As there are presently no residents' parking schemes in Northern Ireland, Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO) has only recently finalised the related draft legislation and I hope to place the notices for the Department's first tranche of residents' parking schemes, including the Rugby Road/College Park Avenue area, within the next few months.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Regional Development, following the announcement that the headquarters of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development is relocating to Ballykelly, to detail the discussions that he has held with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development regarding the relocation.

(AQW 35084/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I attended a meeting on 21 January 2014 with the DARD Minister. It was suggested that the three Departments involved (DARD/OFMDFM/DRD) would meet again if a Masterplan for Ballykelly is available. Transport requirements would have to be justified in terms of an Economic Appraisal and the required funding would need to be considered by the Departments responsible for the site.

Department for Social Development

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the cost of people living in the Republic of Ireland claiming (i) Employment Support Allowance; (ii) Jobseekers Allowance; (iii) Disability Living Allowance; and (iv) other benefits facilitated by his Department, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 34034/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The majority of social security benefits facilitated by the Department for Social Development and paid to people living in the Republic of Ireland are processed by the International Pension Centre located within the Department for Work and Pensions in Great Britain. These benefits include, Contributory Employment and Support Allowance, State Retirement Pension, Bereavement Benefit and Winter Fuel Payments. The information systems used by the International Pension Centre to administer these benefits cannot provide the costs specifically relating to the number of people receiving benefit and now residing in the Republic of Ireland.

A small number of benefits are paid outside the International Pension Centre arrangements. This includes certain disability benefits and Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit. The Disability Living Allowance (Care Component), Attendance Allowance and Carers Allowance are paid through the Department for Work and Pensions legacy benefit systems. These systems are used by the Department for Social Development to process social security benefits. These systems cannot disaggregate the benefit costs specifically relating to claimants residing in the Republic of Ireland.

The Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit payments are managed and paid clerically by the Department for Social Development. The benefit costs to claimants residing in the Republic of Ireland for the last three financial years are stated in the table below:

Costs per financial year	2011-12 £000	2012-13 £000	2013-14 £000	Total £000
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit	177	182	203	562

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development how many owner occupiers, with a portfolio of multiple tenanted properties, benefited under the Warm Homes Scheme; and at what cost to the public purse.

(AQW 34536/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There is no record of any owner occupier, with a portfolio of tenanted properties, benefitting under the Warm Homes Scheme.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development how many occupied Housing Executive homes have paramilitary murals painted on them, broken down by paramilitary grouping.

(AQW 34772/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive advises that it does not record the types of murals painted on their properties, or whether properties with murals painted on them are occupied.

They do advise however, that 204 paramilitary murals are painted on their properties.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive property offices, and all other property owned, occupied or rented by his Department have outside walls painted with paramilitary murals, broken down by paramilitary grouping.

(AQW 34773/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that none of their offices have any outside walls painted with paramilitary murals. My Department owns one property that has a mural painted on the gable wall. While this is primarily a World War 1 memorial it includes Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Young Citizen Volunteers (YCV) emblems.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development how many social housing properties, over which his Department has responsibility, either by way of grants provided for the property, or by housing association, have Paramilitary murals painted on their outside walls broken down by paramilitary groupings.

(AQW 34774/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested in relation to Housing Executive properties as the Housing Executive does not collate information on the particular paramilitary groupings associated with murals on their properties. The Housing Executive has advised there are 204 properties with paramilitary murals.

In relation to Housing Associations they have advised as follows: -

- four Housing Association properties with paramilitary murals: -
 - 2: dissident republican
 - 1: republican (Housing Association is unsure which organisation)
 - 1: UVF (as far as the Housing Association is aware)

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to Employment and Support Allowance applications, whether resubmissions of GP or medical letters, which were presented in previous successful applications, relating to patient's health conditions and confirming significant risk to health will be accepted in instances where applicants are required to complete follow-up ESA50 forms, particularly in instances where the previous assessment was recently completed.

(AQW 34863/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As it is accepted that medical conditions can worsen over time or improve with treatment, claimants initially placed in the Work Related Activity Group or Support Group are subject to periodic re-referrals in order to ensure that they are receiving the correct amount of benefit and support.

A decision maker will consider all of the available medical evidence for a case, including any recent medical evidence resubmitted that is relevant to the claimant's current medical condition.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 34196/11-15, whether the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland has a risk based approach in their policies and procedures, as set out on the Charity Commission for England and Wales website; (ii) if so, is this publicly available and given to those charities under investigation; and (iii) if not, why these charities are not given access to the policy.

(AQW 34916/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Commission has adopted a risk based approach within its policies and procedures, including, for example, undertaking risk assessments at each stage of an investigation into a charity. This approach allows the Commission to determine, based on the seriousness of the concern and the associated risk, the most effective approach to resolving the matter.

The Commission publishes a wide range of information on concerns about charities on its website, including thematic reports providing confidential case studies and lessons learned from concerns. This is aimed at providing charities with an understanding of the Commission's regulatory functions and its risk based approach to concerns as well as providing guidance on good governance of a charity.

The Commission does not publish its risk assessment as the Commission asserts that releasing the requested information would be likely to create a real and significant chance of prejudice to the proper discharge of the Commission's function under section 8(2)3 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development what policies and procedures the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland has for people with disabilities and other vulnerable adults in relation to their correspondence and interview techniques.

(AQW 34918/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Commission's published Integrated Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2012-2017, outlines the Commission's policies and procedures for people with disabilities and other vulnerable adults including in relation to correspondence and interviews. The Commission is committed to embedding equality and diversity within all aspects of its work.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development to list the names of the training courses that each member of Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's investigative team attended between January 2010 and June 2014; and to detail the cost of each course.

(AQW 34919/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information requested is outlined at the attached Annex.

Annex

The Commission's investigation team attended the following courses between January 2010 and June 2014 with the cost, where appropriate, detailed against each course:

Public benefit and registration guidance consultation overview	Not hard charged
Customer Charter	Not hard charged
Information security	Not hard charged
Casework overview	Not hard charged
Concerns about charities: process overview	Not hard charged
Corporate and business plan: briefing	Not hard charged
Public benefit and registration guidance consultation update	Not hard charged
Interim reporting requirements: overview	Not hard charged
Social media: overview	Not hard charged
Project and programme teams	Not hard charged
TRIM refresher	Not hard charged
Interim reporting requirements	Not hard charged
Equality assurance	Not hard charged
Court processes: overview	Not hard charged

Risk management	Not hard charged
Finance and RAF procedures	Not hard charged
Hospitality procedures and conflicts of interest	Not hard charged
Casework overview	Not hard charged
Fire safety	Not hard charged
Participation strategy consultation: overview	Not hard charged
Interim reporting requirements	Not hard charged
Information security	Not hard charged
Legal log protocol: overview	Not hard charged
Customer care: update	Not hard charged
Publication policy	Not hard charged
Trim training	£140 or £180 incl VAT per delegate (depending on when training took place)
Certificate in Investigative Practice	£4,200 incl VAT per delegate
Evacuation Chair training	£49.50 incl VAT per delegate
Fraud Investigation in the Public Sector	£528.75 incl VAT per delegate
Introduction to Charity Accounting	£354 incl VAT per delegate
Prince 2 Foundation & Practitioner Level	£1,140 incl VAT per delegate
First Aid training	£228 incl VAT per delegate
Excel training	£120 incl VAT per delegate
Making the Sound Bite Count - Media skills for senior Executives:	£354 incl VAT per delegate
Effective Report Writing	£294 incl VAT per delegate
Bribery Act 2010 - Impact of the new Legislation	£174 incl VAT per delegate
Dynamic Reading Skills Seminar	£288 incl VAT per delegate
Essential Charity Governance	£384 incl VAT per delegate
Advanced Excel Training	£300 incl VAT per delegate
Recruitment & Selection – Legislation	£78 incl VAT per delegate
Recruitment & Selection - Interview Standards	£78 incl VAT per delegate
Recruitment & Selection - Interview Panel Skills	£150 incl VAT per delegate
Trim Power User training	£150 incl VAT per delegate
Public Bodies Governance Conference	£234 incl VAT per delegat
Deafness Awareness Training	£833.80 incl VAT (for all employees - no breakdown per delegate given)

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the (i) cost; and (ii) human resource hours used, in the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's defence of tribunal and court hearings (a) 2012; (b) 2013; and (c) 2014.

(AQW 34920/11-15)

Mr McCausland:

- (i) The cost of the Commission's defence of tribunal and court hearings is as follows:
- a. 1 January 2012 – 31 December 2012: £6,010.06;
 - b. 1 January 2013 – 31 December 2013: £26,218.50; and
 - c. 1 January 2014 – 30 June 2014: £29,426.45.

- (ii) In the absence of a human resource time recording system in the Commission, the requested information is not available.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 34165/11-15, how the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland determines whether a statutory inquiry is justified; and to outline the criteria used.

(AQW 34964/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In line with the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, a number of criteria are used to determine whether a statutory inquiry is justified, including, but not limited to, the seriousness of the issues presented, the risk to governance within the charity and the risk to the charity's assets.

The Commission considers that the provision of further detail on these matters is inappropriate as such information would be likely to create a real and significant chance of prejudice to the proper discharge of its function under section 8(2)3 of the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 34165/11-15, what consultation was undertaken by his Department or the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI) in determining the criteria which CCNI would apply as part of its risk-based approach; and whether the determination of this approach was subject to any Equality Impact Assessment, or any assessment in respect of the impact on charities.

(AQW 34965/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department for Social Development has not undertaken any consultations as these are operational matters for CCNI.

The Commission has consulted with a number of organisations in determining the criteria used, including the Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW) and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). A screening exercise to identify equality outcomes or impacts was built into the Commission's Integrated Equality Scheme and Action Plan, which was approved on 24 April 2013. This followed consultation with 93 umbrella groups and individuals. As a result, no need for an Equality Impact Assessment was identified. However, equality assurance is built into the investigation risk assessment process and continuous consideration is given to equality implications in each statutory inquiry.

Where an impact on charity beneficiaries is identified to include affected individuals, for example persons with a disability, this becomes a key consideration.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 34195/11-15, why the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland does not advise charities of their right to appeal its decision to initiate a statutory inquiry, at the time that it informs them of the inquiry; and for his assessment of this practice.

(AQW 34968/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland informs charities of the right to appeal its decision to initiate a statutory inquiry at the time of the initial notice of the opening of the inquiry.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 34197/11-15, (i) whether the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI) has advised charities not to spend funds on obtaining legal advice or an independent audit report to assist them in responding to, or answering allegations associated with, a statutory inquiry; (ii) on how many occasions has CCNI given such advice to charities; and (iii) to explain the rationale behind such advice.

(AQW 34971/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Charity Commission has not advised charities regarding spend on legal advice or audit reports to assist in responding to, or answering allegations associated with a statutory inquiry.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what grants are available for the installation of cavity wall insulation in privately owned houses.

(AQW 34989/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that cavity wall insulation can be provided in privately owned houses through the Warm Homes Scheme, where an eligible occupier is in residence. Cavity wall insulation may also be provided within a discretionary Renovation Grant as part of an overall scheme of improvement and repair. However, discretionary Renovation Grants are only provided in exceptional circumstances where there is an imminent and significant risk to the health and safety of the occupants.

Ms Lo asked the Minister for Social Development what are the projected infrastructural investments for the South Belfast area masterplans, including Shaftesbury Square.

(AQW 34991/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My department is currently overseeing two strategic area plans for South Belfast – the Shaftesbury Square Development Framework and the South West Gateway Masterplan. Both projects will go out for public consultation in the

autumn. With the Reform of Local Government and the extension of regeneration powers to local councils, Belfast City Council will decide on any future investment in infrastructure.

Ms Lo asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the role of Belfast Area Partnerships, and the potential impact upon the Partnerships of the transfer of Urban Regeneration and Community Development responsibilities to local councils.

(AQW 34992/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Belfast Area Partnerships were established in the mid 1990s under the Making Belfast Work initiative to draw together the key stakeholders in the regeneration of the city. The Department recognises the contribution each Partnership has made to the regeneration of its own area, and when working collectively, to the regeneration of Belfast.

It is clear that the environment within which the Partnerships operate has changed fundamentally over recent years and the role of the Partnerships should reflect these changes. Among other things, the Reform of Local Government will result in my Department conferring powers on local councils to enable each Council to decide how best to take forward regeneration in their areas. As part of the work

required to bring about this change my officials have engaged with Belfast City Council officials and the Area Partnerships on the Partnerships' future role in the delivery of regeneration functions. No conclusion has been reached in these discussions, although the BAPs have been involved in the communication of work to move urban regeneration and other funding programmes to the Council. Separately, I understand that Belfast City Council has worked with the Area Partnerships and other interested parties in the development of plans for the delivery of the Council's future community planning responsibility.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Programme, through which the Partnerships are currently funded, closes on 31 March 2015. Belfast City Council has agreed to consider continued support for the services that Area Partnerships provide and that process is now underway.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development whether people who have been granted Employment Support Allowance under special circumstances, particularly those who won their case at appeal, are required to complete ESA50 forms and re-attend medicals on a regular basis; and if so, what is the minimum length of time between reassessments.

(AQW 35000/11-15)

Mr McCausland: All claimants of Employment and Support Allowance, whether or not exceptional circumstances apply, including those who were successful at appeal, are subject to reassessment of their work capability in order to ensure that they are receiving the correct amount of benefit and support.

During reassessment, all claimants are asked to complete an ESA50 medical questionnaire providing details of their medical condition. The need for a face to face medical assessment in each case is determined by an Atos Healthcare Professional on the basis of the information provided in the ESA50 and supplied by the claimant.

The length of time between assessments can range from three months to three years depending on the claimant's medical condition. In the majority of cases, Employment and Support Allowance claimants who have successfully appealed are not called for a re-assessment for 6 months following their appeals tribunal.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the departmental projects or funding schemes available to community organisations to help tackle low educational achievement.

(AQW 35003/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department does not have any direct funding schemes to help tackle low educational achievement. However, through its Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, funding may be provided where a priority need for action is identified within local Neighbourhood Renewal Action Plans and where resources are available.

Currently my department supports a number of projects through its Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund which are designed to address low educational achievement. These range from Nurture Units in primary schools, After School Homework Clubs, Literacy and Numeracy programmes to Education Mentoring programmes.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the processing delays affecting Northern Ireland Housing Executive tenants who have simultaneously applied for a Disabled Facilities Grant and a Renovation Grant; and what steps he is taking to ensure that both grant applications proceed smoothly.

(AQW 35037/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Disabled Facilities Grants are initiated by an Occupational Therapist who makes recommendations for adaptations to enable a person with disability to remain comfortably in their own home. However, during the technical inspection the Grants Officer may identify exceptional circumstances, which may result in the awarding of a Renovation Grant. While Disabled Facilities Grants are mandatory, Renovation Grants are discretionary and therefore must be referred to the Exceptional Circumstances Committee (ECC) before an application can be accepted. If the decision of the Exceptional Circumstances Committee is to proceed, both applications are normally processed by the local Grants Office at the same time and approvals to start work issued together to minimise disruption to the occupants when having the work carried out. This is appropriate as the adaptations work may be reliant on the renovation work being carried out first.

At present, the Housing Executive is approving 99% of completed grant applications within the six month timespan contained in the 2003 Housing Order and my Department continues to monitor the performance of the Housing Executive with regard to the processing of grant applications.

In recent years the Housing Executive has introduced a number of measures to streamline grants procedures, such as the initiating the Test of Resources process at an earlier stage in the grant application. My Department and Housing Executive continue to work together to identify areas of improvement in the grants process in order to enhance the grant applicants experience and minimise delays. However, the grants scheme must be operated within the provisions of the 2003 Housing Order.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the action he has taken following each public petition presented to the Assembly and forwarded to his Department.

(AQW 35065/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Two public petitions have been presented to the Assembly and forwarded to my Department: a petition calling for the planned closure of the Crossmaglen Community Benefit Office to be stopped was presented on 9 April 2013, and a petition calling for the erection of the Factory Girls Sculpture in Londonderry was presented on 17 June 2013.

Prior to the tabling of the petition on the closure of Crossmaglen Community Benefit Office, the Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency had met with local elected representatives to discuss the planned closure and the alternative arrangements that were to be implemented. During this meeting, the Chief Executive agreed to review this arrangement and as a result the closure of the office was postponed until 31 May 2013 to allow a new Freephone telephony service, which was being introduced for the Newry area on 8 April 2013, time to

bed in. Following the successful introduction of the new telephony service from 8 April 2013, the Community Benefit Office closed on 31 May 2013 and face to face services relocated to the Jobs and Benefits Office in Newry.

Following the petition on the Factory Girls sculpture in Londonderry, my Department continued to work with the artist and the City Council of Londonderry to move the project forward. My Department subsequently provided funding to allow the designs for the artwork and surrounding environmental works to be worked up and a planning application to be submitted.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 34458/11-15, to detail the nature of each change. **(AQW 35066/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: The five amendments made to the Work Capability Assessment form made in March 2011, June 2011, January 2013, April 2013 and April 2014 are detailed below:

March 2011

The Activity heading "Walking and using steps" was amended to read "Moving around and using steps" and the following Descriptor was added "Can you move at least 50 metres (about 54 yards) before you need to stop?"

Under the Activity heading "Standing and sitting" the Descriptors were amended to read "Can you move from one chair to another right next to it without help from someone else?" and "Can you stay in one place, either standing or sitting, for at least an hour without help from another person?"

In the Activity section "Bending and kneeling" was removed.

Under the Activity "Reaching" the Descriptor was amended to read "Can you lift one of your arms above your head to reach for something?"

The Activity heading "Picking up and moving things on the same level" was amended to read "Picking up and moving things." The Descriptor "Can you pick up and move a large, light object like an empty cardboard box?" was added.

June 2011

Under the Activity heading "Getting around safely" the Descriptor was amended to read "Can you see to cross the road on your own?"

January 2013

Under the Physical functions and Mental, cognitive and intellectual functions a statement was added reading "To answer Yes to any of the following questions, you must be able to do the activity safely, to an acceptable standard, as often as you need to and in a reasonable length of time."

Under the Activity "Moving around and using steps" the Descriptor was amended to read "How far can you move safely and repeatedly on ground level without needing help?" and Options provided.

Under the Activity "Standing and sitting" the Descriptor was amended to read "How long can you stay in one place, either standing, sitting, or a combination of the two, without help from another person, without pain or exhaustion?"

Under the Activity "Communicating with people" the Descriptor was amended to read "Can you communicate a simple message to other people such as the presence of something dangerous?"

Under the Activity "Other people communicating with you" the following

Descriptors were added "Can you understand simple messages from other people by hearing or lip reading without the help of another person?" and "Can you understand simple messages from other people by reading large size print or using braille?"

Under the Activity "Controlling your bowels and bladder and using a collecting device" the Descriptor was amended to read "Do you have to wash or change your clothes because of difficulty controlling your bladder, bowels or collecting device?"

Under the Activity "Awareness of hazard or danger" an additional Descriptor was added "Please tick this box if you can stay safe when doing everyday tasks such as boiling water or using sharp objects."

Under the Activity "Coping with changes" - additional examples were included to assist with completion.

Under the Activity "Going out" the Descriptors were amended to read "Can you leave home and go out to places you know?" and "Can you leave home and go to places you don't know?"

Under the Activity "Coping with social situations" the Descriptor was amended to read "Please tick this box if you can cope with social situations without feeling too anxious or scared?"

A new Activity was added "Eating and drinking."

An additional page/section was added covering cancer treatment – "Cancer treatment – for completion by a healthcare professional."

April 2013

Under the Activity "Controlling your bowel and bladder and using a collecting devise" the Descriptor was expanded to include "tell us if you experience problems if you cannot reach a toilet quickly."

April 2014

In the section entitled "Cancer treatment - for completion by a healthcare professional" the following Explanatory note was added "This may include a GP, hospital doctor or clinical nurse who is aware of your condition."

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Social Development, given that over 100 people are currently awaiting receipt of new mobility cars, particularly Volkswagen Caddy Life models, to explain the reasons for the delay in the delivery of these vehicles.
(AQW 35105/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My department has no statutory or administrative role in the operation of the Motability Scheme and I am unable to provide the information requested. The Motability Scheme is administered by the independent charity Motability whose Chief Patron is Her Majesty the Queen. Information on administrative matters relating to the scheme can be obtained from Motability by writing to: Declan O'Mahony, Director, Motability, Warwick House, Roydon Road, Harlow, Essex, CM19 5PX.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development what actions his Department's Voluntary and Community Unit is taking to ensure that the Volunteering Strategy and its agreed objectives are being adopted by each Executive Department.
(AQW 35124/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Northern Ireland's first ever Volunteering Strategy, endorsed by the NI Executive in June 2011, was welcomed by my Ministerial colleagues and received strong support. The Volunteering Strategy is accompanied by an Action Plan that sets out a programme of work that is currently underway to achieve the Strategy objectives. A Volunteering Strategy Steering Group has been established with representation from volunteering stakeholders, both from government and non government, to monitor and report on the implementation of the Strategy.

A mid-term evaluation of the Volunteering Strategy is planned to take place in this financial year. The outcome of this evaluation will be key to any changes to delivery post 2015 and I will be updating the NI Executive as appropriate, to ensure its continued commitment and the creation of a strong policy context which will provide the conditions to enable volunteering to flourish and ensure its impact on life in Northern Ireland is maximised.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development what actions his Department has taken to ensure that, in line with the Volunteering Strategy, the Department of the Environment protects volunteer drivers in its review of bus operator licensing.
(AQW 35125/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department is currently reviewing the draft guidance for new license requirements for buses and minibuses received from the Minister for the Environment, Mark Durkan, MLA . This review will consider any impact of the guidance on the successful delivery of the Volunteering Strategy.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development what actions his Department has taken, in line with the Volunteering Strategy, to mitigate financial difficulties volunteer drivers may face in paying for full D1 or D licenses, should the Department of the Environment require community organisations to adopt full bus operator licensing.
(AQW 35126/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department is currently reviewing the draft guidance for new license requirements for buses and minibuses received from the Minister for the Environment, Mark Durkan, MLA. This review will consider any impact of the guidance on the successful delivery of the Volunteering Strategy.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development how much has been paid out in public liability claims against the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each of the last five years, broken down by district.

(AQW 35127/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has provided the information as detailed in the attached table.

Financial Year

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Grand Total
Belfast West (D1)	90,126.28	68,055.70	125,385.92	50,585.23	149,375.00	483,528.13
Belfast East (D2)	107,019.19	29,690.45	25,478.25	85,571.20	25,579.30	273,338.39
Belfast West (D3)	124,952.05	54,298.07	173,107.92	119,595.93	40,929.35	512,883.32
Belfast North (D4)	117,971.31	111,496.79	164,586.06	104,091.24	71,160.60	569,306.00
Belfast Shankill	124,078.50	67,769.38	98,403.09	88,448.47	93,052.75	471,752.19
Belfast North (D6)	102,065.82	70,229.54	75,421.80	103,047.90	141,949.20	492,714.26
Belfast South (D7)	78,522.24	24,114.69	56,868.20	76,308.88	175,828.68	411,642.69
Bangor District Office	10,219.45	25,899.28	53,708.34	90,629.11	43,548.91	224,005.09
Newtownards District	55,283.96	71,329.06	185,370.61	88,756.38	65,528.10	466,268.11
Castlereagh District Office	97,098.04	89,519.32	71,247.51	90,591.72	64,142.70	412,599.29
Lisburn District 1	21,124.73	73,456.42	61,342.97	97,536.06	42,986.10	296,446.28
Lisburn District 3	163,765.71	101,504.50	121,952.43	88,368.05	84,066.05	559,656.74
Downpatrick District	72,306.03	22,154.62	91,460.68	77,284.76	75,481.53	338,687.62
Banbridge District	9,864.48	11,765.31	3,486.30	11,029.57	513.33	36,658.99
Newry District	81,167.99	31,104.74	15,187.66	83,037.71	136,564.73	347,062.83
Armagh District	29,982.11	10,948.50	0.00	10,377.35	879.10	52,187.06
Lurgan District	95,180.05	18,607.22	15,959.50	78,132.26	41,027.34	248,906.37
Portadown District	10,164.06	10,318.99	11,135.30	11,724.80	9,719.80	53,062.95
Dungannon District	57,435.56	27,939.27	46,416.22	51,514.27	36,571.40	219,876.72
Fermanagh District	25,619.82	10,402.61	13,694.07	12,109.77	3,850.76	65,677.03
Ballymena District Office	13,931.73	28,322.76	5,782.85	19,915.66	42,032.97	109,985.97
Antrim District Office	5,146.64	59,446.50	33,772.04	6,510.93	23,048.00	127,924.11
Newtownabbey District 1 Office	50,877.27	63,484.32	27,800.61	116,690.47	55,974.30	314,826.97
Newtownabbey District 2 Office	50,455.64	88,765.45	31,071.42	60,554.90	16,703.10	247,550.51
Carrickfergus District Office	52,390.53	25,096.85	22,539.06	87,080.11	17,748.37	204,854.92
Larne District Office	6,340.61	4,767.49	10,475.80	25,580.96	2,856.20	50,021.06
Ballymoney District Office	125.00	100.00	6,136.15	809.55	16,309.00	23,479.70
Coleraine District Office	9,117.60	20,894.79	230,909.42	194,287.71	29,399.10	484,608.62
Waterloo Place District	31,110.92	46,623.27	106,099.27	10,831.12	19,872.84	214,537.42
Waterside District	12,431.19	21,066.60	32,903.92	2,560.00	4,041.00	73,002.71
Collon Terrace District	28,017.34	11,414.36	47,813.42	67,505.69	89,773.90	244,524.71
Limavady District	0.00	2,668.02	19,494.21	104,929.37	8,159.25	135,250.85
Magherafelt District	46,592.77	42,504.76	12,398.68	3,331.50	45,909.49	150,737.20

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Grand Total
Strabane District	33,996.43	60,494.77	10,561.72	2,251.98	4,121.50	111,426.40
Omagh District	55,482.41	40,436.58	6,499.25	37,501.89	2,569.13	142,489.26
Cookstown District	675.00	10,285.35	30,805.40	2,402.45	10,151.68	54,319.88
Total	1,870,638.46	1,456,976.33	2,045,276.05	2,161,484.95	1,691,424.56	9,225,800.35

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.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development how long respective Northern Ireland Housing Executive departments take to process a public liability claim.

(AQW 35128/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive advises that on average it takes up to six months to process a public liability claim. However, this timescale is for indicative purposes only and depends on the complexity of the claim. For example, to investigate the claim thoroughly they may have to check: -

- whether or not a contractor or other organisation is involved and obtain reports;
- whether or not the accident location is adopted for maintenance by the DRD or is the responsibility of another party.

The Housing Executive further advises that there are no specific statistics readily available on the length of time taken to process public liability claims and should legal proceedings be issued, any figures would be distorted by the length of time taken for the legal process to run its course.

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Social Development how many people since 2011 have lost their entitlement to Incapacity Benefit following a work capability assessment.

(AQW 35137/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The process for reassessing Incapacity Benefit claims for conversion to Employment and Support Allowance involves an Atos Healthcare Professional making a recommendation on a claimant's fitness for work and, on receipt of this information, a Social Security Decision Maker will then consider the opinion of the Healthcare Professional, along with all available evidence, to make a decision on whether the claimant has limited capability for work or for work related activity and is eligible for benefit.

From June 2011 to March 2014, 18,540 Incapacity Benefit claimants were disallowed on reassessment following a Work Capability Assessment.

Statistical information is only available from June 2011, the start of the contract with Atos Healthcare.

The information provided is an Official Statistic. The Production and dissemination of all such Statistics is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 32785/11-15, whether his Department intends to recover funding from Clanmill Housing for projects that have not acquired planning permission.

(AQW 35163/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive assesses and approves each individual scheme in the social housing programme, determines the level of grant payable and pays out that grant in three separate tranches. No funding is allocated or paid until each scheme is approved. A first tranche is paid for land acquisition, a second tranche is paid when planning permission has been secured and construction starts and a third tranche is paid on scheme completion.

In the event that grant is paid for land acquisition and planning permission cannot be achieved for whatever reason, the Housing Executive would initiate recovery procedures. However, at this point all of Clanmill's planning applications are proceeding as normal, so there is no need to consider recovery.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 32786/11-15, on how many sites will construction commence during this financial year.

(AQW 35164/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Plans are for housing associations to start a total of 2,000 new social homes during 2014/15. The information provided in AQW 32786/11-15 shows that Clanmill is programmed to start construction work on 28 sites with 629 new homes during the period. However, as also previously stated, the Clanmill programme is a gross programme and some schemes can be lost in year or slip to later years for a variety of reasons, such as delays in securing planning or inability to acquire a site.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development what proportion of bank loans secured by Clanmill Housing to construct 1,600 houses has been drawn down.

(AQW 35165/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department does not hold information about the private finance arrangements between housing associations and financial institutions. In April Clanmil announced that some £100m of the £120m bank loans agreed with Barclays and Danske would be invested in building 1,600 new social homes, with the remainder used to finance existing loan facilities.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission how much the Speaker has spent on hospitality in each financial year since April 2007.

(AQW 34490/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The total amounts spent on hospitality by the Speaker's Office in each of the financial years since 2007 are detailed below:

Year	Amount
2007/08	£18,039
2008/09	£19,067
2009/10	£17,777
2010/11	£17,027
2011/12	£10,138
2012/13	£16,474
2013/14	£12,107
	£110,630

Expenditure on hospitality by the Speaker's Office is incurred as part of the Speaker's representational role on behalf of the Assembly and includes hospitality for visiting parliamentary delegations, diplomats and other dignitaries, the Speaker's annual events themed for community and voluntary causes and a number of official Assembly events hosted by the Speaker.

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission how much the Assembly has spent on hospitality in each financial year since April 2007.

(AQW 34492/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The total amounts spent on hospitality by the Assembly in each of the financial years since 2007 are detailed below:

Year	Amount
2007/08	£36,682
2008/09	£37,455
2009/10	£60,232
2010/11	£49,260
2011/12	£40,043
2012/13	£44,154
2013/14	£43,795
	£311,622

Hospitality expenditure covers a wide range of activities including functions managed by the Speaker's Office, Committee functions and events and hospitality extended to visiting Parliamentarians and officials.

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission to detail the (i) cost; and (ii) quantity of the mints provided in the Assembly chamber in each financial year since April 2009.

(AQW 34498/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): From April 2009 to March 2014, 2,530 rolls of mints have been provided in the Assembly Chamber at a total cost of £1,386.55. The annual consumption per financial year is illustrated in the table below:

Period	Quantity (rolls)	Cost
Apr 09 - Mar 10	524	£288.20
Apr 10 - Mar 11	445	£244.75
Apr 11 - Mar 12	493	£271.15
Apr 12 - Mar 13	418	£224.95
Apr 13 - Mar 14	650	£357.50
Total Consumption	2,530	£1,386.55

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 18 July 2014

Written Answers to Questions

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the meetings her Department have been involved in regarding animal cruelty, in 2014.

(AQW 35182/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): The welfare of animals here is protected by the Welfare of Animals Act 2011. It contains a range of offences including those relating to activities which may cause an animal to suffer unnecessarily. However, it does not contain an offence specifically referred to as "animal cruelty".

The meetings involving my Department with external organisations regarding animal welfare from 1 January 2014 until 4th July 2014 are detailed in the table below. Meetings between my Department's Veterinary Service and individual farmers are not included.

Table - Meetings with external organisations between 1 January and 4 July 2014

Date	Topic	Organisation
07.01.14	Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011	Welfare of Animals Act 2011 Local Government Project Board
16.01.14	Enforcement of Welfare of Animals Act 2011	Departmental Solicitor's Office
17.01.14	Welfare of Equines	Southern Group Environmental Health Committee
19.02.14	Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011	Welfare of Animals Act 2011 Local Government Project Board
26.02.14	Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011	Council Line Managers and Animal Welfare Officers
05.03.14	Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011	Eastern Group Environmental Health Committee
10.03.14	Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011	Welfare of Animals Act 2011 Local Government Project Board
19.03.14	North South Animal Welfare and Transport Working Group	Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine Group
19.03.14	Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011	Welfare of Animals Act 2011 Local Government Project Board
21.03.14	Welfare of Equines	Ballysaggart Environmental Group
27.03.14	Farm Animal Welfare	Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council
04.04.14	Welfare Case Review	Police Service of NI and Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
08.04.14	Welfare of Felines	Cats Protection
15.04.14	Animal Welfare Implementation	Departmental Solicitor's Office
17.04.14	Animal Welfare Implementation	Department of Justice
01.05.14	Issues around Pododermatitis	Poultry Stakeholders
16.05.14	Welfare Conference - Dublin	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
21.05.14	Review of Welfare of Animals Act 2011	Welfare of Animals Act 2011 Local Government Project Board

Date	Topic	Organisation
22.05.14	Review of Welfare of Animals Act 2011	Department of Justice
24.05.14	Compliance with Petshops Regulations 2000 and sale of horses at the Lamas Fair	Moyle District Council
05.06.14	Animal Welfare Implementation	Department of Justice
16.06.14	Welfare Case Review	Western Health Trust
18.06.14	Review of Welfare of Animals Act 2011	Department of Justice
20.06.14	Farm Animal Welfare	Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council
02.07.14	Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011	Welfare of Animals Act 2011 Local Government Project Board

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 34876/11-15, given that she confirmed that her Department changed its original decision in 54 of the 216 Stage 2 Reviews and that a refund may result, to detail the total number of refunds provided.

(AQW 35186/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Additional payments were issued by the Department to farm businesses in 44 of the 54 cases cited in AQW 34876/11-15.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the action she has taken following each public petition presented to the Assembly and forwarded to her Department.

(AQW 34852/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Since May 2011 four public petitions have been presented to the Assembly and forwarded to my Department.

I have listed at Annex A the key actions taken by my Department as a result of these public petitions.

Annex A

- (i) Reduction in opening hours of Community Libraries (presented to the Assembly on 28 November 2011 by Dominic Bradley MLA); and
- (ii) Reduction in opening hours of the Bronte Library in Rathfriland (presented to the Assembly on 29 November 2011 by John McCallister MLA):
 - Both of the above petitions were laid in the Assembly in November 2011 as a result of Libraries NI public consultation on a proposed reduction in library opening hours.
 - Following Libraries NI's public consultation into its review of Library Opening Hours, I shared the views of the many thousands of people who responded to the public consultation and as a result was pleased to be able to provide £2.39m of additional funding in order to minimise the impact of the reduction in library opening hours.
 - As a consequence of this additional funding the opening hours for the Bronte Library in Rathfriland were reduced by 2 hours and not 9 hours as had been previously proposed.
- (iii) The Exploitation of Indigenous Fish Species, including salmon, where stocks are no longer sustainable (presented to the Assembly on 13 February 2012 by Robin Swann MLA):
 - The public petition on the exploitation of indigenous fish species, including salmon, was laid at a time when my Department was developing a salmon consultation policy and the petition informed that process. Subsequently my Department prohibited the commercial netting of wild Atlantic salmon by means of regulation.
- (iv) Development of a Strategic Plan for Athletics as a Priority Sport (presented to the Assembly on 13 November 2012 by Stephen Agnew MLA):
 - On 2 May 2013, a letter issued to Mr Stephen Agnew advising that DCAL officials, along with Sport NI, would arrange a meeting with the Chairman of Athletics NI, the Governing Body for athletics in the north of Ireland, to discuss the issues raised in the petition and a possible way forward.
 - On 10 May 2013, officials from DCAL and Sport NI met with representatives of Athletics NI, the Governing Body for Athletics in the north of Ireland, to hear about its plans. Sport NI has been working with Athletics NI with regard to identifying future facility needs.

- On 23 April 2014, Sport NI met with Athletics NI to provide information in relation to a new capital investment programme which will be launched later this year. This programme will prioritise investments for strategically identified high performance capital projects. Athletics NI may be eligible to compete for this funding.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the outreach activities planned by Libraries NI over the next twelve months for areas of low educational attainment in North Down.

(AQW 34877/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Libraries NI is currently developing proposals to extend its existing outreach activities in areas of social need, including low educational attainment, within the North Down area. These proposals are intended to supplement Libraries NI activities already taking place in rural parts of North Down, Holywood and Bangor including the Kilcooley and Rathgill estates. Further activities currently being considered include:-

- Events to support the Cinemagic Festival in Bangor Carnegie Library in September 2014;
- Partnership programmes with the Creative Learning Centres and other arts/creativity organisations to help children with little or no access to PCs or IMacs;
- Family learning sessions with parents and children; and
- A Teenage Health Fair in Bangor Carnegie Library in February 2015 to promote health and well being.

In addition to these activities, I met with the Minister of Education, John O'Dowd MLA, along with Libraries NI on 26th June 2014 to discuss the scope for closer partnership working between public libraries and the Department of Education (DE). As a result of that meeting, it was agreed that Libraries NI and DE, with assistance from DCAL, would jointly develop an Action Plan and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on how they would work together to promote the value of education across all areas of the North of Ireland including North Down. Both the Action Plan and the MOU are expected to be agreed later this year and I have asked that they be drawn up with a particular focus on tackling disadvantage including educational disadvantage.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the funding that her Department, and its arm's-length bodies, invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014.

(AQW 34881/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The total amount of funding invested in the North Belfast constituency from May 2011 until May 2014 is summarised in the table below:

YEAR	Funding (£)
2011-12 (from 1 May)	7,104,068
2012-13	6,237,386
2013-14	6,615,431
2014-15 (to 31 May)	3,251,135

A breakdown of this funding is provided on the following pages.

Investment in the North Belfast Constituency Between May 2011 and May 2014

Year	Funding Body	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Total
2011-12	ACNI	ADAPT NI	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	70,000
2011-12	ACNI	An tSnáthaid Mhór Teoranta	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000
2011-12	ACNI	Arts and Disability Forum	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	76,721
2011-12	ACNI	Arts and Disability Forum	Arts Development Fund award	18,902
2011-12	ACNI	Arts for All	Arts Development Fund award	3,000
2011-12	ACNI	Belfast Community Circus School	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	147,500
2011-12	ACNI	Belfast Exposed Photography	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	100,000
2011-12	ACNI	Belfast Film Festival	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000

Year	Funding Body	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Total
2011-12	ACNI	Belfast Print Workshop	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	89,019
2011-12	ACNI	Cahoots NI Ltd	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	79,450
2011-12	ACNI	Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	100,000
2011-12	ACNI	Community Arts Forum	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	38,840
2011-12	ACNI	Craft Northern Ireland	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	125,000
2011-12	ACNI	Culture Night Belfast	Arts Development Fund award	25,000
2011-12	ACNI	Dance Resource Base (NI) Ltd	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	37,000
2011-12	ACNI	Digital Arts Studios	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	40,000
2011-12	ACNI	DU Dance	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	35,000
2011-12	ACNI	Fable Multimedia Ltd	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	9,995
2011-12	ACNI	Flax Housing Association Ltd	SStart UP award	5,000
2011-12	ACNI	Flaxart Studios	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	38,680
2011-12	ACNI	Golden Thread Gallery	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	107,000
2011-12	ACNI	Golden Thread Gallery	Arts Development Fund award	8,500
2011-12	ACNI	Green Shoot Productions	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	5,000
2011-12	ACNI	Kabosh Theatre Ltd	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	81,890
2011-12	ACNI	Kabosh Theatre Ltd	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000
2011-12	ACNI	Maiden Voyage (NI) Ltd	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	32,563
2011-12	ACNI	Moving on Music	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	114,150
2011-12	ACNI	New Belfast Community Arts Initiative	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	93,817
2011-12	ACNI	New Lodge Arts	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	30,000
2011-12	ACNI	Northern Visions Ltd.	Arts and Older People award	17,717
2011-12	ACNI	Oh Yeah Music Centre	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	25,000
2011-12	ACNI	Open House Festival	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	60,000

Year	Funding Body	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Total
2011-12	ACNI	Open House Festival	Arts Development Fund award	18,345
2011-12	ACNI	Orchid Studios Association	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	14,523
2011-12	ACNI	Paragon Studios	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	20,000
2011-12	ACNI	Photo Works North / Source Magazine	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	24,000
2011-12	ACNI	Photo Works North / Source Magazine	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	7,260
2011-12	ACNI	Play Resource Warehouse	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	64,450
2011-12	ACNI	Play Resource Warehouse	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	9,020
2011-12	ACNI	Prime Cut Productions Ltd	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	100,950
2011-12	ACNI	Prison Arts Foundation	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	50,000
2011-12	ACNI	Prison Arts Foundation	Arts Development Fund award	10,703
2011-12	ACNI	Ransom Productions Ltd	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	20,000
2011-12	ACNI	The Black Box Trust	Arts Development Fund award	25,000
2011-12	ACNI	The John Hewitt Society	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	18,000
2011-12	ACNI	The John Hewitt Society	Arts Development Fund award	4,782
2011-12	ACNI	The MAC	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	472,450
2011-12	ACNI	The MAC	Arts Development Fund award	22,500
2011-12	ACNI	The Yellow Nib	Arts Development Fund award	4,000
2011-12	ACNI	Tinderbox Theatre Company	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	139,000
2011-12	ACNI	Ulster Youth Orchestra	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	35,000
2011-12	ACNI	Ulster-Scots Community Network	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	25,000
2011-12	ACNI	Ulster-Scots Community Network	Arts Development Fund award	6,000
2011-12	ACNI	Young at Art	Annual Support for Organisations Programme Award	85,000
2011-12	ACNI	Young at Art	Arts Development Fund award	8,500
2011-12	Core Department	Holy Cross Boys' Primary School	No Child Left Behind iPad Initiative	32,000
2011-12	Core Department	Spectrum Centre	CAL Catalyst Project	45,000
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	An tSnáthaid Mhór	Scéim na Foilsitheoireachta 2011/ Publishing Scheme 2011	22,960

Year	Funding Body	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Total
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Caitríona Nic Sheáin	Scéim na gCoimisiún 2011/ Commission Scheme 2011	656
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Club Óige Mhachaire Botháin	Scéim na nImeachtaí Óige/ Youth Events Scheme	3,500
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Craobh Naomh Pádraig	An Ghaeilge sa Phobal 2011/ Irish in the Community 2011	1,910
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Scéim Cholmille/ The Colmille Scheme	2,680
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Scéim na bhFéilte/ Festivals' Scheme	4,000
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Scéim na gCampaí Samhraidh/ Summer Camp Scheme	3,500
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Scéim na nImeachtaí Óige/ Youth Events Scheme	1,590
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Irish Language Community Scheme 2011-2013	80,350
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Fionnuala Ní Mhealláin	Scéim na nOidí 2010 / The Mentor Scheme 2010	820
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór an Tuaiscirt	An Ghaeilge sa Phobal 2011/ Irish in the Community 2011	600
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór an Tuaiscirt	Scéim na nImeachtaí Óige/ Youth Events Scheme	1,550
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór an Tuaiscirt	Scéim na bhFéilte/ Festivals' Scheme	5,000
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Open House	Scéim na bhFéilte/ Festivals' Scheme	6,000
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Seán Fennell	Scéim na nOidí 2010/ The Mentor Scheme 2010	820
2011-12	Foras na Gaeilge	Young at Art	Tionscadail Litríochta 2011/ Literary Projects Scheme 2011	1,693
2011-12	Libraries NI	Belfast Central Library	Refurbishment	242,258
2011-12	Libraries NI	Belfast Central Library	Running Costs	2,164,695
2011-12	Libraries NI	Chichester Library	Running Costs	108,998
2011-12	Libraries NI	Grove Library	Running Costs	170,049
2011-12	Libraries NI	Ligoniel Library	Running Costs	3,746
2011-12	Libraries NI	Oldpark Library	Running Costs	2,020
2011-12	Libraries NI	Shankill Library	Refurbishment	787,238
2011-12	Libraries NI	Shankill Library	Running Costs	135,979
2011-12	Libraries NI	Whitewell Library	Running Costs	181
2011-12	NI Screen	Northern Visions	Training and Mentoring	69,000
2011-12	Sport NI	Clarendon Development Association	Ladies Boot Camp - equipment, venue hire and coaching	975
2011-12	Sport NI	Crusaders Youth FC	Sporting provision in the community - equipment, venue hire and coaching	804

Year	Funding Body	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Total
2011-12	Sport NI	Holy Cross Playgroup	Active play - applying for Equipment, Coaching & Venue hire	1,067
2011-12	Sport NI	Lighthouse	Tackling Suicide Through Soccer - Equipment and Venue Hire	1,367
2011-12	Sport NI	St Patricks FC	Soccer Mums and Nursery Programme - equipment, venue hire and coaching	837
2011-12	Sport Northern Ireland	Crusaders FC	Safe Stadia Programme	367,292
2011-12	Ulster-Scots Agency	Ballysillan Highland Dancers	Dance Tuition 2011	2,484
2011-12	Ulster-Scots Agency	Greater Shankill Partnership Property Development	Festival 2011	1,222
Total Investment In 2011-12 (1 May 2011 – 31 March 2012)				7,104,068
2012-13	ACNI	Belfast Exposed Photography	Equipment grant	14,250
2012-13	ACNI	DU Dance	Equipment grant	12,000
2012-13	ACNI	Northern Visions Ltd.	Equipment grant	15,275
2012-13	ACNI	ADAPT NI	Arts Development Fund award	567
2012-13	ACNI	An tSnáthaid Mhór Teoranta	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000
2012-13	ACNI	ArtsEkta	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	8,500
2012-13	ACNI	Belfast Community Circus School	Annual Funding Programme Award	168,350
2012-13	ACNI	Belfast Exposed Photography	Annual Funding Programme Award	152,040
2012-13	ACNI	Belfast Exposed Photography	Arts Development Fund award	150
2012-13	ACNI	Belfast Exposed Photography	Visual Arts Development Programme award	7,240
2012-13	ACNI	Cahoots NI Ltd	Annual Funding Programme Award	125,530
2012-13	ACNI	Cahoots NI Ltd	SIAP award	536
2012-13	ACNI	Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival	Annual Funding Programme Award	130,000
2012-13	ACNI	Craft Northern Ireland	Annual Funding Programme Award	132,468
2012-13	ACNI	Craft Northern Ireland	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	20,000
2012-13	ACNI	Craft Northern Ireland	Visual Arts Development Programme award	15,000
2012-13	ACNI	Flaxart Studios	Annual Funding Programme Award	40,614
2012-13	ACNI	Flaxart Studios	Visual Arts Development Programme award	7,400
2012-13	ACNI	Goddess and Swift Ltd	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000

Year	Funding Body	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Total
2012-13	ACNI	Golden Thread Gallery	Annual Funding Programme Award	185,587
2012-13	ACNI	Golden Thread Gallery	Arts and Older People award	10,968
2012-13	ACNI	Golden Thread Gallery	Visual Arts Development Programme award	9,242
2012-13	ACNI	Hole in the Wall Gang Limited	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000
2012-13	ACNI	Indian Community Centre	Arts Development Fund award	8,000
2012-13	ACNI	James Rooney Chartered Architect Ltd	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	8,330
2012-13	ACNI	Jude Cassidy	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000
2012-13	ACNI	Kabosh Theatre Ltd	Arts Development Fund award	763
2012-13	ACNI	Kabosh Theatre Ltd	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000
2012-13	ACNI	Moving on Music	Arts Development Fund award	9,000
2012-13	ACNI	Multi-Media Heritage	Arts Development Fund award	2,500
2012-13	ACNI	New Belfast Community Arts Initiative	Annual Funding Programme Award	184,857
2012-13	ACNI	Northern Ireland Theatre Association	Arts Development Fund award	5,000
2012-13	ACNI	Notasuch Films	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000
2012-13	ACNI	Orchid Studios Association	Annual Funding Programme Award	15,249
2012-13	ACNI	Paragon Studios	Annual Funding Programme Award	21,000
2012-13	ACNI	Photo Works North / Source Magazine	Visual Arts Development Programme award	15,400
2012-13	ACNI	Play Resource Warehouse	Arts and Older People award	12,980
2012-13	ACNI	Play Resource Warehouse	Arts Development Fund award	12,600
2012-13	ACNI	Prime Cut Productions Ltd	Annual Funding Programme Award	160,051
2012-13	ACNI	The Black Box Trust	Arts Development Fund award	25,000
2012-13	ACNI	The MAC	Annual Funding Programme Award	1,000,000
2012-13	ACNI	The MAC	Arts and Older People award	3,160
2012-13	ACNI	Tinderbox Theatre Company	Annual Funding Programme Award	220,000
2012-13	ACNI	Young at Art	Annual Funding Programme Award	172,594
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	An tSnáthaid Mhór	Scéim na Foilsitheoireachta 2012/ Publishing Scheme 2012	21,909
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Caitríona Nic Sheáin	Scéim na gCoimisiún 2011/ Commission Scheme 2011	1,392

Year	Funding Body	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Total
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Club Óige Mhachaire Botháin	Scéim na nImeachtaí Óige/ Youth Events Scheme	3,011
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Scéim na bhFéilte/ Festivals' Scheme	4,500
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Scéim na gCampaí Samhraidh/ Summer Camp Scheme	3,470
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Scéim na nImeachtaí Óige/ Youth Events Scheme	2,702
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Irish Language Community Scheme 2011-2013	69,633
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór an Tuaiscirt	An Ghaeilge sa Phobal 2012/ Irish in the Community 2012	630
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór an Tuaiscirt	Scéim na nImeachtaí Óige/ Youth Events Scheme	2,651
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór an Tuaiscirt	Scéim na bhFéilte/ Festivals' Scheme	5,000
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Naiscoil Ard Eoghain	Scéim na nImeachtaí Óige/ Youth Events Scheme	1,745
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Open House	Scéim na bhFéilte/ Festivals' Scheme	6,000
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Seán Mag Uidhir	Scéim na nOidí 2011/ The Mentor Scheme 2011	870
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	University of Ulster	Foilseacháin/ Publications	1,950
2012-13	Foras na Gaeilge	Young at Art	Tionscadail Litríochta 2011/ Literary Projects Scheme 2011	1,344
2012-13	Libraries NI	Belfast Central Library	Refurbishment	258,803
2012-13	Libraries NI	Belfast Central Library	Running Costs	2,161,610
2012-13	Libraries NI	Chichester Library	Running Costs	124,335
2012-13	Libraries NI	Grove Library	Running Costs	151,628
2012-13	Libraries NI	Ligoniel Library	Running Costs	10,549
2012-13	Libraries NI	Oldpark Library	Running Costs	8,170
2012-13	Libraries NI	Shankill Library	Refurbishment & Running Costs	146,670
2012-13	NI Screen	Belfast Film Festival	Core Funding	75,000
2012-13	NI Screen	Northern Visions	Training and Mentoring	62,250
2012-13	Sport NI	Clarendon Development Association	Ladies Boot Camp - applying for equipment, venue hire and coaching	760
2012-13	Sport NI	Crusaders Youth FC	Sporting provision in the community - equipment, venue hire and coaching	582
2012-13	Sport NI	Holy Cross Playgroup	Active play - applying for Equipment, Coaching & Venue hire	414
2012-13	Sport NI	Lighthouse	Tackling Suicide Through Soccer - Equipment and Venue Hire	510
2012-13	Sport NI	North Belfast Play Forum	Midnight Street Soccer	72,000

Year	Funding Body	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Total
2012-13	Sport NI	North Belfast Play Forum	Waterworks Weekend Sport and Older and Active Programme	3,850
2012-13	Sport NI	St Patrick's College, Bearnageeha	Olympic Experience - Trip to Garden Party	1,750
2012-13	Sport NI	St Patricks FC	Soccer Mums and Nursery Programme - equipment, venue hire and coaching	216
2012-13	Sport Northern Ireland	Crusaders FC	Safe Stadia Programme	31,333
2012-13	Ulster-Scots Agency	Arts for All	Partnership Funding - FAS 2012	1,900
2012-13	Ulster-Scots Agency	Duncairn Ulster-Scots Society	Festival 2012	3,180
2012-13	Ulster-Scots Agency	Duncairn Ulster-Scots Society	Tuition 2012	900
2012-13	Ulster-Scots Agency	Pride of Ardoyne Flute Band	Tuition 2012	825
2012-13	Ulster-Scots Agency	Small Steps Adult Education Centre	Summer School 2012	1,143
Total Investment in 2012-13 (1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013)				6,237,386
2013-14	ACNI	Arts & Disability Forum	Equipment grant	11,265
2013-14	ACNI	Belfast Community Circus School	Equipment grant	15,000
2013-14	ACNI	Digital Arts Studios	Equipment grant	6,283
2013-14	ACNI	Jim O'Neill & Robert Allsopp Memorial Flute Band	Musical Instrument grant	4,225
2013-14	ACNI	Kabosh Theatre Ltd	Equipment grant	7,992
2013-14	ACNI	New Belfast Community Arts Initiative	Equipment grant	11,740
2013-14	ACNI	Oh Yeah Music Centre	Equipment grant	5,250
2013-14	ACNI	Outburst Arts Festival	Equipment grant	3,769
2013-14	ACNI	Play Resource Warehouse	Equipment grant	14,000
2013-14	ACNI	The Black Box Trust	Equipment grant	7,438
2013-14	ACNI	An tSnáthaid Mhór Teoranta	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000
2013-14	ACNI	Arts and Disability Forum	Arts Development Fund award	4,000
2013-14	ACNI	Bbeyond	Visual Arts Development Programme award	3,000
2013-14	ACNI	Belfast Community Circus School	Annual Funding Programme Award	163,299
2013-14	ACNI	Belfast Community Circus School	Arts Development Fund award	3,651

Year	Funding Body	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Total
2013-14	ACNI	Belfast Exposed Photography	Annual Funding Programme Award	147,479
2013-14	ACNI	Cahoots NI Ltd	Annual Funding Programme Award	121,764
2013-14	ACNI	Cahoots NI Ltd	Arts Development Fund award	10,000
2013-14	ACNI	Cahoots NI Ltd	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000
2013-14	ACNI	Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival	Annual Funding Programme Award	126,100
2013-14	ACNI	Craft Northern Ireland	Annual Funding Programme Award	128,494
2013-14	ACNI	Craft Northern Ireland	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	19,985
2013-14	ACNI	Craft Northern Ireland	Visual Arts Development Programme award	18,000
2013-14	ACNI	Dance Resource Base (NI) Ltd	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	12,285
2013-14	ACNI	Digital Arts Studios	Visual Arts Development Programme award	6,912
2013-14	ACNI	Fable Multimedia Ltd	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000
2013-14	ACNI	Flaxart Studios	Annual Funding Programme Award	39,396
2013-14	ACNI	Flaxart Studios	Visual Arts Development Programme award	5,688
2013-14	ACNI	Golden Thread Gallery	Annual Funding Programme Award	180,019
2013-14	ACNI	Golden Thread Gallery	Arts Development Fund award	11,180
2013-14	ACNI	Golden Thread Gallery	Visual Arts Development Programme award	9,060
2013-14	ACNI	Greater Shankill Partnership Property Dev. Co.	Arts and Older People award	12,532
2013-14	ACNI	Green Shoot Productions	Arts Development Fund award	8,696
2013-14	ACNI	Indian Community Centre	Arts Development Fund award	8,700
2013-14	ACNI	James Rooney Chartered Architect Ltd	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000
2013-14	ACNI	New Belfast Community Arts Initiative	Annual Funding Programme Award	179,311
2013-14	ACNI	Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	Arts Development Fund award	5,000
2013-14	ACNI	Notasuch Films	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	10,000
2013-14	ACNI	Open House Festival	Arts Development Fund award	23,536
2013-14	ACNI	Orchid Studios Association	Annual Funding Programme Award	14,790
2013-14	ACNI	Paragon Studios	Annual Funding Programme Award	20,370

Year	Funding Body	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Total
2013-14	ACNI	Paragon Studios	Visual Arts Development Programme award	8,640
2013-14	ACNI	Photo Works North / Source Magazine	Visual Arts Development Programme award	15,520
2013-14	ACNI	Play Resource Warehouse	Arts and Older People award	15,690
2013-14	ACNI	Prime Cut Productions Ltd	Annual Funding Programme Award	155,249
2013-14	ACNI	The John Hewitt Society	Arts Development Fund award	15,855
2013-14	ACNI	The MAC	Annual Funding Programme Award	1,000,000
2013-14	ACNI	The MAC	Arts Development Fund award	205,000
2013-14	ACNI	Tinderbox Theatre Company	Annual Funding Programme Award	213,400
2013-14	ACNI	Ulster-Scots Community Network	Arts Development Fund award	5,000
2013-14	ACNI	University of Ulster	Creative Industries Innovation Fund Award	9,995
2013-14	ACNI	Young at Art	Annual Funding Programme Award	167,416
2013-14	ACNI	Young at Art	Arts Development Fund award	2,000
2013-14	Core Department	Cumann Culturtha Mhic Reachtain	McCracken Summer School Cultural Programme	111,384
2013-14	Core Department	North Belfast Harriers	Jog Belfast Initiative	8,000
2013-14	Core Department	Springboard Opportunities Ltd	Pay it Forward with Sport Project	73,500
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	An tSnáthaid Mhór	Scéim na Foilsitheoireachta 2013/ Publishing Scheme 2013	20,090
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	Cairtriona Nic Sheáin	Scéim na gCoimisiún 2011/ Commission Scheme 2011	1,312
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	Club Óige Mhachaire Botháin	Scéim na gCampaí Samhraidh/ Summer Camp Scheme	3,493
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	Club Óige Mhachaire Botháin	Scéim na nImeachtaí Óige/ Youth Events Scheme	1,750
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	Craobh Naomh Pádraig	An Ghaeilge sa Phobal 2013/ Irish in the Community 2013	1,060
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Scéim na bhFéilte/ Festivals' Scheme	2,000
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Scéim na gCampaí Samhraidh/ Summer Camp Scheme	1,350
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Scéim na nImeachtaí Óige/ Youth Events Scheme	3,235
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Irish Language Community Scheme 2011-2013	52,523
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	Scéim Phobail Gaeilge 2014/ Irish Language Community Scheme 2014	17,500
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	Glór an Tuaiscirt	Scéim na nImeachtaí Óige/ Youth Events Scheme	1,745
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	Naiscoil Ard Eoghain	Scéim na nImeachtaí Óige/ Youth Events Scheme	1,745

Year	Funding Body	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Total
2013-14	Foras na Gaeilge	Open House	Scéim na bhFéilte/ Festivals' Scheme	4,000
2013-14	Libraries NI	Belfast Central Library	Refurbishment & Running Costs	2,191,542
2013-14	Libraries NI	Chichester Library	Running Costs	124,165
2013-14	Libraries NI	Grove Library	Running Costs	141,632
2013-14	Libraries NI	Ligoniel Library	Running Costs	1,465
2013-14	Libraries NI	Oldpark Library	Running Costs	6,473
2013-14	Libraries NI	Shankill Library	Refurbishment & Running Costs	164,998
2013-14	NI Screen	Belfast Film Festival	Core Funding	54,000
2013-14	NI Screen	Northern Visions	Training and Mentoring	35,750
2013-14	Sport NI	Cliftonville FC	Installation of temporary seating	12,700
2013-14	Sport NI	Mercy College (Belfast)	Mercy College Netball Programme	1,145
2013-14	Sport NI	Mercy Primary School (Belfast)	Mercy Primary Community Gaelic	2,250
2013-14	Sport NI	North Belfast Play Forum	Midnight Street Soccer	8,000
2013-14	Sport NI	North Belfast Play Forum	Midnight Street Soccer 13-14	74,800
2013-14	Sport NI	Crusaders FC	Safe Stadia Programme	20,523
2013-14	Sport NI	Shankill United FC	Pitch upgrade/extension	220,500
2013-14	Ulster-Scots Agency	Arts for All	Partnership Funding - FAS 2012	5,698
2013-14	Ulster-Scots Agency	Duncairn Ulster-Scots Society	Festival 2013	1,567
2013-14	Ulster-Scots Agency	Fife & Drum Musical & Historical Society	Tuition 2013	1,650
2013-14	Ulster-Scots Agency	Small Steps Adult Education Centre	Summer School 2013	1,743
2013-14	Ulster-Scots Agency	Greater Shankill Partnership Property Development	Festival 2012	6,168
Total Investment In 2013-14 (1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014)				6,615,431
2014-15	ACNI	Belfast Community Circus School	Annual Funding Programme Award	163,299
2014-15	ACNI	Belfast Exposed Photography	Annual Funding Programme Award	147,479
2014-15	ACNI	Cahoots NI Ltd	Annual Funding Programme Award	121,764
2014-15	ACNI	Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival	Annual Funding Programme Award	126,100
2014-15	ACNI	Craft Northern Ireland	Annual Funding Programme Award	128,494
2014-15	ACNI	Flaxart Studios	Annual Funding Programme Award	39,396
2014-15	ACNI	Golden Thread Gallery	Annual Funding Programme Award	180,019

Year	Funding Body	Organisation Funded	Description of Funding	Total
2014-15	ACNI	Golden Thread Gallery	Arts Development Fund award	10,000
2014-15	ACNI	New Belfast Community Arts Initiative	Annual Funding Programme Award	179,311
2014-15	ACNI	Orchid Studios Association	Annual Funding Programme Award	14,790
2014-15	ACNI	Paragon Studios	Annual Funding Programme Award	20,370
2014-15	ACNI	Prime Cut Productions Ltd	Annual Funding Programme Award	155,249
2014-15	ACNI	The MAC	Annual Funding Programme Award	1,000,000
2014-15	ACNI	Tinderbox Theatre Company	Annual Funding Programme Award	213,400
2014-15	ACNI	Ulster Youth Orchestra	Arts Development Fund award	574
2014-15	ACNI	Young at Art	Annual Funding Programme Award	167,416
2014-15	Core Department	North Belfast Harriers	Jog Belfast Initiative	8,000
2014-15	Core Department	Spectrum Centre	CAL Catalyst Project	15,535
2014-15	Core Department	Spectrum Centre	Operational Costs	20,000
2014-15	Foras na Gaeilge	Naiscoil Ard Eoghain	Scéim na nImeachtaí Óige/ Youth Events Scheme	1,707
2014-15	Libraries NI	Belfast Central Library	Running Costs	386,742
2014-15	Libraries NI	Chichester Library	Running Costs	23,545
2014-15	Libraries NI	Grove Library	Running Costs	19,663
2014-15	Libraries NI	Ligoniel Library	Running Costs	529
2014-15	Libraries NI	Oldpark Library	Running Costs	933
2014-15	Libraries NI	Shankill Library	Running Costs	27,816
2014-15	NI Screen	Northern Visions	Training and Mentoring	21,000
2014-15	Sport NI	Mercy College (Belfast)	Mercy College Netball Programme	127
2014-15	Sport NI	Mercy Primary School (Belfast)	Mercy Primary Community Gaelic	250
2014-15	Sport NI	North Belfast Play Forum	Midnight Street Soccer 13-14	50,009
2014-15	Ulster-Scots Agency	Small Steps Adult Education Centre	Community Impact Grant 2014	7,618
Total Investment In 2014-15 (1 April 2014 – 31 May 2014)				3,251,135

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 34373/11-15, what training will be provided for Libraries NI staff with regards to Irish language material, literature and heritage.

(AQW 34886/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Librarians working in local libraries already receive training with regards to Irish literature and heritage material from specialist heritage staff employed by Libraries NI. Two Libraries NI employees are also currently undertaking accredited training courses, one in Irish translation and one in Irish language at Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and the

University of Ulster at Magee respectively. Libraries NI is funding this training and anticipates that these staff will, once they have completed their accreditation, be providing service wide support to staff on Irish language, literature and heritage material.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what support she has provided to enhance and assist participation in leisure pursuits on Lough Neagh, in each of the last three years.
(AQW 34895/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Under the Water Order (NI) 1999 my Department has discretionary powers to develop the recreation and navigation potential of Inland Waterways, at present this relates to its 21 water recreation sites both owned and leased by the Department including the abandoned Lagan Navigation.

My Department's current statutory remit on Lough Neagh is restricted to dredging the channels at the entrance to the Sixmilewater river and, additionally, as a public service, maintaining 48 hazard markers around the Lough Neagh shoreline on a non-statutory basis to assist safe navigation. Costs for major repairs to the markers and ongoing maintenance over the past 3 years are approximately £44k.

Since 2012 my Department has funded the Lough Neagh Partnership £25k per annum in support of their role to co-ordinate heritage, recreational, cultural tourism, navigational issues and development opportunities on Lough Neagh. The Partnership is also funded by seven local authorities around the Lough and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency support the work of an Environment Officer.

As part of its funding provision my Department tasked the Partnership to commission a number of reports on issues relating to Lough Neagh. These reports are presently with the Department for consideration and include:

- Lough Neagh Governance and Management Options Appraisal
- Dredging Study on the mouths of the Blackwater and Upper Bann Rivers and
- Lough Neagh Culture Heritage Audit and Strategic Action Plan.

In 2013 Waterways Ireland on behalf of the Department, carried out a review of the current navigation marker system on Lough Neagh and a study is currently underway by Outdoor Recreation NI to assess the current and potential outdoor recreation facilities and opportunities around Lough Neagh. This study will be completed shortly.

My Department also funded a number of projects including a Fit Gym and additional seating at the Antrim Forum along the Sixmilewater at the Lough Shore, under the Water Recreation Grant Programme.

DCAL was represented on the Inter Departmental Working Group (IDWG) for Lough Neagh, chaired by DARD to look at ownership of the Lough and is actively involved in the reconvened Group presently reviewing the management arrangements for the Lough and its future development.

My Department has also provided grant funding over the last four years through Sport Northern Ireland to the following organisations who promote a variety of leisure pursuits throughout the North of Ireland including Lough Neagh:

- Funding to Outdoor Recreation NI to promote access to and participation in Outdoor Recreation
- Funding to the Canoe Association for NI (CANI) to develop and promote canoe sport which regularly takes place on Lough Neagh
- Funding to the Royal Yachting Association NI (RYANI) to develop and promote sailing which regularly takes place on Lough Neagh
- £750 grant to each outdoor recreation provider who chooses to go through the Adventure Mark quality accreditation process. This is open to providers in the Lough Neagh area and those who use the Lough as an activity venue. Team Build Ireland is an Adventuremark based in the Lough Neagh

In relation to support to enhance and assist participation in leisure pursuits on Lough Neagh you may be assured that my Department has worked closely with the existing Councils around the Lough, and will continue to work with the newly formed shadow councils in relation to its statutory and discretionary remit.

We will also proactively work with those who are committed to protecting users of the Lough in their commercial and recreational pursuits, including members of the Lough Neagh Safety and Navigation Working Group, and Lough Neagh Rescue.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the funding available to organisations wishing to commemorate the First World War.
(AQW 34922/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: An extensive range of events, exhibitions and initiatives aimed at commemorating the First World War and the wider Decade of Centenaries have been and will continue to be funded by DCAL and its ALBs. These include learning resources and perspectives from areas such as the arts, museums, libraries and public records and archives.

These activities provide opportunities and resources for organisations, communities and individuals to engage with and utilise to inform, plan and enhance delivery of inclusive approaches and events remembering this period.

The Community Festival Fund aims to improve the quality and capacity of community festivals. The Department allocates approximately £450,000 annually to local councils who match and administer the fund. Events remembering the past can be supported if in keeping with the Fund's guidelines and those of individual councils.

Culture and arts can play a crucial role in discovering and sharing the stories of significant historical events. However remembering the past is also relevant to other Departments. Links to tourism, economic development, learning and education and social inclusion all demonstrate such relevance. I would be supportive of additional support for the delivery of community events and activities to commemorate the Decade of Centenaries. This would be dependent on additional funding being agreed by the Executive.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the budget available for organisations wishing to apply for funding to commemorate the First World War.

(AQW 34923/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: An extensive range of events, exhibitions and initiatives aimed at commemorating the First World War and the wider Decade of Centenaries have been and will continue to be funded by DCAL and its ALBs. These include learning resources and perspectives from areas such as the arts, museums, libraries and public records and archives.

These activities provide opportunities and resources for organisations, communities and individuals to engage with and utilise to inform, plan and enhance delivery of inclusive approaches and events remembering this period.

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Culture and arts can play a crucial role in discovering and sharing the stories of significant historical events. However remembering the past is also relevant to other Departments. Links to tourism, economic development, learning and education and social inclusion all demonstrate such relevance. I would be supportive of additional support for the delivery of community events and activities to commemorate the Decade of Centenaries. This would be dependent on additional funding being agreed by the Executive.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the estimated number of fish killed, including the type of fish, at Brantry Lough during the incident reported on 30 June 2014; (ii) the estimated cost to replenish the fish stock; and (iii) the length of time it will take to restore the Lough.

(AQW 35054/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) In the recent fish kill at Brantry Lough, 1,100 brown trout were collected by my inland fisheries staff. These fish were stocked by my Department. It is estimated that around 500 indigenous adult perch and 1,500 juvenile perch also died.
- (ii) The cost of replacing the stocked brown trout has yet to be determined.
- (iii) As a precaution, there will be no further stocking of the Public Angling Estate fisheries until water temperatures drop. My staff will continue to monitor water temperature and oxygen levels in Brantry Lough and the restocking of brown trout will resume when these are at safe levels. The indigenous perch stocks should recover naturally over time.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether there are any ongoing investigations relating to any Public Private Partnership projects that her Department is associated with; and if so, to detail the projects.

(AQW 35106/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: There are no ongoing investigations in relation to any Public Private Partnership associated with the Department.

Department of Education

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education to detail the action he has taken following each public petition presented to the Assembly and forwarded to his Department.

(AQW 34850/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): I wish to inform the Member that I take very seriously all issues raised by any public petition which have been forwarded to the Department of Education (DE).

I can confirm that DE responded to each petition and any issues raised were carefully considered. Details of the 12 petitions that have been forwarded to my Department and actions taken are contained in the table below.

Petition	Action
Future of Bangor Central Integrated Primary School	No further action required. I replied to Steven Agnew MLA outlined the position regarding any potential project and purchase of land
Save Drumcree College	No further action required. I replied to Dolores Kelly MLA advised that it is CCMS responsibility, in the first instance, to manage provision in the maintained schools estate and bring forward proposals to DE.
Development Proposal Woodlands Speech and Language Centre	Petition presented was considered alongside other submissions and informed my consideration of the Development Proposal (DP) relating to Woodlands which were published in January 2013.
Development Proposal Envagh/St Francis of Assissi/ Newtownstewart Primary Schools	I replied to Pat Ramsay MLA explaining the DP process. Subsequent DP's for Envagh and St Francis of Assissi were published in May 2014. No DP has been submitted for Newtownstewart.
Support and Retention of The Dickson Plan	No further action required. I replied to Stephen Moutray MLA referencing the decision of SELB to support proposals for change to the Dickson Plan and explained the DP process
Closure of Immaculate Conception College, Derry	I replied to Pat Ramsay MLA explaining the Statutory two month objection period ended and the petition would form part of the submission advice to me.
Crumlin Supports Shared Education	No further action required by Department. I replied to Danny Kinahan MLA explained that it is the responsibility of the managing authorities to plan provision.
Opposition to Development Proposal for Collegiate Grammar School Enniskillen	I replied to Arlene Foster explaining the latest position regarding Collegiate Grammar School and that the petition will form part of the submission advice to me.
Proposed Closure of Artillery Youth Centre	No further action was taken by DE as my reply to Alban Maginness MLA explained that issues regarding Artillery Youth Resource Centre's premises are a matter for the Belfast Education and Library Board.
New Build for Parkhall Integrated College	No further action required. Parkhall was included in my announcement of new schools in January 2013.
Accommodation Issues between Hazelwood Integrated College and the Belfast Education and Library Board	No further action required as following meetings between both parties the matter has been brought to a satisfactory conclusion.
Cross Border Area Planning Community Post-Primary Education in the North and West Fermanagh	DE and DES officials have been tasked by their respective Ministers to continue to engage at senior level regarding cross-border school provision.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to detail the capital funding provided to each school in the Dickson Plan Catchment Area in each of the last five years broken down by (i) sector; and (ii) school.

(AQW 34858/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following table details capital expenditure in each school in the Dickson Plan Catchment Area in each of the last five financial years broken down by (i) sector; and (ii) school:

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Controlled Primary						
Donacloney Ps	18,033.38	0.00	54,243.00	0.00	82,027.00	154,303.38
Edenderry Ps	0.00	0.00	420,103.00	0.00	169,785.00	589,888.00
Gilford Ps	0.00	0.00	0.00	14,109.00	0.00	14,109.00
Hardy Memorial Ps	382,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	382,000.00
Kings Park Ps, Lurgan	0.00	0.00	574,462.00	66,383.00	0.00	640,845.00
Lurgan Model Ps	7,000.00	0.00	51,321.00	591,262.00	0.00	649,583.00
Millington Ps	0.00	0.00	56,769.00	0.00	0.00	56,769.00

School Name	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	Total
Orchard County Ps	0.00	0.00	159,327.00	0.00	55,416.00	214,743.00
Waringstown Ps	0.00	0.00	371,120.00	400,424.00	0.00	771,544.00
Total	407,033.38	0.00	1,687,345.00	1,072,178.00	307,228.00	3,473,784.38
Controlled Post Primary						
Craigavon Shs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Killicomaine Jhs	0.00	0.00	0.00	279,026.00	0.00	279,026.00
Lurgan College	0.00	0.00	330,154.00	0.00	678,753.00	1,008,907.00
Portadown College	0.00	0.00	391,060.00	53,390.00	0.00	444,450.00
Total	0.00	0.00	721,214.00	332,416.00	678,753.00	1,732,383.00
Controlled Special						
Ceara Spec School	117,000.00	27,000.00	0.00	289,422.00	527,260.00	960,682.00
Total	117,000.00	27,000.00	0.00	289,422.00	527,260.00	960,682.00
Overall Controlled Total	524,033.38	27,000.00	2,408,559.00	1,694,016.00	1,513,241.00	6,166,849.38
Maintained Primary						
Presentation Ps	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	30,342.00	30,342.00
St John The Baptist Ps, Portadown	21,200.00	10,421.00	9,063.13	0.00	0.00	40,684.13
Total	21,200.00	10,421.00	9,063.13	0.00	30,342.00	71,026.13
Maintained Post Primary						
St Mary's Hs, Craigavon	96,761.40	20,197.75	0.00	0.00	3,073.38	120,032.53
Total	96,761.40	20,197.75	0.00	0.00	3,073.38	120,032.53
Overall Maintained Total	117,961.40	30,618.75	9,063.13	0.00	33,415.38	191,058.66
Voluntary Grammar						
St Michael's Gs, Lurgan	1,480.00	1,204.61	0.00	0.00	3,521.28	6,205.89
Total	1,480.00	1,204.61	0.00	0.00	3,521.28	6,205.89
Overall Total For All Sectors	643,474.78	58,823.36	2,417,622.13	1,694,016.00	1,550,177.66	6,364,113.93

* The Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) has provided expenditure information in relation to the controlled sector. SELB are also responsible for school meals accommodation in the maintained sector. However, in the period covered there was no expenditure relating to this.

** Information relating to capital expenditure in the voluntary sector has been obtained from Departmental records.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Education to detail the funding that his Department, and its arm's-length bodies, invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014.

(AQW 34882/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The funding (expenditure) that my Department, and its ALBs have invested in North Belfast over the course of the last three financial years, 2011-12 to 2013-14, is detailed in the following table:

	2011-12 £m	2012-13 £m	2013-14 £m	Total £m
Recurrent	115.1	115.8	121.2	352.1
Capital	8.8	8.2	9.0	26.0
Total	123.9	124.0	130.2	378.1

Notes:

- 1 As funding(expenditure) is recorded in financial years (April to March) the information requested has been provided on this basis.
- 2 Recurrent includes e.g schools delegated budgets, services to schools funded by ELBs, youth funding.
- 3 This information has been compiled utilising the NISRA central postcode directory method to identify the North Belfast constituency.
- 4 All 2013-14 figures are provisional until year end accounts have been finalised.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education whether the proposed re-alignment of the school estate in Holywood is causing a delay in individual schools receiving capital for a new school building.

(AQW 34897/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In December 2013 the South Eastern Education & Library Board (SEELB) identified schools in the Holywood schools' estate to be considered for major capital investment.

While there are interrelated issues with these schools in terms of location of any new build they were considered independently under 'The Major Works Projects Protocol for Selection of Projects to Proceed in Planning' dated June 2014. The protocol subjected the potential projects to 'Gateway' checks for sustainability and area planning issues prior to the remaining projects being prioritised.

Ongoing sustainability issues with Priory College meant that it did not pass the 'Gateway' and hence could not be included in my 24 June announcement.

Holywood Primary School was scored under the protocol however it did not attract sufficient priority to be included in my announced list of schools due to budget constraints.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the departmental projects or funding schemes available to community organisations to help tackle low educational achievement.

(AQW 35005/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In recognition of the importance of influences on pupil outcomes outside school I am providing funding to support programmes aimed at involving local communities in addressing educational underachievement.

I have allocated £2 million pounds to the Community Education Initiatives Programme in both the 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 financial years. This will promote partnership working between community and voluntary organisations and schools to provide educationally focused programmes in communities with particular concentrations of educational disadvantage. In the North Down area funding through this programme supports community-based work in the Whitehill and Kilcooley areas of Bangor and in Donaghadee.

The Department also provides funding to the West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB) and the Greater Shankill Partnership Board (GSPB) to support the West Belfast Community Project. This aims of the Project include the provision of support for families with children in pre-school, primary school or post-primary school outside of normal school hours to address issues with attendance, attainment and engagement in education. Funding of £260,000 is being provided in 2014/2015.

The Extended Schools (ES) programme seeks to establish schools as the hub of the community and schools can use ES funding to engage the services of a wide range of voluntary/community organisations in delivering programmes which aim to address the learning and development needs of pupils, families and the wider community. In 2014/2015, over £12 million of ES funding has been made available to almost 500 eligible schools.

In the pre-school sector, the Department currently invests around £25 million pounds per annum in the Sure Start programme which is administered by the Health and Social Care Board. Thirty-nine Sure Start projects here provide services to over 34,000 children aged 0-4 and their families within at least the top 20% most disadvantaged wards with services being expanded to the top 25% most disadvantaged wards by April 2015.

The Department also currently provides funding to a mix of approximately 160 playgroups, early years centres and crèches through the DE Early Years Fund. Groups accessing the funding provide direct early years care and education to children in areas of low provision, disadvantaged areas or where the service is considered critical for children.

The Department funds the Toybox project which is administered by the Early Years Organisation and provides support to Traveller children and their parents before, during and after pre-school. Funding is approximately £360,000 for 2014/15 and is delivered to Traveller families across the north of Ireland in nine localities.

Through the Department's youth budget, Education and Library Boards and the Youth Council provide funding to a wide range of voluntary and community youth work organisations that run clubs and programmes for young people, particularly those in disadvantaged areas and those who are at risk of educational underachievement.

In addition, my Department works closely with the Department of Social Development in relation to education related neighbourhood renewal projects which target children in the most disadvantaged areas by linking school and community-based activities.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what new initiatives his Department is pursuing to combat educational underachievement, particularly in disadvantaged communities or sections of the community with low attainment.
(AQW 35006/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have redistributed school funding to target schools with high numbers of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds under the common funding scheme and injected a further £10 million specifically targeting social deprivation into school budgets from April 2014.

Within schools, the Department is implementing a range of funded programmes to improve pupil outcomes in literacy and numeracy. These include the Delivering Social Change programme to employ additional teachers, a literacy and numeracy CPD KS2/3 Project, the Strategic Development Fund to Area Learning Communities and the Greater West Belfast Primary Schools Project.

I am also providing additional funding to support recently initiated programmes targeted at socially deprived communities. These include the Community Education Initiatives Programme and the Greater West Belfast Community Project.

I have invested an additional £9 million in youth work over the period 2012-13 to 2014-15. This is being used to increase access for young people to mainstream youth services in disadvantaged areas, with priority given to interface areas, and, through outreach and detached youth work.

As regards pre-school provision, the Sure Start programme is being expanded to the top 25% most disadvantaged wards here by April 2015. Expansion will facilitate greater involvement in the education, health and social development of children in disadvantaged areas.

In October 2013, 'Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning' was published. Key objectives for the Framework include providing equitable access to high quality early years education and learning services and identifying and helping address barriers to learning, and reduce the risk and impact of social exclusion and the need for later intervention. As a key action a review of the Sure Start Programme is underway, with input from DHSSPS. Following the review, the Department will develop potential options for the expansion of the Developmental Programme for 2-3 year olds.

I announced last year that free school meal entitlement would be extended from September 2014 so that the same eligibility criteria apply to primary and postprimary pupils. This means that from September 2014 postprimary pupils from lower income families will be supported with access to this benefit and the school uniform grant in the same way as primary pupils. An estimated additional 15,000 pupils will become eligible as a result.

Under the review of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Inclusion, new pilots in SEN Early Years Capacity Building and in a Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing are ongoing. Both pilots aim to increase the capacity of staff in the participating settings to identify, assess and make provision for SEN children. The review also supports: a new cross-board Leadership and Management Capacity Building Programme, which focuses on the role of SEN Coordinators in schools to enable them to effectively manage arrangements for SEN pupils; and an innovative SEN Continuing Professional Development Literacy Project in Stranmillis and St Mary's University Colleges which promotes effective teaching of reading, writing and spelling to SEN pupils with literacy difficulties

These programmes complement existing policies and programmes which I am taking forward to address educational underachievement. However, there is also an important role to be played by our MLAs, local councillors and those with influence in the community in raising educational awareness and aspiration in socially deprived communities.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education how many school principal positions are currently filled by staff acting up to cover the position on a temporary basis.
(AQW 35007/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Employing Authorities for the controlled and maintained sectors report that there are 35 school principal positions currently filled by staff acting up to cover the position on a temporary basis. The Department does not hold this information for the Voluntary Grammar or Grant Maintained Integrated schools, as each school is an employer in their own right.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education how many school principals are currently absent from work on stress related sick leave.
(AQW 35008/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Employing Authorities for the controlled, maintained and integrated sectors report that there are 10.5 school principals currently absent from work on stress related sick leave. The Department does not hold the information requested for the Voluntary Grammar schools, as each school is an employer in their own right.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education how many school principal positions have become available in the last two financial years; and how many applications were received for these positions, broken down by (i) Education and Library Board area; (ii) primary and post-primary sectors; and (iii) controlled, integrated and maintained sectors.
(AQW 35009/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Each Employing Authority has provided the numbers of school principal positions which became available in the last two financial years and the numbers of applications received as detailed in the tables below. The Department does not

hold this information for the Voluntary Grammar or Grant Maintained Integrated schools, as each school is an employer in their own right.

BELB

Financial Year	Primary Principal Posts	Applications	Post-Primary Principal Posts	Applications
2012/2013	2	19	2	4
2013/2014	2	23	1	5

WELB

Financial Year	Primary Principal Posts	Applications	Post-Primary Principal Posts	Applications (Total)
2012/2013	3	3	None	None
2013/2014	2	9	None	None

NEELB

Financial Year	Primary Principal Posts	Applications	Post-Primary Principal Posts	Applications
2012/2013	9	118	7	50
2013/2014	16	135	None	None

SEELB

Financial Year	Primary Principal Posts	Applications	Post-Primary Principal Posts	Applications
2012/2013	10	64	4	23
2013/2014	2	13	7	47

SELB

Financial Year	Primary Principal Posts	Applications	Post-Primary Principal Posts	Applications
2012/2013	6	35	4	21
2013/2014	7	58	1	6

CCMS

Financial Year	Primary Principal Posts	Applications	Post-Primary Principal Posts	Applications
2012/2013	21	176	3	26
2013/2014	35	286	10	75

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education to detail the groups that received funding under the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education scheme in 2012/13, including the funding each group received; and the groups and amount of funding planned for 2013/14.

(AQW 35042/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The groups and amount of funding each received under the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Enhancement Scheme is detailed in the tables below.

CRED Funding 2012/13

Group/School	Partner Group/School	Amount of Funding
Colin Neighbourhood Partnership		£3,000.00
Derriagh Youth Centre		£3,000.00

Group/School	Partner Group/School	Amount of Funding
37th Belfast Explorer Scouts	29th Belfast Venture Scouts	£3,800.00
Cregagh Youth Centre	Ballymote Health and Wellbeing	£3,000.00
Ballynahinch Youth Club	Ards Arena Youth Club	£3,800.00
Old Warren Youth Initiative	Lagmore Area project	£3,000.00
Laurelhill Youth Centre	Mourne Youth Project	£3,000.00
Ards Arena Youth Club	St Comgall's Youth Group	£2,385.00
Brooklands Youth Centre	Wandsworth Community Association	£3,000.00
Ards Rural Project		£3,000.00
Derrigahy Youth & Resource Centre		£3,000.00
Crossgar, Saintfield & Killyleagh Area Project	Killyleagh Sailing Association	£3,000.00
Windmill Integrated PS	St Patrick's PS Dungannon	£780.00
St Mary's PS, Maghery	Portadown Integrated PS	£4,600.00
Markethill PS	St James' PS Mullabrack	£2,000.00
Ballyoran PS	Bocombra PS	£2,000.00
St Paul's HS, Bessbrook	Newtownhamilton HS	£2,000.00
St Patrick's PS, Dungannon (Nursery Unit)		£1,000.00
St Malachy's PS, Glencull		£2,500.00
Drumnamoe Nursery School	Dromore Nursery School	£1,200.00
Carntall PS	St Macartans PS	£1,595.00
St Anthony's PS, Craigavon,	Moyallon PS and Ceara School	£1,525.00
Dungannon PS	St Patrick's PS Dungannon	£500.00
St Mary's PS, Cabragh	Sperrinview Special School	£2,155.00
Lurgan JHS	St Mary's HS, Lurgan	£4,590.00
St Teresa's PS, Tullyherron	Mountnorris PS	£1,330.00
St Brigid's HS, Armagh		£2,181.25
St John's PS, Moy	Moy Regional PS	£2,996.00
Aughnacloy PS	St Mary's PS, Aughnacloy	£4,000.00
Hart Memorial PS		£5,000.00
SELB	St Joseph's Boys' High School	£2,752.00
Taghnevan Youth Club		£2,963.02
Youth Included - Cookstown Youth Resource Centre		£2,876.80
St Mary's Youth Club	Seagoe Youth Club	£2,872.26
Seagoe Youth Group	St Mary's Youth Club	£3,063.35
Goal Line Youth Trust		£2,647.17
Keady Area Youth Project	Oasis LGBT&H Youth Group	£1,840.41
SELB Specialist Youth Development Worker		£1,755.26
SELB - Cookstown Youth Resource Centre		£1,395.00
SELB - SYW Inclusion		£558.50
Glengormley IPS	Glennan PS	£3,074.00
St John's PS Coleraine	Killowen	£3,514.00
Corran IPS	n/a	£1,857.00
St Patrick's & St Brigid's PS	DH Christie	£2,614.00
St Mary's PS Cargan	Carnlough IPS, Seaview PS	£3,500.00

Group/School	Partner Group/School	Amount of Funding
St John's PS Swatragh	Eden, PS B'money	£1,989.00
St John Bosco PS	Bellaghy PS	£1,269.00
Edmund Rice College	n/a	£1,216.00
Mt St Michael's PS	Randalstown CPS	£2,500.00
Antrim PS	St Comgall's PS	£500.00
Straidbilly PS	Barnish PS, Armoy PS, St Olcan's PS	£2,074.00
Duneane PS	Moneynick PS	£2,260.00
Ballynure PS	Ballyclare HS	£1,314.00
Rasharkin PS	St Patrick's Rasharkin	£3,000.00
Garryduff PS	n/a	£800.00
Oakfield PS	Acorn IPS	£1,614.00
St Ciaran's PS Cushendun	Carrowreagh PS	£2,077.00
Broughshane PS	St Patrick's PS Loughguile	£1,885.00
Carniny PS	St Colmcille's PS	£280.00
St Columba's PS	Kilrea PS	£3,160.00
Whitehouse PS	St James' PS	£574.00
St Mary's GS	n/a	£2,000.00
Knockahollet PS	St Brigid's PS Cloughills, Cloughmills PS, St Anne's PS	£3,330.00
Knockloughrim PS	St Brigid's Mayogall, Maghera PS	£3,186.00
St John Bosco PS	Bellaghy PS	£1,994.00
Grange Community YC, Ballyclare		£2,000.00
Cheers YC, Ballymoney	Rasharkin Community YC	£1,676.00
Armoy Outreach	n/a	£2,000.00
Newtownabey Youth Council	n/a	£2,000.00
Diversity Competency Leadership Programme, Coleraine	n/a	£3,000.00
Coleraine Youth Group	n/a	£2,560.00
Disability Focus Group: Coleraine Area	n/a	£550.00
4th Ballymoney BB		£2,300.00
Ashfield Boys' High School		£1,000.00
Belfast Boys' Model School		£2,500.00
Bunscoil Phobal Feirste		£1,700.00
Christian Brothers' School		£1,800.00
City of Belfast School of Music		£2,422.00
Donegall Road Primary School		£800.00
Euston Street Primary School		£2,000.00
Fane Street Primary School		£2,000.00
Harberton School		£5,000.00
Hazelwood Integrated Primary School		£1,500.00
Holy Cross Girls' Primary School		£2,500.00
Ligoniel Primary School		£939.00
Little Flower Girls' School		£2,300.00
Loughshore Educational Resource Centre		£2,500.00
Malone College		£1,000.00

Group/School	Partner Group/School	Amount of Funding
Mercy Primary School		£1,608.00
Mitchell House School		£2,000.00
New Lodge Nursery School		£1,500.00
Our Lady's Nursery School		£2,500.00
Shaftesbury Nursery School		£2,475.00
St Louise's Comprehensive College		£1,848.00
St Malachy's College		£2,500.00
St Mary's Nursery School		£2,500.00
St Michael's Primary School		£2,308.00
St Patrick's College		£2,500.00
St Therese of Lisieux Primary School		£800.00
Victoria College		£2,000.00
Annadale Haywood Residents' Association		£2,400.00
Archway Youth Club		£2,500.00
Belfast YMCA		£2,200.00
East Belfast Area Project		£5,000.00
Glen Parent Youth Group		£3,500.00
Glencairn Youth Initiative		£5,000.00
Indian Community Centre		£1,400.00
Roden Street Youth Service		£4,950.00
Rosario Youth Centre		£5,000.00
South Belfast Area Project		£10,000.00
St Colmcille's Parish Youth Group		£1,400.00
West Belfast Area Project		£5,000.00
Willowbank Youth Club		£5,000.00
Willowfield Youth		£3,520.00
Boys Brigade	Girls Brigade, Catholic Girl Guides, Scout Association, Scouting Ireland and Ulster Guides	£50,000.00
Youthlink	YMCA	£20,000.00
Youth Action	Public Achievement	£5,000.00
Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster	Including partnership work with GAA and Spirit of Enniskillen	£32,800.00
Shimna Integrated College		£2,959.00
Forthill Integrated College		£2,172.00
St Joseph's PS (Tyrella, Downpatrick)	Newcastle PS	£3,000.00
St Patrick's Academy	Lisnagarvey HS	£3,000.00
Killyleagh PS	St Mary's PS (Killyleagh)	£3,000.00
St Macartan's PS	Cumran PS	£3,000.00
St Mary's HS	Knockbreda HS	£2,657.00
Pond Park PS	Beechlawn School	£2,078.00
Glencraig IPS	Hazelwood IPS	£1,830.00
St Anne's PS	Ballyvester PS	£3,000.00
Holy Family PS	Academy PS	£3,000.00
Academy PS	St Mary's PS (Saintfield)	£360.00
Clifton SS	Parkview SS	£2,000.00

Group/School	Partner Group/School	Amount of Funding
St Columba's College	Glastry College	£600.00
Ballynahinch PS	St Patrick's PS (Ballynahinch)	£2,700.00
Kircubbin IPS		£675.00
Moirá PS	Rowandale IPS	£620.00
Down HS	St Patrick's GS	£2,700.00
Ballymacrickett PS	Ballinderry PS	£2,954.00
McKinney PS	Ballymacward PS	£405.00
Our Lady & St Patrick's/Grosvenor GS	Lagan College	£2,503.00
Ballynahinch	Newcastle	£3,530.00
St John's PS Bligh's Lane		£4,760.00
Drumrane PS		£1,430.00
St Patrick's PS, Pennyburn		£1,200.00
St Mary's College Derry	Foyle View School	£1,300.00
St Teresa's PS, Loughmacrory		£1,025.00
Brookeborough PS	Willowbridge School	£820.00
St Mary's PS Altinure	Cumber Claudy PS	£1,120.00
Knochavoe School	Arvalee School	£1,950.00
Denamona PS		£3,000.00
Destined Youth Group		£1,940
Lakeland YC		£2,535.92
NW Inclusion Unit Derry / Long Tower YC		£2,516.11
Springhill Community Association		£3,662.66
Omagh Boys & Girls Club		£1,901.58
Shantallow YC / NW Inclusion Unit		£401.40
SW Inclusion Project / Fountain Centre Kesh		£2,516.11

CRED Funding 2013/14

Group/School	Partner Group/School	Amount of Funding
Hart Memorial PS	Presentation PS	£3,000.00
New-Bridge integrated College		£1,675.00
St. Mary's PS, Cabra	Sperrinview Special School	£2,540.00
St. Brendan's PS, Craigavon (Nursery Unit)		£2,392.52
St. Anthony's PS, Craigavon,	Moyallon PS and Ceara Special School	£1,800.00
St Malachy's PS, Camlough	Markethill PS	£1,820.00
Edendork PS	Howard PS	£3,600.00
St Mary's PS, Stewartstown	Ballytrea PS	£2,909.00
Banbridge HS	Holy Trinity College, Cookstown	£7,352.50
St John's PS, Moy	Moy Regional PS	£2,006.00
Windsor Hill PS	St Patrick's PS Newry	£2,190.00
St Patrick's HS, Keady	Markethill HS	£2,128.00
St Teresa's PS, Tullyherron	Mountnorris PS	£1,740.75
St Michael's Grammar, Lurgan	Ceara School, Lurgan	£901.00
St Michael's Grammar School, Lurgan		£383.00

Group/School	Partner Group/School	Amount of Funding
St Paul's HS, Bessbrook,	St Joseph's HS Crossmaglen and Newtownhamilton HS	£2,000.00
Newmills PS	St Mary's PS Lisbuoy	£400.00
Dromore Road PS	St bronagh's PS, Rostrevor	£2,500.00
Banbridge HS	Newbridge Integrated College	£2,995.00
Hart Memorial PS (Nursery Unit)	Ballyoran PS (Nursery Unit)	£1,957.00
Goal Line Youth Club		£1,767.00
Tullygally/Drumgor, CR Project		£2,521.94
Seagoe Youth Group, Sporting Challenge		£2,685.76
Armagh Lithuanian Project		£2,634.88
Dungannon Area CRED Project		£2,934.88
Fivemiletown Outreach		£1,302.99
All Stars Programme, Brownlow		£2,733.54
Keady Area Youth Project		£2,885.48
Lurgan YMCA		£2,525.00
Armagh Area Outreach Programme		£2,325.88
Craigavon & Banbridge Young Carers		£2,145.88
DCLP	n/a	£3,000.00
Political & Cultural Awareness Project	n/a	£3,000.00
Summer Camp Project	n/a	£3,000.00
Cornstore YC, Draperstown	n/a	£1,406.00
4th Ballymoney BB	n/a	£800.00
Grange Youth & Community group	n/a	£3,000.00
Mossley Area Project		£1,740.00
St Patrick's NU Rasharkin	Rasharkin Community Play Group	£1,360.00
Crumlin Int PS	None	£780.00
Glengormley Int PS	Glenann PS	£2,800.00
Millstrand Integrated PS	Damhead PS	£2,066.00
St Patrick's PS Loughguile	Broughshane PS	£3,000.00
St James' PS Newtownabbey	King's Park PS	£2,938.00
St John's PS Coleraine	Killowen PS	£3,000.00
St Patrick's & St Brigid's PS	DH Christie Memorial PS	£1,337.00
Carniny PS	St Colmcille's PS	£704.00
St John's PS , Swatragh	Eden PS	£1,404.00
St Brigid's PS Mayogall	Maghera PS	£3,000.00
St Columba's PS Kilrea	Kilrea PS	£3,476.00
St Ciaran's PS Cushendun	Carrowreagh PS	£2,502.00
St Patrick's PS Rasharkin	Rasharkin PS	£2,664.00
St Paul's PS Ahoghill	St Colmcille's PS	£1,600.00
Cullybackey College	St Mary's College	£1,050.50
Downshire School	Downshire Youth Club	£1,226.20
Dunclug College	St Patrick's College, Ballymena	£1,644.00
Magherafelt HS	None	£569.80

Group/School	Partner Group/School	Amount of Funding
Belfast Boys' Model School		£3,000.00
Black Mountain Primary School (Nursery Unit)		£1,750.00
Clarawood School		£842.00
Cranmore Integrated Primary School		£2,850.00
Dominican College		£950.00
Donegall Road Primary School		£957.00
Euston Street Primary School		£2,000.00
Fane Street Primary School		£3,000.00
Glenbank Nursery School		£980.00
Harding Memorial Primary School		£600.00
Holy Rosary Primary School		£1,914.00
Little Flower Girls' School		£3,033.00
Lowwood Primary School		£3,000.00
McArthur Nursery School		£2,997.00
Mitchell House School		£1,355.00
Orangefield Primary School		£2,000.00
Ravenscroft Nursery School		£3,000.00
Shaftesbury Nursery School		£2,310.00
St Dominic's High School		£3,000.00
St Joseph's Primary School		£1,000.00
St Louise's Comprehensive College		£1,034.00
St Patrick's College		£2,294.00
St Paul's Primary School		£4,003.00
St Rose's Dominican College		£1,180.00
Taughmonagh Primary School		£3,000.00
The Link Centre		£2,970.00
Tudor Lodge Nursery School		£2,054.00
An Munia Tober (Bryson House)		£2,000.00
Annadale Haywood Residents' Association		£4,836.00
Curriculum Support Unit		£8,500.00
Corpus Christi Youth Centre		£2,202.00
East Belfast Area Project		£6,000.00
East Belfast Youth Forum		£1,000.00
Fortwilliam Youth Centre		£3,000.00
Gay and Lesbian Youth Northern Ireland		£2,000.00
Holy Trinity Youth Centre		£3,000.00
Inclusion and Diversity Team		£3,000.00
Ledley Hall Boys' and Girls' Club		£1,381.00
North Belfast Area Project		£3,000.00
South Belfast Area Project		£3,000.00
St Michael's Youth Club		£3,000.00
St Peter's Immaculata Youth Centre		£2,610.00

Group/School	Partner Group/School	Amount of Funding
Streetbeat Youth Project		£3,000.00
Wandsworth Community Association		£2,999.00
West Belfast Area Project		£2,967.00
Boys Brigade	Girls Brigade, Catholic Girl Guides, Scout Association, Scouting for Ireland, Ulster Guides	£47,500.00
Youthlink	YMCA	£32,314.25
Youth Action	Public Achievement	£36,812.50
Include Youth		£3,313.50
St Joseph's Primary School, Lisburn	Harmony Hill Primary School	£2,720.00
Beechlawn Special School	Pond Park School	£2,193.60
St Columba's College	Glastry College	£1,200.00
Derryboy Primary School	St Caolan's Primary School	£794.80
St Malachy's HS	The High School Ballynahinch & Blackwater Integrated College	£2,050.00
CSK Area Project		£3,000.00
East Down Rural Project	Lecale & Ards Rural	£3,000.00
Newcastle Youth Provision (NCD)	Langley Youth Project	£3,000.00
Brooklands Youth Centre	North Down, Down & Ards Inclusion Project	£3,000.00
Brooklands Youth Centre	Wandsworth Community Centre	£3,000.00
Lisburn BME	Lisburn Rural	£3,000.00
Ballynahinch Youth Office		£1,950.00
Laurelhill Youth Centre		£3,000.00
Lagan College	Our Lady & St Patrick's College & Grosvenor Grammar School	£1,377.50
St Patrick's Academy, Lisburn	Lisnagarvey High School	£3,000.00
St Joseph's Primary School	Newcastle Primary School	£3,000.00
Glencraig Integrated Primary School	Hazelwood Integrated Primary School	£3,000.00
St Mary's High School, Downpatrick	Down High School	£1,800.00
Nendrum College	St Colmcille's High School	£950.00
Cumran Primary School	St Macartan's Primary School	£3,000.00
Clifton Special School	St Comgall's Primary School	£686.00
Regent House	Assumption Grammar School	£1,430.00
St Malachy's High School	Laurelhill Community College	£2,372.00
Kircubbin Integrated Primary School		£820.00
Ballinderry Primary School		£540.00
Ballyvester Primary School	St Anne's Primary School	£3,000.00
St Colmcilles High School		£1,470.00
Moirra Primary School	Rowandale Integrated Primary School	£752.00
Holy Family Primary School	Academy Primary School	£3,000.00
Downpatrick Scouting Ireland Venture Group	South East Down Explorer Scouts	£3,000.00
29th Belfast Venture Scout Group	37th Belfast Explorer Scout Unit	£3,000.00
Aghadrumsee PS	St Tierney's	£1,460.00
Ardstraw Jubilee PS	Gortnagarn PS	£877.50

Group/School	Partner Group/School	Amount of Funding
Drumachose PS	Termoncanice PS	£3,240.00
Foyle View School	Hollybush PS	£720.00
Gillygooley PS	n/a	£895.00
Good Shepherd PS	Foyleview	£3,640.00
Gortin PS	St Peter's PS	£950.00
Holy Family PS	Omagh County PS	£613.40
Jones Memorial PS	n/a	£600.00
Langfield PS	n/a	£350.00
St Mary's PS, Altinure (P6)	Cumber Claudy PS	£750.00
St Mary's PS, Altinure (P7)	Cumber Claudy PS	£720.00
St Teresa's PS, Loughmacrory	n/a	£2,000.00
SW Inclusion Unit / Dromore Kils Kerry		£3,085.28
Omagh / Strabane Good Relations Programme		£1,634
WELB Inclusion Unit Omagh Disability Awareness		£610
WELB Inclusion Unit Omagh / Strabane Autism Buddy Project		£1,793.26

Mr Frew asked Minister of Education to list the schools in each constituency that were allocated funding for new builds in each of the last three years; and the funding allocated in each case.

(AQW 35138/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In the last three years, I have made three statements to the Assembly announcing 56 new build major capital projects across the Schools' estate.

I have attached tables showing the constituency and associated costs for each of the projects announced in June 2012 and January 2013. I have provided details of the constituency only for those projects I announced in recent weeks. Work has yet to begin on these projects therefore the total costs estimate given is purely indicative at this time.

June 2012 Capital Announcement

Constituency	School	Estimated Cost*	Approved Cost*
Upper Bann	Tannaghmore Primary School, Lurgan		£6m
Upper Bann	St. Teresa's Primary School, Lurgan		£3.9m
Upper Bann	St. Mary's Primary School, Banbridge		£6.8m
Belfast North	Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagain, Belfast		£3.7m
Belfast East	Victoria Park Primary School, Belfast		£4.3m
Belfast West	St. Gerard's Resource Centre, Belfast		£4.3m
Belfast West	Coaliste Feirste		£11.9m
Newry & Armagh	St. Joseph's Convent Primary School, Newry		£9.025m
Newry & Armagh	St. Clare's Convent & St. Coleman's Abbey Primary School, Newry		£6.3m
Foyle	Eglinton Primary School, Derry		£2.6m
Foyle	Foyle College/Ebrington Primary School, Derry		£31.9m
Foyle	Belmont House Special School, Limavady	£7.4m	
East Londonderry	Rossmar Special School, Limavady		£8.3m
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	Enniskillen Model Primary School	£5.7m	
Lagan Valley	Dromore Central Primary School, Co. Down		£11.4m

Constituency	School	Estimated Cost*	Approved Cost*
North Antrim	Castletower Special School, Ballymena		£20.2m
West Tyrone	Arvalee Special School, Omagh		£18.9m

* Estimated costs relate to those projects which have not yet had an Economic Appraisal (EA) approved.

* Projects with an approved cost have Economic Appraisals (EA's) approved.

Constituency	School	Estimated Cost*	Approved Cost*
West Tyrone	Strabane Academy		£21.5m
West Tyrone	Gaelscoil Ui Dhochartaigh, Strabane	£2m	
West Tyrone	Omagh Integrated Primary School	£4m	
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	St Patrick's Academy Dungannon	£27m	
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	Devenish College/ Lisnakea, Enniskillen	£22.5m	
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	Portora Royal/ Collegiate, Enniskillen	£17m	
Newry & Armagh	St Joseph & St James Primary School, Poyntzpass & SMA	£2m	
Mid Ulster	Holy Trinity College, Cookstown	£25m	
Mid Ulster	Gaelscoil Ui Neill, Coalisland	£2m	
Mid Ulster	Edendork Primary School, Dungannon & SMA	£4m	
South Down	St Bronagh's Primary School, Rostrevor & SMA	£3m	
South Down	Down High School	£17m	
Foyle	Craigbrack PS/ Mullabuoy PS/ Listress Primary School	£2m	
Upper Bann	St Marys St Pauls & St Michaels – Lurgan	£26.5m	
Upper Bann	Portadown Integrated Primary School	£2m	
North Antrim	St Mary's PS/Glenravel Primary School	£2m	
North Antrim	Braidside Integrated Primary School	£3.5m	
South Antrim	Parkhall Integrated College, Antrim		£19.9m
East Antrim	Corran Integrated Primary School	£2m	
Belfast East	Elmgrove Primary School/ Avoniel Primary School	£11m	
Belfast North	Edenderry Nursery School	£0.5m	
Belfast North	Glenwood Primary School	£10.5m	

January 2013 Capital Announcement

* Estimated costs relate to those projects which have not yet had an Economic Appraisal (EA) approved.

* Projects with an approved cost have Economic Appraisals (EA's) approved.

June 2014 Capital Announcement

Constituency	School
Strangford	Drumlins Integrated Primary School, Ballynahinch
West Tyrone	Gaelscoil na gCrann, Omagh
South Down	Iveagh Primary School, Rathfriland
East Londonderry	Roe Valley Integrated Primary School, Limavady
Belfast South	Scoil an Droichid, Belfast

Constituency	School
Belfast South	Methodist College, Belfast
Belfast South	Newtownbreda/ Knockbreda High School
Belfast West	St Mark's/ St Luke's Primary Schools, Twinbrook
Belfast North	St Patrick's Primary School, Belfast
East Antrim	Woodburn Primary School, Carrickfergus
East Antrim	Monkstown High School/ Newtownabbey Community High
North Antrim	Cullybackey High School
North Antrim	Dunclug High School, Ballymena
Upper Bann	Lismore Comprehensive, Lurgan
Newry & Armagh	St Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen
East Antrim	St Killian's College, Carnlough

The above projects are at an earlier stage of the planning/design process as they have only been announced. As such a detailed description of the works to be undertaken, associated costs and timescales for completion have not yet been agreed. Cost are currently estimated to be in the region of £170-£180million.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 34841/11-15, what his Department is doing to ensure consistency, in terms of retentions for small works, across the Education and Library Boards.
(AQW 35162/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I refer to my previous answer for AQW 34841/11-15 which outlined the consistent approach taken by the Education and Library Boards (ELB's).

Public procurement guidance includes a Fair Payment Charter which is designed to encourage fair and transparent payment practices; this includes payments in respect of retention. ELB's confirm they consistently apply public procurement guidance and monitor payments made to contractors.

My Department seeks quarterly updates from each ELB in respect of their inclusion, use and monitoring of Fair Payment clauses in works contracts to ensure there is compliance with the Fair Payment Charter.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 6680/11-15, and in light of the schools capital works programme announcement for St Killian's College, Garron Tower on 24th June 2014, how his Department's disposal procedure will now be implemented regarding the sale and reinvestment of the proceeds of the former St Comgall's College site to contribute to the cost of the new build.
(AQW 35174/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The former St Comgall's College site in Larne is owned by the Trustees and, as such, disposal of the site is the Trustees' responsibility. However, as the school received Government grants over its lifetime, the Department is entitled to recover public funds, as provided for by legislation.

St Killian's College is the result of the amalgamation of St Comgall's College with St Aloysius High School and St MacNissi's College. As I announced on 24 June 2014 that a new build for St Killian's College is to be advanced in planning, there is an expectation that the value of the vacant premises will be clawed back by the Department. The Trustees will retain an equity share in the new building.

Should the St Comgall's site be disposed of before expenditure is incurred for the provision of the new build, then this will be taken into account in agreeing the grant recovery sum.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what his Department is doing in conjunction with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to ensure that successful nurture projects, such as the one at St Joseph's Primary School in Antrim, continue to be funded.
(AQW 35177/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The "Nurture Unit" Signature Project is one of six Signature Projects announced by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMdfM) in October 2012 and is being taken forward jointly by the Department of Education (DE) and the Department and Social Development. It is part of the Delivering Social Change Programme and involved the establishment of 20 new nurture units. In addition DE is also funding existing nurture units in 10 schools where funding had ceased or would be due to cease during the life of the Signature Project.

DE does not have a formal policy position on nurture provision but I have recently commissioned independent research and evaluation on the effectiveness and impacts of nurture provision, from all 30 units, to provide an evidence base for a policy

decision on whether this intervention should continue to be supported in schools, and if so, how best to target this effectively, to ensure maximum impact for those children most in need of this form of support.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Education to detail the total capital investment in (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools in County Fermanagh in each of the last ten years, broken down by sector.

(AQW 35219/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Information is only readily available in the requested format for the last eight years.

The attached table provides details of capital spend in (i) primary and (ii) post primary schools in County Fermanagh broken down by sector.

School	2006/07 £'s	2007/08 £'s	2008/09 £'s	2009/10 £'s	2010/11 £'s	2011/12 £'s	2012/13 £'s	2013/14 £'s
Controlled Primary								
Aghadrumsee PS	11,168.00	0.00	4,355.00	5,760.00	84.00	23,868.00	23,151.00	2,165.00
Ballinamallard PS	200,047.00	11,943.00	22,348.00	33,916.00	23,549.00	9,109.00	30,704.00	347,493.00
Belleek(2) PS	334.00	0.00	4,027.00	95,197.00	7,880.00	4,703.00	29,792.00	0.00
Brookeborough PS	8,770.00	19,441.00	8,605.00	13,653.00	2,879.00	29,381.00	17,962.00	0.00
Derrygonnelly PS	0.00	0.00	4,057.00	1,119.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Enniskillen Model PS	17,173.00	28,449.00	4,912.00	8,269.00	13,520.00	83,880.00	52,462.00	0.00
Florencecourt PS	10,979.00	22,982.00	45,409.00	29,529.00	20,339.00	28,387.00	5,519.00	45,079.00
Irvinestown PS	20,617.00	375.00	69,156.00	3,631.00	14,776.00	3,686.00	2,640.00	63,928.00
Jones Memorial PS	131,089.00	42,910.00	19,277.00	35,850.00	18,977.00	28,089.00	13,968.00	50,163.00
Kesh PS	0.00	863.00	22,529.00	1,276.00	0.00	4,960.00	0.00	0.00
Lack PS	19,052.00	50.00	23,987.00	26,452.00	79,506.00	21,303.00	0.00	0.00
Lisbellaw PS	29,204.00	33.00	715.00	75,985.00	0.00	15,405.00	19,395.00	0.00
Maguiresbridge PS	3,691.00	375.00	46,255.00	8,688.00	16,281.00	9,019.00	29,518.00	1,276.00
Moat PS	109,984.00	29,427.00	22,895.00	15,547.00	25,333.00	17,894.00	15,730.00	0.00
Newtownbutler(2) PS	0.00	3,357.00	29,419.00	4,817.00	822.00	41,055.00	7,649.00	41,760.00
Tempo PS	0.00	0.00	21,788.00	10,057.00	9,425.00	15,104.00	346,675.00	36,209.00
Total	562,108.00	160,205.00	349,734.00	369,746.00	233,371.00	335,843.00	595,165.00	588,073.00
Controlled Post Primary								
Devenish College	566,009.00	6,055.00	160,924.71	155,829.00	35,949.00	182,588.00	156,482.00	94,200.00
Lisnaskea High School	40,918.00	3,600.00	13,378.00	55,028.00	15,573.00	22,892.00	808.00	0.00
Total	606,927.00	9,655.00	174,302.71	210,857.00	51,522.00	205,480.00	157,290.00	94,200.00
Controlled Grammar								
Collegiate Grammar School	42,990.00	21,359.00	60,334.00	28,068.00	4,407.00	25,062.00	8,186.00	57,036.00
Controlled Grammar Total	42,990.00	21,359.00	60,334.00	28,068.00	4,407.00	25,062.00	8,186.00	57,036.00
Overall Controlled Total	1,212,025.00	191,219.00	584,370.71	608,671.00	289,300.00	566,385.00	760,641.00	739,309.00
Maintained Primary								
Bunscoil an Traonaigh	0.00	0.00	3,877.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

School	2006/07 £'s	2007/08 £'s	2008/09 £'s	2009/10 £'s	2010/11 £'s	2011/12 £'s	2012/13 £'s	2013/14 £'s
Bunscoil an Traonaigh, Meals	0.00	14,476.00	9,815.00	1,995.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Holy Trinity PS	4,332.87	14,054.24	10,734.08	124,811.00	14,863.95	0.00	0.00	0.00
Holy Trinity PS Meals	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,441.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Killyhommon PS	71,212.00	12,053.00	41,912.52	95,154.84	853.43	2,500.00	0.00	0.00
Killyhommon PS, Meals	16,258.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Columban's PS	23,637.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Davog's PS	184.78	2,379.94	0.00	0.00	7,352.00	40,660.00	2,590.76	0.00
St John the Baptist PS	1,632.00	1,583.00	24,899.71	2,440.22	67,273.86	244.00	20,337.00	0.00
St Joseph's PS, Donagh	24,197.05	442.77	18,432.57	0.00	0.00	7,200.00	279,271.00	80,042.00
St Joseph's PS, Ederney	0.00	40,682.00	49,052.00	28,771.80	211.28	2,203.00	370.00	44,787.73
St Macartan's PS	24,875.00	0.00	10,178.00	34,518.00	1,880.00	1,524,134.00	315,632.00	2,595.00
St Martin's PS	3,035.28	15,590.00	2,193.00	3,622.50	5,759.93	33,023.00	1,738.00	0.00
St Mary's PS, Brookeborough	3,527.17	24,538.00	36,534.00	12,394.15	2,271.00	0.00	3,467.00	0.00
St Mary's PS, Killesher	14,860.00	1,583.64	7,004.12	73,467.00	23,674.00	0.00	2,104.00	0.00
St Mary's PS, Maguiresbridge	245,298.55	81,107.00	20,439.12	0.00	2,310.33	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Mary's PS, Mullymesker	55,708.24	0.00	85,500.00	3,233.96	32,627.00	0.00	768.60	0.00
St Mary's PS, N'butler	0.00	16,487.00	67,832.00	0.00	146,996.02	56,165.84	7,647.07	0.00
St Mary's PS, Teemore	24,435.00	6,797.95	33,999.00	0.00	6,457.80	1,897.34	0.00	3,852.60
St Mary's PS, Teemore, Meals	0.00	2,488.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Mary's PS, Tempo	1,758.25	0.00	8,812.50	0.00	12,816.78	2,487.00	35,908.00	0.00
St Naile's PS	0.00	0.00	52,203.28	38,598.66	68,222.11	233,172.65	18,932.34	4,473.38
St Ninnidh's PS	32,525.00	18,280.00	39,466.00	80,331.00	0.00	0.00	38,185.79	0.00
St Patrick's PS, D'gonnelly	1,395.88	20,723.49	0.00	10,284.00	0.00	1,272.79	0.00	14,351.66
St Patrick's PS, Mullanaska	65,817.79	863.39	0.00	22,167.52	68,442.00	0.00	17,461.00	0.00
St Paul's PS	0.00	8,066.75	0.00	41,302.00	24,971.52	1,027.78	0.00	0.00
St Paul's PS, Meals	0.00	185.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Ronan's PS	87,939.47	159,951.00	17,470.85	0.00	14,578.00	237.00	82,752.14	704.00
St Tierney's PS	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,676.00	507.55	2,400.00	7,432.08	0.00
Tattygar PS	80,695.00	22,684.00	10,324.83	16,279.68	5,823.89	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	783,325.12	465,016.17	550,680.08	597,488.33	507,892.45	1,908,624.40	834,596.78	150,806.37

School	2006/07 £'s	2007/08 £'s	2008/09 £'s	2009/10 £'s	2010/11 £'s	2011/12 £'s	2012/13 £'s	2013/14 £'s
Maintained Post Primary								
St Aidan's High School	4,384.93	9,078.00	0.00	68,814.49	90,087.00	352,988.91	47,379.00	41,175.23
St Comhghall's College	85,069.60	55,930.76	165,646.39	48,710.90	400,482.01	70,147.99	33,809.00	13,435.14
St Comhghall's College, Meals	0.00	1,995.00	9,465.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Eugene's College	8,102.37	24,074.00	83,078.69	1,069.77	8,404.27	1,728.00	0.00	0.00
St Fanchea's College	368,468.00	289,018.00	47,165.00	81,596.00	19,115.00	155,013.00	0.00	13,597.00
St Joseph's College	616.00	70,719.00	22,105.21	114,177.91	12,628.00	168,307.08	38,629.00	84,922.33
St Mary's College	25,436.00	21,503.65	0.00	0.00	65,426.66	52,043.00	0.00	0.00
St Mary's College, Meals	186.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	255.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
St Mary's High School	14,314.00	0.00	0.00	7,864.87	22,325.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	506,576.90	472,318.41	327,460.29	322,233.94	618,722.94	800,227.98	119,817.00	153,129.70
Overall Maintained Total	1,289,902.02	937,334.58	878,140.37	919,722.27	1,126,615.39	2,708,852.38	954,413.78	303,936.07
Voluntary Grammar Schools								
Mount Lourdes G S	1,510,859.44	3,464,321.78	2,441,981.38	238,581.24	267,776.23	107,618.33	16,624.00	39,481.50
Portora Royal School	9,554.10	112,945.20	14,529.24	44,525.75	17,523.91	130,810.17	7,646.00	23,773.60
St Michael's College	56,393.59	168,313.47	355,186.66	324,459.91	26,781.16	319,587.00	32,307.00	0.00
Overall Voluntary Grammar Total	1,576,807.13	3,745,580.45	2,811,697.28	607,566.90	312,081.30	558,015.50	56,577.00	63,255.10
Grant Maintained Integrated Primary								
Enniskillen Integrated PS	793,829.00	1,689,987.36	101,165.35	156,977.92	1,140.00	1,200.00	4,369.10	60,425.00
Total	793,829.00	1,689,987.36	101,165.35	156,977.92	1,140.00	1,200.00	4,369.10	60,425.00
Grant Maintained Integrated Post Primary								
Erne Integrated College	336,003.57	99,635.05	6,837.00	544,938.96	67,229.96	4,200.00	8,181.00	75,893.86
Total	336,003.57	99,635.05	6,837.00	544,938.96	67,229.96	4,200.00	8,181.00	75,893.86
Overall Grant Maintained Integrated Total	1,129,832.57	1,789,622.41	108,002.35	701,916.88	68,369.96	5,400.00	12,550.10	136,318.86
Overall Yearly Totals	5,208,566.72	6,663,756.44	4,382,210.71	2,837,877.05	1,796,366.65	3,838,652.88	1,784,181.88	1,242,819.03
Overall Total For All Years = 27,754,431.36								

* The Western Education and Library Board (WELB) has provided expenditure information in relation to the controlled sector and school meals accommodation in the maintained sector.

** Information relating to capital expenditure in the voluntary sector has been obtained from Departmental records.

Department for Employment and Learning

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the departmental projects or funding schemes available to organisations to help tackle low educational achievement in local communities.

(AQW 34995/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): My Department is committed to tackling low educational achievement in a range of ways.

DEL has developed and implemented the Learner Access and Engagement Programme to widen access to learning opportunities for all individuals across Northern Ireland. This programme, which commenced in September 2013, allows further education colleges to contract with third party organisations for the provision of learner support. The learner support is directed at 'hard to reach' learners aged 16 and over who are economically inactive, disengaged from the labour market, and hold few or no qualifications; the aim is to encourage them to enrol on and complete FE courses.

Access to Success is my Department's regional strategy to widen participation in higher education among those groups which are currently under-represented, in particular students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with disabilities and learning difficulties. It has a strong focus on the creation of a more accessible sector in which the people who are most able, but least likely to participate, are given every encouragement and support to apply to and benefit from higher education. The strategy sets out a programme, which includes work on the introduction of the 'Reach' programme; under this programme my Department will make funding available to the Higher Education Institutions on a competitive basis to support the expansion of the range of educational attainment-raising programmes in schools, colleges, the community and the workplace.

My Department provides a guaranteed training place on the 'Training for Success' programme to those who are unemployed and in the 16 & 17 year old age group. There are extended eligibility criteria for those aged under 22 with a disability, and under 24 for those young people who qualify under the Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) (2002). The Programme is designed to enable young people to progress to higher level training, further education, or employment. It provides training to address personal and social development needs, occupational and employability skills, and, where necessary, Essential Skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology.

The Employment Service Division within my Department provides a range of programmes that offer help to improve our customers' employability through work experience. This help is aimed at providing employment-related skills and qualifications and is provided through a network of 35 offices based in communities across Northern Ireland. In addition to offering help directly to customers, my offices also work with community-based groups and charitable organisations in an effort to make our services more accessible to customers.

The Collaboration and Innovation Fund is funded under the Executive's 'Pathways to Success' Strategy, designed to help young people aged 16 to 24 who are not in education, employment or training. The Fund is testing new approaches to address the general and specific employability barriers faced by the most vulnerable groups of young unemployed people, such as those who have drug or alcohol problems, a mental illness or physical disability, low educational achievement, or who have left care. Over £8.9 million has been allocated to 23 organisations from the community, voluntary and educational sectors to deliver project activity from December 2012 to March 2015.

Priority 1 of the Northern Ireland European Social Fund Programme 2007-13 is entitled 'Helping People into Sustainable Employment'; it aims to reduce unemployment and economic inactivity among unemployed people.

The main aim of Priority 1 is to improve the employability of those groups experiencing significant employment gaps; these include people with disabilities and health conditions, lone parents and other disadvantaged parents, older workers, young people not in education, employment or training, women, people with no or low qualifications, and other disadvantaged groups such as homeless people and others. There are 95 projects currently supported under this Priority.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the current number of people employed on a zero hour contract.

(AQW 35134/11-15)

Dr Farry: Information on the number of zero hours contracts in Northern Ireland is imprecise. The Office of National Statistics UK-wide Labour Force Survey for the period October-December 2013 found that 583,000 people categorised themselves as being on a zero hours contract: an increase on the 250,000 reported for the same period in 2012.

More recently in April 2014, the Office of National Statistics published the results of its survey of 5000 employers - which indicated that employers in Great Britain are using around 1.4 million employee contracts that do not guarantee a minimum number of hours. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development also completed earlier research which suggested that there could be around 1.2 million.

Given the public interest in this issue I launched a consultation on 23 June 2014 that seeks to determine the extent of the use of zero hours contracts and to provide a clearer picture of their benefit or impact within our economy. The consultation period will run from 23 June 2014 until 29 September 2014.

In parallel to the public consultation I have also commissioned quantitative and qualitative research to provide a better understanding of the numbers of zero hours contracts and where they are most prevalent.

The consultation and research will allow me to determine whether there is a need to bring forward legislative proposals or provide clearer information, advice and guidance for employers and employees availing of these contracts.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline how the Youth Employment Programme operates. (AQW 35151/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Youth Employment Scheme was introduced in July 2012 to address high levels of unemployment among young people in Northern Ireland.

It is a voluntary scheme designed to help young people aged 18 to 24 to develop the skills needed to get a job. It is built upon a partnership between the young person, the employer, the Department and Lead Contractors.

The Youth Employment Scheme has three elements.

- Work Experience - lasting 3-8 weeks which allows a young person to develop employability skills and improve levels of confidence and motivation in a work placement setting. Participants on this element are paid a Benefit Based Training Allowance and receive the equivalent of their benefit plus £15.38 per week.
- Skills Development - a period of up to 26 weeks which enables job ready 18-24 year olds to undertake work experience and relevant qualifications with the aim of improving their ability to compete in the labour market with more experienced jobseekers. Participants on this element are paid a Benefit Based Training Allowance and receive the equivalent of their benefit plus £45 per week. Those young people who complete their training and achieve a qualification will receive a bonus payment of £250.

Participants in both of these elements are entitled to reimbursement of travel costs in excess of £4 per week and, in some circumstances, to assistance with childcare costs.

- Enhanced Employer Subsidy - Employers offering full time, permanent jobs to young people may avail of a subsidy of up to £5,750 for the first 52 weeks of employment. Employers must provide training to allow the young people to develop their skills and gain relevant qualifications while in employment.

The scheme is delivered by the Department's Employment Service across its network of 35 Jobs and Benefits Offices and JobCentres. Employment Service staff engage directly with young people to identify their employability skills gaps and with employers to secure work experience placements and jobs which match the employability needs and aspirations of each individual young person. Before a young person takes up his or her placement, the employer is required to sign a formal agreement with the Department. The agreement sets out the conditions of the scheme and the responsibilities and obligations of the employer.

Participants are fully supported throughout their time on the scheme. Under the terms of the agreement signed with the Department, the employer is required to appoint a mentor for each young person on placement. This support is complemented by Employment Service staff who visit participants a number of times at their placement. The level and type of support needed will vary according to individual needs and the type of activity undertaken.

On 30th September 2013, following a Post Implementation Review, the Department entered into a partnership arrangement with Lead Contractors to support the delivery of the Youth Employment Scheme. The involvement of Lead Contractors is intended to broaden the support and advice available to the young people and to provide Employment Service staff with additional options for eligible and suitable participants. Lead Contractors are primarily responsible for the identification and delivery of training for employers offering Skills Development opportunities and for the administration of these placements on behalf of the Department, including the payment of travel and childcare allowances to participants.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether there are any restrictions in place on an applicant being (i) accepted; and (ii) funded on the Steps 2 Success Programme on the basis of their capital or savings. (AQW 35184/11-15)

Dr Farry: Eligibility for the Steps 2 Success programme is determined by the Social Security benefits which clients are receiving. The qualifying benefits are; Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support and Pension Credit. Clients in receipt of any of these benefits can participate on the programme to help them prepare for and find work.

If a client is not entitled to one of the qualifying benefits for any reason, including capital or savings which exceed the upper capital limit, they would not be eligible to participate on Steps 2 Success.

The responsibility for determining a claimant's entitlement to Social Security benefits lies solely with the Social Security Agency within the Department for Social Development.

Clients who are not in receipt of a qualifying benefit, but who are seeking help to find employment, can still avail of the help and support provided by my Department's Employment Service staff located in local Jobs and Benefits offices and Jobcentres across Northern Ireland .

Therefore, although there are no direct restrictions in place on an applicant either being accepted or funded on the Steps 2 Success programme on the basis of their capital or savings, a person may not be accepted on Steps 2 Success because of a decision taken on their eligibility to benefits.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 33946/11-15, what level of exports sale were (i) expected; and (ii) levered as a result of this investment into the sandwich sector, in each of the last three years. **(AQW 34874/11-15)**

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): Invest NI supports projects over a multi-year period and expects that the full economic benefit will also be realised after a number of years.

The total increase in exports for the projects listed in AQW 34875/11-15 is projected to be £6.3million by the end of the full implementation.

Validated export figures are provided by HMRC on a quarterly and annual basis. HMRC provides figures or set categories, such as Vegetables & Fruit and Dairy; thus the specific information requested for the sandwich sector is not available.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 33946/11-15, to detail (i) how; and (ii) when the investment was delivered to the companies. **(AQW 34875/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: The table below details all assistance from Invest NI to companies related to the sandwich sector within the past three years, the support offered and claimed by the clients:

Company Name	Invest NI Scheme/Programme	Total Investment	Amount Offered	Paid to Date
Deli-Lites (Ireland) Ltd	Growth Accelerator Programme	£117,120	£45,648	£45,648
Trevor Poole	Growth Accelerator Programme	£55,460	£22,184	£432
Around Noon Ltd	Growth Accelerator Programme	£22,000	£8,800	£8,800
Deli-Lites (Ireland) Ltd	SFA Jobs Fund	£352,000	£42,000	£42,000
Bite Snack Foods Ltd	Restructuring Support	£125,000	£125,000	£125,000
Woodwin (Catering) Ltd	Growth Accelerator Programme	£95,572	£38,228	£0
Around Noon Ltd	Business Growth – Jobs Fund	£198,000	£39,600	£0
Around Noon Ltd	SFA Jobs Fund	£1,674,000	£108,000	£0
	Total:	£2,639,152	£429,460	£221,880

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the funding that her Department, and its arm's-length bodies, invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014. **(AQW 34884/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: My Department has invested the following funding in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014:-

InvestNI (1 May 2011 to 31 March 2014)	£17,450,000
Northern Ireland Tourist Board	£215,160
Energy (Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme)	£30,141
Total	£17,695,301

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the funding her Department has provided to each Credit Union. **(AQW 34893/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: My Department has not provided any direct funding to individual credit unions. However £20,000 was provided to the Irish League of Credit Unions and £20,000 to the Ulster Federation of Credit Unions to help them meet the costs of providing a service to all credit unions that required guidance on the transitional arrangements for the transfer of regulation from my Department to the then Financial Services Authority.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide a breakdown of the payments made to (i) individuals; and (ii) organisations on behalf of individuals, for appearances or voice overs in advertisements for the Northern Ireland Tourist Board since 2011. **(AQW 34957/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board's remit is to promote Northern Ireland as a visitor destination to both the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland markets. NITB does this through the delivery of a series of marketing campaigns.

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board's marketing activity is delivered through a procured agency which develops all NITB's advertising creatives.

The total expenditure for appearances or voice overs in advertisements for the Northern Ireland Tourist Board since 2011 is £267,157. This covers 14 different marketing campaigns with multiple TV, radio, online, outdoor and press executions. This figure is paid directly to the agency in line with proper procurement procedures and at competitive market rates.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many jobs have been created through foreign investment in the last three years.

(AQW 34990/11-15)

Mrs Foster: In the past three years (2011-12 to 2013-14) 4,899 new jobs have been created through projects delivered by externally-owned Invest NI customers.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, of the 4,760 Foreign Direct Investment jobs promoted by InvestNI in 2013/14, to detail the number of these promoted in each of the 26 district council areas.

(AQW 35012/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The table below details the number of jobs promoted by externally-owned companies in each of the 26 district council areas (DCAs) during 2013-14.

Invest NI Externally-Owned Jobs Promoted by Council Area (2013-14)

DCA	New Jobs Promoted
Antrim	241
Ards	0
Armagh	13
Ballymena	0
Ballymoney	0
Banbridge	2
Belfast	3,282
Carrickfergus	100
Castlereagh	0
Coleraine	0
Cookstown	3
Craigavon	25
Derry	510
Down	10
Dungannon	0
Fermanagh	1
Larne	102
Limavady	0
Lisburn	5
Magherafelt	0
Moyle	0
Newry & Mourne	8
Newtownabbey	1
North Down	6
Omagh	19
Strabane	64

DCA	New Jobs Promoted
Not Yet Located	368
Total	4,760

Note: Not Yet Located refers to those businesses that have not yet selected a location in which to establish their business.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, of the local jobs promoted by InvestNI in 2013/14, which were not business startups, to detail the number of jobs promoted in each of the 26 district council areas.

(AQW 35013/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The table below details the number of local jobs promoted by InvestNI in 2013/14, which were not business startups, in each of the 26 district council areas (DCAs).

Invest NI Local Jobs Promoted (excl. Business Start Ups*) by Council Area (2013-14)

DCA	New Jobs Promoted
Antrim	99
Ards	61
Armagh	122
Ballymena	243
Ballymoney	94
Banbridge	22
Belfast	1,027
Carrickfergus	26
Castlereagh	73
Coleraine	104
Cookstown	128
Craigavon	286
Derry	348
Down	157
Dungannon	282
Fermanagh	83
Larne	4
Limavady	53
Lisburn	227
Magherafelt	168
Moyle	32
Newry & Mourne	205
Newtownabbey	127
North Down	114
Omagh	122
Strabane	68
Total	4,275

* Business Start Ups refers to the Regional Start Initiative, Invest NI's business start scheme delivered in conjunction with Enterprise NI.

Department of the Environment

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency Scientific Officer posts advertised in August 2012, why internal candidates are kept on the reserve list for two years, whereas external candidates are only kept on the list for one year.

(AQW 33594/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Merit lists for external recruitment competitions in the Northern Ireland Civil Service remain live for one year, unless there are cogent practical reasons for extending the period; this applies to both internal and external candidates. The current merit list for the Scientific Officer competition is due to expire on 17 September 2014.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has received notification from Tamboran Resources of their intention to drill a borehole.

(AQW 34189/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department has not received any confirmation from Tamboran indicating their intention to drill a borehole, however Tamboran has indicated that they intend to issue notification in the near future.

When notification is received, the Assembly will be notified.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of planning applications, in each of the last three years, that were not processed within the target time, broken down by planning division.

(AQW 34474/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Since 2012/13, target times for processing planning applications have been set with reference to the average (median) processing times involved for the three categories of planning application – major, intermediate and minor. This means that the target is for at least 50% of all such applications to be processed within the specified target time. It is not an absolute target for all applications but instead must be met by half of all applications processed by DOE Planning.

In 2011/12, the equivalent targets were for 60%, 70%, and 80% of major, intermediate and minor, respectively, to be processed with the specified target time, which was generally longer than subsequent years in order to allow for the larger percentage of cases which had to meet the target in that year.

Table 1 below shows the number of applications of each type processed each year, the processing target time in force for that year, the number required to be processed within that time for the target to be met, and the shortfall in numbers if the target was not met.

Table 1: Planning Processing Performance 2013/14

Type of application	2011/12					2012/13					2013/14				
	Total number processed to decision ¹	Target Processing time in weeks (% to be processed)	Target number to be processed within target time	Actual number processed within target time ²	Shortfall from target number	Total number processed to decision or withdrawal ¹	Target Processing time in weeks (% to be processed)	Target number to be processed within target time	Actual number processed within target time ²	Shortfall from target number	Total number processed to decision or withdrawal ¹	Target Processing time in weeks (% to be processed)	Target number to be processed within target time	Actual number processed within target time ²	Shortfall from target number
Belfast	898	23 (60%)	539	288	251	989	23 (50%)	495	404	91	989	20 (50%)	386	299	87
	1,032	31 (70%)	722	619	103	1,256	20 (50%)	628	503	125	1,213	18 (50%)	607	544	63
	1,453	18 (80%)	1,162	794	368	1,286	14 (50%)	643	607	36	1,222	12 (50%)	611	560	51
Northern	606	23 (60%)	364	264	100	672	23 (50%)	336	329	7	562	20 (50%)	281	239	42
	1,017	31 (70%)	712	750	0	986	20 (50%)	493	607	0	842	18 (50%)	421	520	0
	599	18 (80%)	479	457	22	528	14 (50%)	264	369	0	478	12 (50%)	239	294	0
Major	528	23 (60%)	317	256	61	506	23 (50%)	253	275	0	419	20 (50%)	210	212	0
Intermediate	827	31 (70%)	579	683	0	735	20 (50%)	368	490	0	655	18 (50%)	328	441	0
Minor	498	18 (80%)	398	361	37	468	14 (50%)	234	326	0	475	12 (50%)	238	327	0
Major	924	23 (60%)	554	256	298	916	23 (50%)	458	355	103	671	20 (50%)	336	259	77
Intermediate	2,020	31 (70%)	1,414	870	544	1,775	20 (50%)	888	756	132	1,398	18 (50%)	699	751	0
Minor	799	18 (80%)	639	315	324	678	14 (50%)	339	312	27	601	12 (50%)	301	333	0
Major	233	23 (60%)	140	53	87	263	23 (50%)	132	17	115	128	20 (50%)	64	6	58
Intermediate	36	31 (70%)	25	18	7	64	20 (50%)	32	13	19	46	18 (50%)	23	7	16
Minor	3	18 (80%)	2	1	1		14 (50%)					12 (50%)			
Major	781	23 (60%)	469	420	49	944	23 (50%)	472	546	0	723	20 (50%)	362	318	44
Intermediate	1,702	31 (70%)	1,191	1,340	0	1,212	20 (50%)	606	841	0	1,108	18 (50%)	554	750	0
Minor	553	18 (80%)	442	460	0	496	14 (50%)	248	380	0	458	12 (50%)	229	317	0

Type of application	2011/12					2012/13					2013/14				
	Total number processed to decision ¹	Target Processing time in weeks (% to be processed)	Target number to be processed within target time	Actual number processed within target time ²	Shortfall from target number	Total number processed to decision or withdrawal ¹	Target Processing time in weeks (% to be processed)	Target number to be processed within target time	Actual number processed within target time ²	Shortfall from target number	Total number processed to decision or withdrawal ¹	Target Processing time in weeks (% to be processed)	Target number to be processed within target time	Actual number processed within target time ²	Shortfall from target number
Major	3,970	23 (60%)	2,382	1,537	845	4,290	23 (50%)	2,145	1,926	219	3,274	20 (50%)	1,637	1,333	304
Intermediate	6,634	31 (70%)	4,644	4,280	364	6,028	20 (50%)	3,014	3,210	0	5,262	18 (50%)	2,631	3,013	0
Minor	3,905	18 (80%)	3,124	2,388	736	3,456	14 (50%)	1,728	1,994	0	3,234	12 (50%)	1,617	1,831	0
All applications															

Notes:

- For 2011/12, the targets only related to applications that had been processed to a decision and excluded withdrawn applications. For 2012/13 and 2013/14 withdrawn applications were included in the targets, and Large Scale Investment applications were excluded.
- A small number of applications were missing a value for processing time, and so had to be excluded from the calculation to determine if they had met the targets.
- Strategic Planning generally process only major planning applications.
Belfast Planning Area includes the Belfast, North Down, Castlereagh, Ards and Lisburn Local Government Districts
Northern includes Derry, Strabane, Limavady, Coleraine, Ballymoney and Moyle districts
South Antrim includes Ballymena, Larne, Antrim, Newtonabbey and Carrickfergus districts
Southern includes Craigavon, Armagh, Banbridge, Newry and Mourne, and Down districts
Western includes Omagh, Fermanagh, Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt district

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment whether there are any plans to change the number plate system in Northern Ireland in line with the rest of the UK.

(AQW 34503/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Vehicle Licensing is an excepted matter and is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport. It is administered in Northern Ireland by the Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) under a formal agreement between the Department of the Environment and the Department for Transport (DfT). The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is responsible for vehicle licensing policy matters across the United Kingdom and provide the necessary funding for the vehicle and registration services delivered by DVA in Northern Ireland.

You will be well aware that the DfT in London is introducing new arrangements for vehicle licensing and registration services in Northern Ireland. After 17 July 2014, the DVA in Northern Ireland will no longer tax and register vehicles or allocate vehicle registration marks. This will become the responsibility of the DVLA in Swansea from Monday 21 July 2014. From this date the format of vehicle registration plates in Northern Ireland will be a matter for the DVLA.

I understand that the DVLA does not have any plans to change the present number plate system in Northern Ireland.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration has been given to the fact that public hire taxis are, by their specific design, disability access compliant; and what action his Department is taking to highlight this fact to groups representing people with disabilities as to encourage the use of these fully accessible service vehicles.

(AQW 34573/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In November 2012 my Department engaged Integrated Transport Planning (ITP) to conduct research into the taxi industry in Northern Ireland. One of the research outputs was a recommendation for a new technical specification for a wheelchair accessible vehicle. The research, which was concluded in January 2014, included consideration of the Belfast Public Hire (BPH) fleet.

Details of the reports were provided to the Committee by letter on 7 February 2014 and the synopsis of responses to the relevant consultation and subsequent policy intentions has been relayed to the Committee for consideration. To mitigate the costs of the higher accessibility specification, the Department is proposing to grant BPH grandfather rights for five years. This will allow them to continue to operate as wheelchair accessible taxis during this time as long as they can continue to meet the current wheelchair accessible vehicle specification.

All of the groups representing people with disabilities that the Department has worked with are aware of the fact that BPH taxis are regarded as being wheelchair accessible.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment why his Department has written to its consultees and advised that the proposal to carry out exploratory drilling at Ballinlea, County Antrim (E/2013/0093/F) is not an application to undertake hydraulic fracturing when recently submitted environmental information requested by Strategic Planning Division confirms that the proposal will involve hydraulic fracturing; and what steps he intends to take to rectify the misleading information emanating from his Department.

(AQW 34870/11-15)

Mr Durkan: DOE Planning did advise consultees that the proposal was not an application to undertake hydraulic fracturing. This statement was provided in the covering letter which was submitted with the application and was understood to be in reference to 'unconventional high volume' hydraulic fracturing.

The development proposed under application E/2013/0093/F constitutes a conventional borehole and is not for the unconventional exploration of hydrocarbons, neither does it propose to use any unconventional testing techniques.

At the extended testing phase, should the operator have difficulty obtaining the natural flow of the gas/oil, a conventional hydraulic stimulation fracture may need to be conducted.

A conventional hydraulic stimulated fracture is distinctly different from unconventional hydraulic fracturing.

The Department does not believe that any misleading information has been issued by DOE Planning. Information on the extended testing phase and proposed works has been detailed in the Operational Statement provided by the company which has been uploaded onto the Planning Portal for consultees to review and comment on.

Further information has been requested from the applicant and during consultation with consultees, in the interests of providing unequivocal clarity, the Department will specify that the application is for a conventional exploratory borehole operation.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 32997/11-15, whether the means by which his Department has historically chosen to deal with unregulated sand extraction from the Lough Neagh Special Protection Area leaves the UK Member State open to infraction proceedings; and whether he has notified the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of any failures by his Department which could give rise to such proceedings.

(AQW 34900/11-15)

Mr Durkan: It would be a matter for the European Commission to determine if particular occurrences were in breach of the requirements of relevant EC Directives, to an extent that warranted the issue of infraction proceedings.

My Department has not notified the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of any matter relating to Lough Neagh that may give rise to the issue of infraction proceedings by the Commission.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment whether North Down Borough Council has submitted an application for the next tranche of Dereliction Intervention Funding; and if so, what properties are included in the application.

(AQW 34910/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I can confirm that at the end of May 2014 North Down Borough Council submitted an application for Dereliction Intervention Funding. The proposal is for 3 properties within the town of Holywood –

- 1 Stewart's Place;
- The Olde Priory Inn; and
- 122/124 High Street.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment to provide a copy of the letter sent to taxi drivers conforming that a single tier system will be in place from 2015; and whether this letter refers to the single tier system in its present form or with forthcoming amendments.

(AQW 34943/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I attach a copy of the letter which was sent to all Taxis Operators, providing a copy of my Statement to the Assembly.

Road Safety & Vehicle Regulation Division
G33 Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
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BT2 8GB

Telephone: 028 9054 0843

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Our Ref:

Date: 20 June 2014

Dear Taxi Operator

For your information, please find attached a copy of the written statement made by Mark H. Durkan, the Minister of the Environment, to the Northern Ireland Assembly on Thursday 19 June 2014. The statement relates to the implementation of the remaining elements of the Taxis Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, including:

- Taxi vehicle licensing - including the introduction of single tier licensing throughout Northern Ireland;
- Taxi driver licensing – including the reintroduction of a taxi driver test for new drivers and periodic training for all drivers;
- Taximeters, printers and maximum fares;
- Wheelchair Accessible Taxi specifications; and
- Power of Seizure – relating to illegal taxis.

Further, more specific, communications will follow in the coming months as the implementation process is rolled out.

Yours sincerely

Iain Greenway

Director of the Road Safety & Vehicle Regulation Division

Implementation of the Taxis Act (NI) 2008

Written Statement

by

The Minister for the Environment

Mark H Durkan MLA

Thursday 19 June 2014

Members of the Assembly will, I am sure, share my view that taxis are a vital and valuable part of our economy. Every year they greet many of the million plus visitors who come to Northern Ireland. They make tens of thousands of trips to bring people to and from work or safely home after a night out. They also help some of our most vulnerable people, young and old, travel in the way the majority of us take for granted.

The majority of our taxi legislation, however, dates back to the early 1980s – in fact, in Belfast it goes back to by-laws devised in the early 1950s. The problem is, quite simply, that it not up to the task of effectively regulating taxis in the 21st century.

For this reason the Taxis Act was debated and approved by this House and received Royal Assent in April 2008. It is a piece of enabling legislation, designed to create a new legislative framework for the operation and regulation of taxis here.

The aims of the Taxis Act are to raise the standard of taxi services, reduce illegal taxiing and improve compliance. Its objectives are to promote road safety, improve accessibility for older people and people with disabilities, and facilitate fairer competition for taxi services. In short, it is about creating a safe, fair and fit for purpose industry that allows those involved in it to make a living from it.

For the last six years my Department has been working to implement the Act by way of subordinate regulations. To date, the only part of the Act that has been commenced is the introduction of Taxi Operator Licensing, which came into force in 2012. This, for the first time, made operators accountable for the operation of their business and the actions of their drivers. High levels of compliance with these provisions have already been achieved, and improvements to the accountability of the industry delivered.

The purpose of this statement is to set out my intentions for the implementation of the remaining aspects of the Act. These include new arrangements for taxi vehicle licensing (including new plating and roof sign requirements), taxi driver licensing (including the introduction of a taxi driver test for new drivers and periodic training for all drivers) and other elements including provisions for a maximum fare and the use of taximeters and receipt printers, new powers of seizure, and a revised specification for Wheelchair Accessible taxis.

There has been much debate, going back some years, about the need for these changes. Since taking office, I have listened carefully to many representations and have considered many points made in favour and against implementing the remaining provisions of the Taxis Act. After careful consideration, I have decided that it is essential we implement these changes now, to give full effect to this legislation and to deliver improvements to the industry for the benefit of users and suppliers alike.

A key element of the taxi reform programme is the arrangements for taxi vehicle licensing and the classes of taxis that will be recognised across Northern Ireland.

The Act's provisions, one of which is introducing a single tier licensing regime, have been well-known and much debated for many years, and has been the subject of consultation on more than one occasion. Indeed, I have lost count of the number of Assembly questions that I have received on this one issue.

I believe that the current dual tier system in place in Belfast, with some taxis able to be hailed and others only available through prior bookings, cannot adequately address a number of problems that the Act was designed to tackle. The public (residents and visitors alike) are confused as to which taxis they can use in different circumstances. There are insufficient numbers of taxis which can pick up on the street in Belfast, particularly at peak periods, to meet demand and ensure public order. Furthermore, there is too much enforcement activity addressing relatively minor licensing offences, which reduces the resources available to address the illegal and dangerous taxis which are out there.

I have listened to, considered and reconsidered the concerns expressed that the change would adversely impact on Belfast Public Hire taxi drivers, and that enforcement difficulties around illegal picking up in Belfast have given cause for concern about the Department's ability to enforce a new licensing regime. I must advise members that I am not persuaded by these arguments.

The changes that are proposed will, I believe, enhance the reputation of the taxi industry as a whole, increasing the confidence of the public in Northern Ireland to use taxis because we will have a professional and fit for purpose service. The demand for the services of Belfast Public Hire, which represent around 5% of taxis in Northern Ireland and around 10% of taxis in Belfast, should be determined by the service they provide and the price at which it is provided. I am convinced that any sector of the industry that provides a good quality and price-competitive service will be able to thrive in the improved regulatory regime that the Taxis Act provides for.

Further, consumers will, and should, be able to exercise choice and their preferences in terms of how and when to secure the services of a taxi and which type of taxi they wish to use. It is the responsibility of my Department, as regulator, to set the minimum standards which all operators, vehicles and drivers must meet, so that taxi users can receive the service they expect; and then to ensure compliance with those standards.

Picture the scene when on a Saturday night a member of the public wants to hail a fully compliant, licensed taxi, licensed driver and licensed operator in any part of the North. I don't believe that there is justification for my Department to deny such a transaction.

I feel that my Department has given very great consideration to the concerns of the Belfast Public Hire drivers and has gone a long way to help them prepare for change. The measures that we have put in place include that all taxi drivers currently in possession of a taxi driver's licence will be unaffected by plans to introduce a new taxi driver test. Belfast Public Hire taxis will be granted grandfather rights in respect of any changes to the specification for Wheelchair Accessible Taxis. Furthermore only Wheelchair Accessible Taxis will be permitted to stand at ranks in Belfast, securing to some degree the status quo for the current Belfast Public Hire fleet in relation to ranks.

My officials have engaged extensively with Belfast Public Hire representatives to help them arrange meetings with other parts of government on a range of issues including, training, taxi ranks and access to bus lanes. We have also delayed the reform programme to provide all taxi operators – not least Belfast Public Hire – additional time to prepare for the reforms. So while I am aware of the concerns of the Belfast Public Hire taxi drivers, I must balance these with the requirements, clearly set out by consumer and disability groups, to improve regulation for a safe, fair and fit for purpose taxi industry. It is high time the remaining elements of the Act were implemented.

The alternative is to continue to operate a dual tier regime, limited to Belfast, and to prevent taxi users in Belfast from exercising the same choice available in all other parts of the North, in order to continue to protect the commercial interests of Belfast Public Hire taxi drivers.

I have a number of serious concerns in respect of such a system. A dual tier approach provides more confusion, not less, to Belfast consumers in terms of which taxis they can legally hail in the street or access at ranks. It provides less choice, not more, to Belfast consumers – they are constrained in the choice that is extended in every other part of the North, in terms of which type of taxi they want – instead they are limited to using the small Belfast Public Hire fleet unless they pre-book a taxi.

I am concerned that the dual tier model is unable to cope with the need to empty the city of people in a timely manner in the evenings, particularly at weekends. Suspension of the regime for these high peak periods could be considered, but would create even further confusion for users and would prove difficult, if not impossible, to enforce.

The Taxis Act is based on a single tier licensing regime. During the development of the then Bill, two options were consulted on – single tier; or a clearer distinction between public hire and private hire taxis (along the lines of the London model of 'black cabs' and 'mini-cabs'). A public consultation at that time showed a preference for single tier, and this was included in the Bill and passed by this Assembly, without division, as part of the Act.

Since enactment, a 2011 public consultation showed 84% support for single tier licensing. Those in favour included the Consumer Council (who stated that single tier would remove public confusion and free up enforcement resource), Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) and Disability Action.

Recently, I have received explicit support for single tier licensing from Disability Action, IMTAC, the Consumer Council, Women's Aid, Victim Support, Belfast Chamber of Trade & Commerce, the Northern Ireland Hotels Federation, Pubs of Ulster and Visit Belfast, all of whom see the clear benefits to consumers, tourists and the industry itself. I have also received 913 letters from Belfast private hire taxi drivers in support of single tier. And that is in addition to the 4,200 postcards the Committee received from private hire taxi passengers of a similar mind.

I therefore remain of the view that a single tier model should be introduced throughout the North. I am aware that the Law Commission has recently recommended the retention of two tier licensing for taxis in England and Wales, and that the Department for Transport is currently considering those proposals. With respect to those that say that we should do the same here, I would point out that exactly this point was debated in the development of the Taxis Act, with decisions made to progress a single tier regime. I would point out that the two tiers of taxis here are less differentiated than those in England and Wales have traditionally been. It is also worth noting that a Comparative Study on Regulation in Europe concluded that taxi licensing regimes differ based on local circumstances. Devolution has been designed to allow local solutions to local issues. We have debated this issue for far too long and should now implement our intent.

Understandably, given the delays and changes in the timings for the various elements of taxi reform, the industry has expressed concerns and has sought clarity about my intentions. I intend to provide this clarity today.

I am, therefore, today giving notice that I intend to make Taxi Vehicle Licensing regulations introducing single tier licensing in October 2014 with the provisions coming into force at the end of January 2015. Alongside this, I intend to commence the new Powers of Seizure regulations in January 2015 so that, from day one, these powers are available to enforcement officers to take action against illegal taxis.

This delay in the implementation date for the new arrangements is a result of the time needed to consider the different options put forward; and to avoid changes for the industry in its busiest period of the year in the run up the Christmas and New Year.

In advance of that, in October 2014, a new taxi driver test will be introduced for new taxi drivers only. This will be followed in September 2015 with the start of periodic training requirements for all taxi drivers.

In relation to taximeters and printers, I intend to make regulations before the end of the year, with the requirements coming into force in September 2015.

Finally, in respect of the new specification for Wheelchair Accessible Taxis, I intend to make these regulations in April 2015, coming into force in May 2015. Importantly, this new specification will ensure that users with disabilities will be better served by the taxi industry.

I look forward to continuing to work with the industry, the Environment Committee and other consumer and disability groups in the coming months as we introduce the relevant legislation to deliver on the aims of the Act in relation to this vital industry.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of the Environment why the introduction of compulsory taxi metering has been delayed until September 2015.

(AQW 34952/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In November and December 2013, Environment Committee members indicated that they were not content with elements of the Department's proposals for taxi vehicle licensing. I chose to take time and consider their concerns and the concerns expressed by sections of the taxi industry. Having completed this process, on 19 June 2014 in a written statement to the Assembly I outlined my intended timeline for the implementation of the remaining elements of the reform programme. This included deferring the introduction of the new taxi vehicle licensing regime until January 2015.

The introduction of compulsory taxi metering has been deferred until September 2015 due to the close linkages between that element of the taxi reform programme and taxi vehicle licensing.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what work is being undertaken with the community and social work teams in hospitals to ensure that patients who can be discharged, are provided with the proper care package and the issue of bed blocking is addressed.

(AQW 34683/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): There are teams of social workers based in every acute hospital and one of their key functions is to provide a professional social work service to those patients who have needs for care and support to achieve a safe discharge when they are ready to leave hospital.

In consultation with the clinical team, the social worker will identify as early as possible those patients who may require care and support on discharge. The social worker will complete an assessment with the patient and their family to identify their needs and, where required, liaise with community services to secure the necessary care and support in a timely manner.

The primary aim of the hospital social worker is to return people to their own home with a suitable care and support package, however where the person's needs have become more complex and cannot be met in their home environment the social worker will assist the individual and their family to consider other possible care options, such as supported housing, intermediate care, residential or nursing home care.

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether a policy exists for whole scale hospital support when Emergency Departments are under pressure.

(AQW 34685/11-15)

Mr Poots: Hospitals have Emergency Department escalation policies in place to deal with spikes in attendances and admissions. A number of measures may be taken, such as additional ward rounds, making extra beds available and putting additional staff in place.

Such plans are likely to be implemented when a major incident is declared. A major incident is any incident that is likely to involve a hospital receiving large numbers of seriously ill or injured patients in excess of that which could reasonably be managed within the scope of normal resources available. The major incident plan will form part of Trusts' overall emergency planning framework and may be activated in isolation or in conjunction with other specific emergency or business continuity plans.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the funding that his Department, and its arm's-length bodies, invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014.

(AQW 34904/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department does not capture or hold this information centrally and the level of detail requested could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Funding is not typically invested on a constituency basis. Most providers are commissioned to provide services on a Trust-wide or Belfast-wide basis.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether wheelchairs that are no longer needed by hospitals are donated to other health organisations.

(AQW 34931/11-15)

Mr Poots: When a wheelchair is no longer required by a service user, it is inspected by a Medical Technical Officer to determine whether it is suitable for recycling or not. If deemed to be suitable, it is put through the recycling programme (decontamination/ refurbishment) and re-issued to another user.

This reconditioned stock is a valuable component in the wheelchair service across Northern Ireland. If beyond economic repair or declared unfit for recycling, wheelchairs are condemned and disposed of as they cannot be reissued.

If the wheelchair has been declared unfit for recycling, it would not be possible to donate to other health organisations.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the policy in relation to wheelchairs that are no longer needed by hospitals and are in the possession of a patient.

(AQW 34932/11-15)

Mr Poots: I refer the member to my answer to AQW 34931/11-15.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will scrap the exceptionality clause and fund equal access to cancer drugs for patients.

(AQW 35023/11-15)

Mr Poots: All National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) approved cancer drugs that are available in England are either recurrently funded or available via a cost per case mechanism in Northern Ireland. The Health and Social Care Board has a clear process by which unapproved cancer drugs can be made available to patients in Northern Ireland by means

of an Individual Funding Request (IFR) setting out the clinical circumstances which support the request. The Board has advised my Department that around 98% of the applications for unapproved drugs are accepted.

However, I have listened to the concerns expressed by patients about the IFR process and during a recent debate in the Assembly on this issue I announced that I had instructed my Department to evaluate whether the process, including the clinical exceptionality clause, is meeting its objectives. My Department will report the findings of the evaluation to me later this year and I will announce my decision on the future of the scheme as soon as I have fully considered the report.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department ensures responsible prescribing and dispensing of appropriate medicines; and to detail any actions which he has taken in this regard in the last three years.

(AQW 35026/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Pharmaceutical Clinical Effectiveness (PCE) programme comprises of a number of initiatives synergistically designed to optimise the implementation of the product selection process through effective procurement, prescribing policy, guidelines and pharmaceutical service improvements. Key initiatives include: Generic Prescribing; Repeat Dispensing; Minor Ailments; Extended Supplies of Hospital Discharge Medicines; Integrated Medicines Management; Medicines Governance in Primary Care; Clinical Procurement; and Pharmaceutical Clinical Technology

Responsibility for the prescribing budget was transferred to HSC Board in July 2010. The Board has continued to develop and implement the principles of Pharmaceutical Clinical Effectiveness through the extension of the programme to maintain current initiatives and develop new and innovative ways of working including implementation of a Northern Ireland Formulary. The Formulary covers the majority of prescribing choices in Northern Ireland and aims to standardize prescribing practice and ensure a level of consistency but also recognises that some patients may require medicines which lie outside the guidance. The Formulary is intended to be used across both primary and secondary care sectors to ensure consistency and continuity of supply of medicines to patients.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the 38 drugs, available through the English Cancer Drugs Fund, that are included under the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme and whose use could be included under the Scheme if utilised in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 35068/11-15)

Mr Poots: The list of drugs currently available through the English Cancer Drugs Fund can be accessed via the following link: - <http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/ncdf-list-may14.pdf>

If the drugs are branded drugs they will be included in the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme unless they were licensed after 1 January 2014.

In the 2013/2014 year there were 72 Individual Funding Requests (IFR) approved, of those 64 were for cancer drugs. Of the 27 cancer drugs approved via an IFR 17 were also on the Cancer Drug Fund (CDF) list. There were 11 cancer drugs approved via IFR which were not on the CDF list.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much funding will become available through the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme in each of the next three years.

(AQW 35072/11-15)

Mr Poots: The 2014 PPRS is a UK-wide scheme that has been developed to deliver stability and predictability in the branded medicines economy over the next five years.

Under the scheme PPRS payments will only be made available to ensure that the allowed growth in medicines spend, on a UK-wide basis, is not exceeded and to enable the DHSSPS to meet its policy and operational objectives, as stated in the PPRS agreement. As any "payments" apportioned to Northern Ireland under the Scheme will depend on the UK-wide growth rate in the cost of branded medicines, it is not possible to estimate how much will be apportioned to Northern Ireland in the next three years.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to speed up the engagement between the Nursing and Midwifery Council and nursing applicants from both inside and outside the UK.

(AQW 35095/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is the independent regulator for nurses and midwives and operates on a UK-wide basis to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the public.

It is the Northern Ireland policy position to work on a 4-country basis on matters related to professional regulation. My officials work closely with DH England, the devolved administrations and professional regulators including the NMC to address a wide range of regulatory issues. This includes work to ensure application and registration processes are fit for purpose, proportionate and robust to uphold public protection, but also to ensure that the speed of processes is reasonable.

It is illegal to work as a nurse in the UK without being on the NMC register. In order to join the register the NMC must be satisfied that an applicant is capable of practising safely and effectively. It is the responsibility of the NMC to process

applications to its register and also to assess an applicant's qualifications, training and experience against its registration standards.

I am aware that the Professional Standards Authority (PSA), which oversees the work of the regulators, has produced its latest performance assessment of the NMC and has identified a number of areas for improvement in relation to its registration processes. However, I am encouraged to note that the PSA also acknowledged improvements and further planned developments in relation to these processes. This includes the commencement of on-line registration and revised guidance on implementation of policies and procedures for EU/EEA applicants.

I recognise the very valuable contribution made to health and social care in the UK, including here in Northern Ireland, by nurses trained in Europe and other parts of the world. My officials continue to liaise on a 4-country basis to monitor progress in this area.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to ensure nursing qualifications in European countries are recognised by the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

(AQW 35098/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is the independent regulator for nurses and midwives and operates on a UK-wide basis to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the public.

It is the Northern Ireland policy position to work on a 4-country basis on matters related to professional regulation. My officials work closely with DH England, the devolved administrations and professional regulators including the NMC to address a wide range of regulatory issues. This includes work to ensure application and registration processes are fit for purpose, proportionate and robust to uphold public protection, but also to ensure that the speed of processes is reasonable.

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I recognise the very valuable contribution made to health and social care in the UK, including here in Northern Ireland, by nurses trained in Europe and other parts of the world. My officials continue to liaise on a 4-country basis to monitor progress in this area.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33205/11-15, for an update regarding the recommendations which the Expert Group were expected to report by 1 July 2014.

(AQW 35100/11-15)

Mr Poots: The independent assessment of current and future needs for cardiology and cardiac surgery for congenital heart disease in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland which the International Expert Team, led by Dr John Mayer, are taking forward has not yet been submitted. I anticipate that the report will now be submitted in the next few weeks.

I am aware that the content of the report is a matter of widespread public interest. The Minister of Health in the Republic of Ireland and I will need to carefully consider the report. I aim to make public the implications for the future delivery of this service for Northern Ireland as soon as I am in a position to do so.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for his assessment of the provision and services for adults with learning disabilities in Upper Bann; and to detail (i) the number of referrals to respite units in each month of the last three years; and (ii) the waiting times following referral.

(AQW 35101/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Southern HSC Trust has in place a range of services for adults with a learning disability in the Upper Bann area. These include residential respite, access to nursing respite beds across the Trust area, day and weekend respite which is activity based and provided by the voluntary sector. In addition, the Trust has a range of statutory and voluntary day care provision whose secondary objective is to offer respite to carers. All services are targeted for adults with a learning disability aged over 18 who reside in the Southern Trust area.

The attached Annex details the months in the last 3 years in which there were referrals to Woodlawn House, Nightingale Lodge, and Enable NI respite units and the waiting times following referral for Woodlawn House only.

The waiting times following referral for Nightingale Lodge and Enable NI are not readily available.

Nightingale Lodge also offers day respite to 12 service users in addition to those overnight service users when their day activity programmes are not available, for example, on public holidays.

Respite Unit	Month	Number of Referrals	Waiting Time
Woodlawn House	Sep 2011	2	3 months
	Sep 2012	1	5 months
	Jan 2013	1	11 months
	May 2013	1	-
	Aug 2013	1	10 months
	Oct 2013	1	2 months
Nightingale Lodge	Sep 2011	1	This information is not routinely collected.
	Jan 2012	1	
	Feb 2013	1	
	Sep 2013	2	
	Nov 2013	3	
	Jan 2014	2	
	Apr 2014	1	
	May 2014	1	
Enable NI	July 2011	4	This information is not routinely collected.
	Sep 2011	1	
	Jan 2012	1	
	Mar 2012	2	
	Apr 2012	1	
	May 2012	1	
	Aug 2012	1	
	Oct 2012	1	
	Nov 2012	1	
	Jan 2013	1	
	Nov 2013	1	
	Dec 2013	2	
	Apr 2014	1	

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much in total income would be generated by a £25 a year charge for prescriptions.

(AQW 35111/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is not possible to estimate how much revenue would be generated by a £25 a year charge for prescriptions. The revenue raised would depend on whether any exemptions from charges were put in place, the uptake of medicines by individual patients and the level of charge imposed for individual prescription items.

All of these issues would be subject to a full public consultation before any prescription charges would be re-introduced.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry's claim that the Pharmacy Price Regulation Scheme will cover all access to new drugs over the next two years at no cost to Health and Social Care.

(AQW 35114/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) is a UK wide scheme. One of the overarching principles of the scheme is to improve access to medicines commensurate with the outcomes they offer patients by ensuring that medicines approved by NICE are available widely in the Health Service. The scheme is designed to constrain the growth in spend in branded medicines at a UK level, across the period 2014-19, for those medicines licensed before 31st December 2013. Any increase in spend in new medicines licensed after that date is not subject to the PPRS price control mechanism.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are any ongoing investigations relating to any Public Private Partnership projects that his Department is associated with; and if so, to detail the projects. (AQW 35156/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are currently no ongoing investigations relating to any Public Private Partnership projects that my Department is associated with.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department will highlight the need for blood donation in North Down.

(AQW 35160/11-15)

Mr Poots: NIBTS has six blood donation locations in North Down; Bangor, Bangor East, Bloomfield, Holywood, Donaghadee and Newtownards. Between these locations a total of 24 donation sessions are held each year.

All registered donors receive a call-up letter ten days before the donation session to advise them of dates and times. If blood stocks are low this is followed up with a text message.

For all public donation sessions there are volunteers within the local community who help to publicise donation sessions with posters and leaflets; these are sent out 2-3 weeks before each session and the volunteers distribute them to local shops, businesses and community groups. Local churches announce sessions at services or in newsletters, and laminated posters are affixed to lampposts a week in advance.

As part of its educational programme, NIBTS visits South Eastern Regional College (SERC) for fresher days to speak to college students and also visits several schools in the area; Regent House, Sullivan Upper, Priory Integrated, Strangford College and Bangor Academy.

NIBTS also uses newspaper or radio advertisements to raise awareness of donor weeks which happen annually in June and November/December. Relevant adverts would be placed in the North Down Spectator and the Newtownards Chronicle. Social media is also used.

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of Health Service procedures and treatments on Northern Ireland patients carried out by each private health provider in (i) Northern Ireland; (ii) England; (iii) Scotland; (iv) Wales; and (v) the Republic of Ireland, in each year since May 2007.

(AQW 35207/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of Health Service procedures and treatments carried out on Northern Ireland patients, by the Independent Sector in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland, in each financial year since 2007/08, is shown below.

Financial Years	Northern Ireland	England	Scotland	Wales	Republic of Ireland
2007/08	8,731	1,972	18	0	276
2008/09	20,584	2,530	101	0	478
2009/10	14,871	2,256	158	0	317
2010/11	6,204	1,117	0	0	175
2011/12	11,226	4,107	0	0	225
2012/13	24,497	231	1	0	967
2013/14	24,378	767	0	0	803

Source: HSCB

* Figures do not include extra contractual referrals

* Financial year relates to information from 1st April to 31st March.

Department of Justice

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Justice to detail the funding that his Department, and its arm's-length bodies, invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014.

(AQW 34905/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The Department of Justice does not record expenditure in a format that enables all funding invested in North Belfast to be quantified.

Expenditure that can be identified as relating directly to North Belfast is contained in the table below. Figures exclude the running costs of any offices based in North Belfast, and exclude the maintenance costs of security barriers. Figures provided are by financial year.

Description	Number Plate System in Northern Ireland	2012/13	2013/14
North Belfast DPCSP*	N/A	£105,864	£125,000
PBNI Community Grants	£169,733	£154,294	£134,624
PSNI Community Safety Projects**	£57,500	£72,700	£25,700
Youth Justice Agency Community Funding	£25,034	£42,494	£40,921

* Funding for the North Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership (DPCSP) is provided via Belfast City Council. DPCSPs were established on 01 April 2012.

** Some of the PSNI projects also include West Belfast but the funding cannot be split.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice who has been selected to sit on the Researchers Advisory Group for Research into Prostitution.

(AQW 34947/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Board of Advisers to the prostitution research is appointed by Queen's University Belfast as part of its internal research mechanism and the Department of Justice had no part in the selection process of its members.

The members of the Advisory Board are: Professor of Criminology, School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University; Assistant Professor in International Peace Studies, Trinity College Dublin; Reader in Migration Studies, Institute for the Study of European Transformations, London Metropolitan University; Lecturer, Department of Sociology, National University of Ireland, Maynooth; Team Leader, Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid and; Nurse and Health Care Co-ordinator, Belfast Commercial Sex Workers Service.

Travel and subsistence costs for the Advisory Board were included within the overall tender.

As detailed in the tender specification, a maximum of £60,000 (exclusive of VAT) has been allocated for the research.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice to detail the selection process for the Researchers Advisory Group for Research into Prostitution.

(AQW 34948/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Board of Advisers to the prostitution research is appointed by Queen's University Belfast as part of its internal research mechanism and the Department of Justice had no part in the selection process of its members.

The members of the Advisory Board are: Professor of Criminology, School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University; Assistant Professor in International Peace Studies, Trinity College Dublin; Reader in Migration Studies, Institute for the Study of European Transformations, London Metropolitan University; Lecturer, Department of Sociology, National University of Ireland, Maynooth; Team Leader, Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid and; Nurse and Health Care Co-ordinator, Belfast Commercial Sex Workers Service.

Travel and subsistence costs for the Advisory Board were included within the overall tender.

As detailed in the tender specification, a maximum of £60,000 (exclusive of VAT) has been allocated for the research.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the job titles of the staff; and (ii) the organisations represented on the Researchers Advisory Group for Research into Prostitution.

(AQW 34949/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Board of Advisers to the prostitution research is appointed by Queen's University Belfast as part of its internal research mechanism and the Department of Justice had no part in the selection process of its members.

The members of the Advisory Board are: Professor of Criminology, School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University; Assistant Professor in International Peace Studies, Trinity College Dublin; Reader in Migration Studies, Institute for the Study of European Transformations, London Metropolitan University; Lecturer, Department of Sociology, National University of Ireland, Maynooth; Team Leader, Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid and; Nurse and Health Care Co-ordinator, Belfast Commercial Sex Workers Service.

Travel and subsistence costs for the Advisory Board were included within the overall tender.

As detailed in the tender specification, a maximum of £60,000 (exclusive of VAT) has been allocated for the research.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the Researchers Advisory Group for Research into Prostitution, whether the (i) Committee for Justice; or (ii) non-governmental organisation engagement groups on human trafficking were consulted prior to the constitution of the group.

(AQW 34950/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Board of Advisers to the prostitution research is appointed by Queen's University Belfast as part of its internal research mechanism and the Department of Justice had no part in the selection process of its members.

The members of the Advisory Board are: Professor of Criminology, School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University; Assistant Professor in International Peace Studies, Trinity College Dublin; Reader in Migration Studies, Institute for the Study of European Transformations, London Metropolitan University; Lecturer, Department of Sociology, National University of Ireland, Maynooth; Team Leader, Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid and; Nurse and Health Care Co-ordinator, Belfast Commercial Sex Workers Service.

Travel and subsistence costs for the Advisory Board were included within the overall tender.

As detailed in the tender specification, a maximum of £60,000 (exclusive of VAT) has been allocated for the research.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice whether any funding is being used to support the Researchers Advisory Group for Research into Prostitution for (a) travel or accommodation expenses; and (b) remuneration for services rendered.

(AQW 34951/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Board of Advisers to the prostitution research is appointed by Queen's University Belfast as part of its internal research mechanism and the Department of Justice had no part in the selection process of its members.

The members of the Advisory Board are: Professor of Criminology, School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University; Assistant Professor in International Peace Studies, Trinity College Dublin; Reader in Migration Studies, Institute for the Study of European Transformations, London Metropolitan University; Lecturer, Department of Sociology, National University of Ireland, Maynooth; Team Leader, Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid and; Nurse and Health Care Co-ordinator, Belfast Commercial Sex Workers Service.

Travel and subsistence costs for the Advisory Board were included within the overall tender.

As detailed in the tender specification, a maximum of £60,000 (exclusive of VAT) has been allocated for the research.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice to detail the budget allocated for the Research into Prostitution.

(AQW 34976/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Board of Advisers to the prostitution research is appointed by Queen's University Belfast as part of its internal research mechanism and the Department of Justice had no part in the selection process of its members.

The members of the Advisory Board are: Professor of Criminology, School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University; Assistant Professor in International Peace Studies, Trinity College Dublin; Reader in Migration Studies, Institute for the Study of European Transformations, London Metropolitan University; Lecturer, Department of Sociology, National University of Ireland, Maynooth; Team Leader, Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid and; Nurse and Health Care Co-ordinator, Belfast Commercial Sex Workers Service.

Travel and subsistence costs for the Advisory Board were included within the overall tender.

As detailed in the tender specification, a maximum of £60,000 (exclusive of VAT) has been allocated for the research.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he plans to order a Serious Case Review to include the prior management and monitoring of case number 14/062668 at Newry Magistrates Court, particularly in respect of present allegations of (i) breach of a Sexual Offences Prevention Order for four years; and (ii) the commission of further offences against a child in the last twelve months.

(AQW 34984/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Strategic Management Board responsible for oversight of the Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI) has authority to commission Serious Case Reviews. This case has been referred into PPANI. I have asked my officials to provide me with an update in this case at the earliest opportunity.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what action his Department is taking to combat crimes against people with a disability.

(AQW 35036/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department, through the Community Safety Strategy, is committed to tackling hate crime and the harm it causes. Consequently, working in partnership with others, an Action Plan comprising a range of measures has been developed and is currently being implemented. Progress on this Action Plan was provided to the Committee for Justice in February 2014.

Following consultations between my officials and a number of organisations, including Leonard Cheshire Disability, Mencap, NIAMH and Disability Action, my Department is working with others to develop the hate crime advocacy service.

In addition, my Department currently provides practical support to victims of hate crime, including people with a disability, through the Hate Incident Practical Action (HIPA) scheme; and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) are delivering a range of initiatives aimed at tackling all forms of hate crime.

Legislation is in place which allows for an increase in sentence for offences aggravated by hostility because of race, religion, sexual orientation or disability.

During consultation in advance of the publication of the Victim and Witness Strategy, my officials met with key stakeholders from various organisations including Mencap, Disability Action, and Leonard Cheshire Disability.

You will also be aware that my Department has also been working in partnership with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on the development of a new adult safeguarding policy. This new policy will complement the measures already in place to protect vulnerable adults, including those with a disability.

I have personally met a number of organisations on the issue of crimes against people with a disability. During the period July 2012 to July 2013, I met with the Communications Manager at Signature, to discuss the use of Registered Sign Language Interpreters for deaf and blind people. I also met with representatives from Action Mental Health, Mindwise and NIAMH.

During the period since July 2013, I have attended a Disability Seminar organised by the Law Society and addressed a Disability Hate Crime Seminar organised by Disability Action where I met representatives from a variety of disability organisations including Mencap, Leonard Cheshire Disability, Disability Action and the REAL Network.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what organisations he has met with regarding the issue of crimes against people with a disability, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35038/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department, through the Community Safety Strategy, is committed to tackling hate crime and the harm it causes. Consequently, working in partnership with others, an Action Plan comprising a range of measures has been developed and is currently being implemented. Progress on this Action Plan was provided to the Committee for Justice in February 2014.

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Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of staff employed in Maghaberry Prison, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35047/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number of staff in post is shown in the table below. There is a slight variation in dates because of a change in how this data was collated between 2012 and 2013.

Date	Uniform Staff	Non-Uniform Staff
30 June 2010	867	135
30 June 2011	806	132
30 June 2012	665	118
1 July 2013	716	127
1 July 2014	689	125

To break this down further, by prison landing, would require an extensive manual exercise and incur disproportionate cost.

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of prison officers that have had more than three days sick absence as a result of injuries sustained whilst working in Maghaberry Prison, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35049/11-15)

Mr Ford: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of drug seizures from prisoners in Maghaberry Prison, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35053/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number of drug finds attributed to prisoners at Maghaberry Prison for the period requested is set out below. The figures are for the total number of seizures, some of which will have included more than one banned substance.

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
74	37	44	87	452

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail the action he has taken following each public petition presented to the Assembly and forwarded to his Department.

(AQW 35063/11-15)

Mr Ford: Since Devolution, my Department has not been forwarded any public petitions from the Assembly.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 34170/11-15, how long has each warrant been outstanding.

(AQW 35086/11-15)

Mr Ford: All European Arrest Warrants are considered outstanding until the subject of the warrant has been returned to Northern Ireland.

The table below provides a list of the outstanding European Arrest Warrants including details on the date of issue of the warrant and the arrest date of the subject. The execution date of each European Arrest Warrant has been taken as the date that the subject of the warrant was arrested in the host country. Once arrested, the individual will be brought before the courts in the host country where it will be determined if they should be extradited.

Offence	Country	Issued	Arrest Date	Current Status
VAT offences	Republic of Ireland	21/06/2007	19/11/2008	Subject failed to answer bail in the Republic of Ireland and has not been located to date
Rape	Lithuania	12/08/2009		Subject has raised issues that are continuing before the Lithuanian courts
Fraud	Republic of Ireland	14/06/2012	08/11/2012	This case is in the final stages of extradition
Rape	Republic of Ireland	28/11/2012	15/01/2013	Subject is serving a sentence for domestic matters in the Republic of Ireland
Murder	Republic of Ireland	17/12/2012	16/01/2013	Subject is contesting extradition before the courts in the Republic of Ireland
Rape	Republic of Ireland	11/09/2013		Subject's whereabouts unknown to date - last residing in Republic of Ireland
GBH w/intent	Republic of Ireland	03/10/2013		Subject's whereabouts unknown to date - last residing in Republic of Ireland
Theft	Republic of Ireland	04/03/2014	24/06/2014	Subject is contesting extradition before the courts in the Republic of Ireland
Theft	Republic of Ireland	04/03/2014		Subject's whereabouts unknown to date - last residing in Republic of Ireland
Drugs & Money laundering	Republic of Ireland	01/05/2014		Subject's whereabouts unknown to date - last residing in Republic of Ireland
Drugs	Portugal	11/06/2014		Subject's whereabouts unknown to date - last residing in Portugal

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AWQ 34168/11-15, to detail the (i) date of issue; and (ii) execution of each warrant.

(AQW 35088/11-15)

Mr Ford: All European Arrest Warrants are considered outstanding until the subject of the warrant has been returned to Northern Ireland.

The table below provides a list of the outstanding European Arrest Warrants including details on the date of issue of the warrant and the arrest date of the subject. The execution date of each European Arrest Warrant has been taken as the date that the subject of the warrant was arrested in the host country. Once arrested, the individual will be brought before the courts in the host country where it will be determined if they should be extradited.

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Theft	Republic of Ireland	04/03/2014		Subject's whereabouts unknown to date - last residing in Republic of Ireland
Drugs & Money laundering	Republic of Ireland	01/05/2014		Subject's whereabouts unknown to date - last residing in Republic of Ireland
Drugs	Portugal	11/06/2014		Subject's whereabouts unknown to date - last residing in Portugal

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33630/11-15, in relation to the Prisoner Safety and Support Team, how many prisoners are currently (i) receiving support; and (ii) awaiting assessment.

(AQW 35110/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) There are currently twenty five people being case managed by a multidisciplinary team under the auspices of Prisoner Safety Support.
- (ii) All assessments are carried out on receipt of the referral by Prisoner Safety Support, there are no referrals awaiting assessment.

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of contraband items seized from prisoners whilst in a prison cell in Maghaberry Prison, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35121/11-15)

Mr Ford: The figures for all unauthorised articles found are set out in the table below. It is not possible to determine which of these items were found in a prisoner's cell.

Year	No. Items
2009	1810
2010	1805

Year	No. Items
2011	2801
2012	2605
2013	3846

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of contraband items seized from people visiting a prisoner in Maghaberry Prison, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35122/11-15)

Mr Ford: If any article discovered during the searching of a visitor is suspected to be an illicit or illegally held item then the PSNI will be informed. The Northern Ireland Prison Service do not record such finds.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what additional measures or legislation is planned to facilitate the criminal prosecution of people selling or distributing legal highs.

(AQW 35135/11-15)

Mr Ford: As legislation governing the sale and distribution of drugs remains a reserved matter, I have no plans to introduce legislation.

In December 2013 the Government announced a Review of the drug legislation and its suitability to tackle the issue of New Psychoactive Substances, also known as legal highs. This Review is ongoing and I await the outcome.

However, I am not complacent in seeking to tackle this serious issue. For example my Department continues to support District Council Environmental Health Officers in seeking to utilise the General Product Safety Regulations as a means of tackling those who are selling and distributing legal highs. Belfast City Council recently secured a Forfeiture Order against one shop selling these substances and I am advised that further prosecutions are pending. In addition, two other Councils have utilised this same legislation and successfully removed these substances from sale.

DOJ officials continue to work with the PSNI and DHSSPS colleagues to highlight the dangers associated with consuming these untested substances.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice whether there are any ongoing investigations relating to any Public Private Partnership projects that his Department is associated with; and if so, to detail the projects.

(AQW 35157/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice does not have any ongoing investigations relating to any Public Private Partnership projects.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice what constitutes a prisoner officer receiving a written warning.

(AQW 35172/11-15)

Mr Ford: All Northern Ireland Civil Servants, including Prison Officers, are managed under the policies set out in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) HR Handbook. The section on Inefficiency Sickness sets out the policy applied where staff are not at work due to sickness absence. This provides for the issue of written warnings where levels of absence breach review points. Once review points are breached, a meeting is held with the member of staff before a decision whether to issue a written warning is made. The meeting gives the member of staff an opportunity to provide any relevant information they wish to be taken into consideration. All relevant facts are taken into account before a decision is made.

Procedural variations apply for new entrants undertaking their probationary period of employment.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice what support is in place for on duty prison officers who are assaulted by inmates.

(AQW 35173/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) has a range of support mechanisms in place for prison officers who are assaulted by inmates. Staff can discuss any concerns they have with their Line Managers or their HR Business Partners based in their local Establishment Personnel Units. Staff can make direct contact with the Central Welfare Team for support and advice. They can also make direct contact with Carecall who provide an independent, confidential and professional counselling service available to all NIPS staff.

Staff can also self-refer to the Occupational Health Service.

In the event of an incident involving a number of officers, the locally based HR Business Partner or the Duty Governor can arrange for Carecall to provide a critical incident debrief for staff involved.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice how many written warnings have been issued to prison officers as a result of sickness absence, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35176/11-15)

Mr Ford: In the last 3 years, the following numbers of Written and Final Written Warnings have been issued to prison officers due to sickness absence;

Date	Written Warnings issued	Final Written Warnings issued	Total Warnings issued
7 July 2011 to 6 July 2012	167	30	197
7 July 2012 to 6 July 2013	115	11	126
7 July 2013 to 6 July 2014	129	16	145

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice how many new recruits have left the Prison Service in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35178/11-15)

Mr Ford: In each of the last three years, the following number of new recruits have left the Northern Ireland Prison Service:

2012	6
2013	31
2014	29 to date

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice how many prison officers have been assaulted by prisoners in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35179/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number of incidents of assault by prisoners on prison staff is shown in the table below:

Year	Incidents of Assault
2011	50
2012	48
2013	94

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in light of the absence of proposals to legislate within the current Justice Bill on the collection of £14 million outstanding court fines, when he will bring forward the Fines and Enforcements Bill, or whether it is possible to introduce this as an additional inclusion in the Justice Bill.

(AQW 35192/11-15)

Mr Ford: I plan to bring a draft Fines and Enforcement Bill to the Executive for approval to introduce into the Assembly this coming autumn. The Bill will contain a completely new regime for the collection and enforcement of fines with a range of additional powers for courts supported by a newly created collection and enforcement service.

Powers will be available for example to deduct fine payments from income and, following my recent policy consultation, I also intend to create powers to seize vehicles and access bank accounts in certain situations.

The Bill will not only change the law on fines. It will also contain important changes to youth justice law following the Youth Justice Review; changes to both Prisoner and Police Ombudsman legislation; and some changes to prisons law.

Across the breadth and depth of its scope, the Bill will require detailed Committee scrutiny which would not be possible if it were to be brought forward as an amendment to the Justice Bill. It would therefore be neither feasible nor appropriate for the Fines and Enforcement Bill to be combined with the Justice Bill.

In terms of unpaid fines, a programme of work is already underway ahead of new legislation to recover currently outstanding amounts where possible. All outstanding warrants have been recalled for review by the judiciary and a default hearing system commenced whereby cases are brought back to court for review.

In due course it is my intention that the new powers in the Fines and Enforcement Bill will also be available to tackle any remaining outstanding fines.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33630/11-15, how many staff are employed in the Prisoner Safety and Support Team; and to outline their job descriptions.

(AQW 35194/11-15)

Mr Ford: Including the Head of Unit, there are six staff employed in Prisoner Safety and Support (PSS).

The role of PSS is to deliver a safer environment for all prisoners in NIPS care and its main responsibilities are to ensure compliance with the Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Policy.

PSS also considers cases where an individual may pose a risk to themselves and the prison or where they have difficulty in coping whilst in prison.

Safer Custody is a multi-disciplinary, multi-functional element of prison life and the prison service works in partnership with stakeholders such as the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, probation, psychology and ADEPT. While PSS provides a dedicated specific role it must be noted that responsibility for delivery of safer custody extends to all staff.

Department for Regional Development

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the (i) cost; and (ii) location of all new water and sewage pumping stations planned for North Down.

(AQW 34697/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): Work is ongoing and proposed to progress capital sewerage schemes, some of which require the construction of new pumping facilities as part of the solution.

In the Bangor area, work is being carried out in the Harbour area to provide storm storage with onward pumping to Luke's Point. The cost of this work is approximately £2 million.

It is anticipated that work will be progressed to replace the existing Castle Park Pumping Station with a new build on the same site. The cost of the pumping station element of this work is estimated at £2 - £2.5 million.

It is also intended that similar work will be carried out at the existing Stricklands Glen pumping station, to build a new pumping station on the same site at an estimated cost of £1.8 million.

In the Holywood area, a scheme is presently being prepared for the construction of a new pumping station necessitated by the need to address odour and ineffective overflow operations in the Kinnegar Catchment. The pumping station site is located on the periphery of the Kinnegar Wastewater Treatment Works and will require expenditure of approximately £2 million.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration has been given to providing two vehicles free-of-charge to the rural transport organisations, given that they have been leasing the vehicles from Translink for the last seven years.

(AQW 34827/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Grant funding arrangements for the Rural Community Transport Partnerships (RCTPs) ensure that services can be provided to members and that this Department is compliant with EU regulations.

The RCTPs were provided with access to vehicles, owned by Translink, but the funding provided by my Department was adjusted accordingly.

Public auction offers the fairest option for disposal of vehicles as the RCTP's and indeed other voluntary and community organisations then have the opportunity to bid and purchase at perhaps a more favourable rate.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of how cycling uptake correlates with deprivation levels.

(AQW 34855/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Travel Survey for Northern Ireland (TSNI) is the only source of data that records how and why people travel in Northern Ireland. A range of cycling specific information is recorded, including a question on those who have ridden a bicycle in the last 12 months.

The official measure of spatial deprivation in Northern Ireland is the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010. The question on cycling in the last 12 months was analysed by NIMDM 2010 for the most recent data available (2010-2012). These findings were compared to the results for NI as a whole.

It was found that respondents living in the 20% most deprived areas were less likely to have cycled in the last 12 months than the NI population as a whole.

Conversely, respondents living in the 20% least deprived areas were more likely to have cycled in the last 12 months compared to the overall NI population.

Looking at the respondents living in the remaining areas, there was no real difference in the proportion of those who had cycled in the last 12 months compared to the NI total.

More information on the TSNI can be found at:

http://www.drndi.gov.uk/index/statistics/stats-categories/northern_ireland_travel_survey.htm.

It must be remembered that levels of cycling in specific areas cannot simply be attributed to the level of deprivation, for example the geography of a location can be a contributory factor as to whether people cycle or not. Levels of Cycling may also be impacted where low cost, widely available modes of transport such as black taxi 'bus' routes are available.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development how he plans to promote cycling in areas of high deprivation.
(AQW 34856/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Cycling Unit is currently developing a draft Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland which will be published for consultation in the near future.

This strategy will outline all aspects required to create a better environment for cyclists including infrastructure provision, support measures and promotion. In taking forward the strategy I am particularly keen to explore opportunities to enhance cycling in areas of deprivation.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development how his Department has made Albert Bridge, Belfast safer for cyclists in the last six months.
(AQW 34857/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There is an onus on all road users, including those using Albert Bridge, Belfast, to travel safely and respect one another. As numbers of cyclists on our roads continue to increase, it is important that their safety as well as the safety of other road users is given the highest priority.

The Member may be aware that I recently launched the 'Bus and Bike Travelling in Harmony' campaign, a joint initiative with Translink, Sustrans and my Department's Travelwise team which aims to provide each group with a better understanding of each other's needs such as giving sufficient road space, potential blind spots and the importance of making the appropriate adjustments while travelling to ensure they travel safely on the road together. This should benefit cyclists using Albert Bridge as well many other routes in Belfast and elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

In addition, my Department is currently working on developing a clear and aspirational vision for cycling, which will give an increased focus and priority to the needs of cyclists, and pedestrians, to encourage greater participation in this healthy and sustainable form of transport.

A key task will be to work with stakeholders in the assessment and development of current bicycle infrastructure and progressing opportunities for new routes.

My Department is looking at the new pedestrian and cycle bridge proposed between Ormeau Park, on Ravenhill Embankment and the Gas Works. Given the constraints of and limited potential for significant infrastructure improvements at sites such as Albert Bridge, this bridge may give an alternative traffic free route to those cycling from the east of the city into the city centre.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the funding that his Department, and its arm's-length bodies, invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014.
(AQW 34906/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the investment by my Department, and its arm's-length bodies (Northern Ireland Water and Translink) in North Belfast between April 2011 and May 2014 are provided below.

	2011-121	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 (April and May 2014)	Total
	£'million	£'million	£'million	£'million	£'million
Department2	30.9	29.0	328.5	0.04	88.4
NI Water	10.1	8.0	13.0	1.8	32.9
Translink5	1.1	1.3	0.2	0.0	2.6
Total	42.1	38.3	41.7	1.8	123.9

Department

The following streets in North Belfast had resurfacing of footways and carriageways in the applicable years.

- Information is normally held on a financial year basis therefore total expenditure for 2011-12 has been provided.
- Expenditure by the Department on roads infrastructure and maintenance of the road network is analysed for each financial year on a District Council basis rather than a parliamentary constituency basis. As the parliamentary constituency of North Belfast includes wards of both Belfast City Council and Newtownabbey Borough Council, the table above provides the expenditure for both Council areas.
- An estimate of expenditure is provided as expenditure is currently being analysed.

4. Expenditure is analysed on a financial year basis therefore no details are currently available for 2014-15.
5. During these financial years my Department has invested in the purchase of new modern buses, some of which have been deployed in the North Belfast constituency. It is not possible to assign a specific sum to this investment.

2011/12

- | | |
|---|--|
| ■ Alexander Park Avenue (carriageways and footways) | Gardens |
| ■ Cavehill Road (carriageways and footways) | ■ Crumlin Road - Ligoneil Road to Ballysillan Park |
| ■ Crumlin Road - Ardoyne Road to Wheatfield | ■ Fortwilliam Park. |

2012/13

- | | |
|---|--|
| ■ Antrim Road at Throne Bends | Road |
| ■ Whiterock Road | ■ Crumlin Road - Upper Hightown Road to Flush Road |
| ■ Duncrue Road | ■ Nelson Street |
| ■ College Avenue | ■ Garmoyle Street |
| ■ Great Victoria Street | ■ Dock Street |
| ■ Crumlin Road - Ballysillan Park to Upper Hightown | ■ Linfield Road |

2013/14

- | | |
|---|---|
| ■ Duncrue Street | ■ Shore Road footway |
| ■ Ballygomartin Road (footways) | ■ Westland Road |
| ■ Donegall Park Avenue (carriageway and footways) | ■ Springfield Road - Springfield Park to West Circular |
| ■ Wheatfield Crescent | ■ Springfield Road - West Circular to Watermouth Crescent |
| ■ Ligoneil Road | ■ High Street |
| ■ Black Mountain Estate (footways) | |

Northern Ireland Water

2011-12 £'m	Projects
2.16	Ballysillan Zone Watermain Improvements
1.42	Newtownabbey Zone Watermain Improvements Phase 2
1.67	Capital Maintenance Whitehouse Wastewater Treatment Works
1.00	Newtownabbey Zone Watermain Improvements Phase 1
1.09	Ballywonard Zone Watermain Improvements
0.19	Major Incident Mitigation Project East Region East Freeze Thaw Improvements
1.80	Capital Maintenance Belfast Wastewater Treatment Works
0.02	Ballysillan Road Belfast - Flood Alleviation
0.12	Ballygomartin South Phase 1 Water Mains Improvements
0.14	Oldpark Watermain Improvements
0.27	Reservoir Integrity and Rehabilitation Phase 4
0.01	Bank Square, Belfast, Environmental Improvements Scheme
0.08	Belfast City Centre Zone Watermain Improvements
0.08	Security improvements at Keypoint Installations
0.07	Belfast City Entries Upgrade
0.02	Appraisal of risk register locations within North Belfast Phase 2
10.14	

2012-13 £'m	Projects
2.06	Ballysillan Zone Watermain Improvements
1.41	Newtownabbey Zone Watermain Improvements Phase 2

2012-13 £'m	Projects
1.17	Capital Maintenance Whitehouse Wastewater Treatment Works
1.07	Newtownabbey Zone Watermain Improvements Phase 1
0.63	Ballywonard Zone Watermain Improvements
0.33	Major Incident Mitigation Project East Region Freeze Thaw Improvements
0.45	Belfast Wastewater Treatment Works Base Maintenance - Phase 2
0.32	Capital Maintenance Belfast Wastewater Treatment Works
0.13	Ballysillan Road Belfast - Flood Alleviation
0.03	Ballygomartin South Phase 1 Water Mains Improvements
0.02	High Priority Watermains Phase 2 Work Package.
0.07	McVeigh's Well Rationalisation of Pipework
0.18	Belfast Terminal Pumping Station – Cooling Water Tank Feasibility Study
0.09	Bank Square, Belfast, Environmental Improvements Scheme
0.03	44a Alliance Avenue, Belfast Storm Sewer Extension
0.02	Alliance Avenue Belfast Storm Sewer Extension
8.01	

2013-14 £'m	Projects
1.21	Ballysillan Zone Watermain Improvements
1.50	Newtownabbey Zone Watermain Improvements Phase 2
0.76	Newtownabbey Zone Watermain Improvements Phase 1
0.83	Ballywonard Zone Watermain Improvements
1.97	Major Incident Mitigation Project East Region Freeze Thaw Improvements
1.69	Belfast Base Wastewater Treatment Works Maintenance - Phase 2
1.63	Gravity II, McVeighs well to Old Park Service Reservoir
0.98	Ballysillan Road Belfast - Flood Alleviation
0.73	Ballygomartin South Phase 1 Water Mains Improvements
0.70	High Priority Watermains Phase 2 Work Package.
0.40	Oldpark Watermain Improvements
0.26	McVeigh's Well Rationalisation of Pipework
0.25	Newtownabbey Zone Watermain Improvements Phase 3
0.02	Belfast City Centre Zone Watermain Improvements
0.04	Preparation of redundant Belfast Storm Pumping Stations for disposal
0.04	Belfast Wastewater Treatment Works Upgrade
0.01	York Street, Belfast Interchange
13.02	

2014-15 (April and May 2014) £'m	Projects
1.03	Gravity II, McVeighs well to Old Park Service Reservoir.
0.02	Ballygomartin South Phase 1 Water Mains Improvements

2014-15 (April and May 2014) £'m	Projects
0.03	Newtownabbey Zone Watermain Improvements Phase 3
0.32	Oldpark Watermain Improvements
0.18	Major Incident Mitigation Project East Region Freeze Thaw Improvements
0.05	McVeigh's Well Rationalisation of Pipework
0.12	Belfast Wastewater Treatment Works Base Maintenance - Phase 2
0.02	York Street, Belfast Interchange
0.02	Newtownabbey Zone Watermain Improvements Phase 2
1.79	

Translink

2011-12 £'m	Project / Comments
0.07	York Road Replacement Profile Burner
0.09	York Road Overhaul upgrade fume extraction system
0.22	York Road Overhaul Wheel Lathe
0.41	York Road Bleach Green Replacement of Switch & Crossings
0.18	York Road Depot/Workshops - Various minor projects
0.16	Yorkgate Area Signalling Improvements
1.13	

2012-13 £'m	Project / Comments
0.09	York Road Overhaul Wheel Lathe
0.11	York Road Network Upgrade
0.25	York Road-Bleach Green Replacement of Switch and Crossings
0.03	Yorkgate Area Signalling Improvements
0.66	Yorkgate Station Platform Extensions
0.16	Rail Replacement Dargan Viaduct
1.30	

2013-14 £'m	Project / Comments
0.03	York Road Network Upgrade
0.01	York Road Depot/Workshops – Various minor projects
0.02	Yorkgate Area Signalling Improvements
0.11	Yorkgate to Donegall Quay Dualling Dargan Viaduct
0.03	Dargan Bridge Side Worn Rail Replacement
0.20	

2014-15 (April and May 2014) £'m	Project / Comments
	None to date

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will instruct the Flood Investment and Planning Group to coordinate an investigation into the flooding of Carnlough village due to the collapse of the sea defence wall.

(AQW 34945/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Department is not aware of the collapse of any sea defence infrastructure it owns in Carnlough village or of any drainage infrastructure issue which would require investigation.

A short length of sea wall on property belonging to the Londonderry Arms Hotel was removed during the 2013 winter storm surges to allow sea water to drain away. The Department carried out this work in agreement with the proprietor of the hotel following a request from a local councillor. The sea wall has subsequently been reinstated.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the current cost of parking in each departmental owned car park in Belfast.

(AQW 35019/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of parking tariffs for all of my Department's charged Car Parks are available via the NI Direct website at the following web address:

<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/travel-transport-and-roads/parking-and-parking-enforcement/off-street-and-on-street-parking.htm>

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the proportion of badges issued under the Blue Badge Scheme that are currently being used unlawfully.

(AQW 35035/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In Northern Ireland there are currently 109,085 Blue Badge holders.

In 2013/2014 Traffic Attendants issued 99 Penalty Charge Notices relating to misuse of Blue Badges.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are any plans to create a proper cycle lane from Bangor to Belfast.

(AQW 35046/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Cycling Unit is currently working on developing a clear and aspirational vision for cycling, which will give an increased focus and priority to the needs of cyclists, and pedestrians, to encourage greater participation in this healthy and sustainable form of transport.

A key task will be to work with stakeholders in the assessment and development of current bicycle infrastructure and progressing opportunities for new routes. Officials will be looking at the development of joined up routes in urban centres and greenway route between town and city centres.

The linkage between Bangor and Belfast will be one of the routes that will be considered.

Mr Cree asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the current plans and future strategy for reservoirs in Conlig.

(AQW 35058/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Conlig Impounding Reservoirs have been out of service for some time and are surplus to requirements. In accordance with the terms of its operating licence, NI Water has an obligation to dispose of assets that are no longer of use. The reservoirs have been identified for disposal during the current financial year, and expressions of interest have been invited from the public sector, in accordance with the Department of Finance and Personnel's Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property in the Northern Ireland guidance document. If it is not possible to transfer ownership of the reservoirs within the public sector, NI Water will consider other options for disposal.

The closing date for submissions to the Department of Finance and Personnel's Land and Property Services (LPS) from interested parties was 27 June 2014. LPS is currently collating the expressions of interest and aims to forward details to NI Water by the end of July for consideration.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on actions taken regarding noise pollution in the Ardmore area of Belfast.

(AQW 35073/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Road traffic noise levels at Ardmore Avenue were assessed using two pieces of legislation: The Noise Insulation Regulations (NI) 1995, which relate to the noise generated from newly constructed or upgraded roads; and the Environmental Noise Regulations (NI) 2006, which relate to general noise.

The results of these assessments indicated there was no requirement for any noise mitigation measures.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has considered erecting sound proofing structures to prevent road noise at the Ardmore Area of Belfast.

(AQW 35075/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to the answer I provided to Assembly Question AQW 35073/11-15.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development what action Northern Ireland Water is taking to complete the storm water plans at Ballyclare Waste Water Treatment Plant; and to detail when the works will be complete.

(AQW 35094/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Northern Ireland Water is progressing two separate workstreams in relation to storm water plans and Ballyclare Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW):

NI Water is currently undertaking an appraisal to (i) increase the capacity of the treatment membranes and/or (ii) upgrade the storm tank holding capacity at the Ballyclare WWTW. This appraisal work should be completed by the end of December 2014. It is expected that the membranes will all be replaced in the 2015 calendar year, however any other capital works on site will be dependent on the outcome of the Utility Regulator's PC15 Final Determination, due in December 2014.

Following consideration by the inter-departmental Stormwater Management Group NIW has prioritised progression of the Ballyclare Drainage Area Study (DAS). A new sewerage network model is being built and flow monitoring is currently taking place on site to allow the model to be verified. The model should be completed by the end of October 2014 and it will then be used to assess the issues and develop outline solutions. Some storm separation works in the Ballyclare WWTW sewerage network are likely to be amongst the first capital works to progress in the PC15 period as part of the PC15 'Storm Separation' pilot capital funding, subject again to the Regulator's Final Determination and the findings of the DAS.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on NI Water's investigation on the combined sewer on Dunadry Road, Co. Antrim, including the pumping station at the bridge in the grounds of the Dunadry Inn; and to detail (a) when; and (b) how the report will be published.

(AQW 35149/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that its investigation into the combined sewer on Dunadry Road and Dunadry Wastewater Pumping Station is currently underway and being carried out in accordance with the company's Capital Investment Appraisal System requirements. The appraisal study and project business case are expected to be completed in August 2014, however the completed appraisal study report is an internal document which will contain commercially sensitive information. I have asked NI Water to send you an executive summary of the report when it becomes available.

Emerging findings from the appraisal study indicate that additional wastewater storage volume is a key requirement at the Dunadry Wastewater Pumping Station in order to reduce unsatisfactory intermittent discharges into the Six Mile River. This work will be considered by NI Water during its PC15 (2015-2021) capital works prioritisation process.

Department for Social Development

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to people with illnesses or disabilities who were on benefits but have been classed for work, (i) whether staff at Social Security Agencies can assist or advise on rights and legalities, when prospective employers reject job applicants on the grounds of illness or disability which was lawfully declared on application forms or at interview; (ii) whether Social Security Staff report such employers; if so, (iii) to whom do they report; and (iv) how often this has occurred since the introduction of Welfare Reform.

(AQW 34942/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The Social Security Agency's primary responsibility is to pay social security benefits accurately and securely and to give advice and information about these benefits. The Agency has no responsibility for providing claimants with advice on their rights and legalities where prospective employers reject their job applications on the grounds of illness or disability. The NI Direct Website provides information for people with disabilities and also provides links to other useful websites including the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 25 July 2014

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the benefits, including financial benefits, to the economy of the Barosa Task Force in each year since its inception.

(AQW 32125/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The recommendations by the Barroso Taskforce in its report of 2007, which were adopted by all EU Commissioners, provided a clear roadmap for enhanced Northern Ireland engagement with Europe. The emphasis of the Taskforce Report was on helping the region to generate more growth and jobs and in that way create more economic opportunities and thereby underpinning the peace process. The Report specifically cited a low level of entrepreneurship with low investment in research and innovation, persistent negative image of the region to international investors and a high proportion of the population detached from the world of work. The Taskforce drew and continues to draw our attention to the many competitive European Programmes available to us to help enhance our investment in research and development and transport and energy initiatives to help support our infrastructure development.

In response to the Barroso Taskforce Report, we established an inter-departmental co-ordinating group, the objectives of which are:

- promoting the Executive's interests within the European Union;
- raising the Executive's positive profile throughout Europe;
- raising awareness and encouraging participation in European matters;
- access EU funding; and
- sharing experience of building peace and conflict resolution in a divided society with Europe and beyond.

Indirectly, the Taskforce has also stimulated enhanced co-ordination across stakeholders through the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum, jointly chaired by OFMDFM and the Belfast City Council.

More specifically and in response to the opportunities that the Taskforce presented, the Executive set itself a target of increasing drawdown from Competitive European Programmes of 20%. In terms of the financial benefit therefore, this translates at the halfway point in the budget period (March 2013) to a financial gain ie an additional £14.5 million in drawdown.

The Barroso Taskforce ensures that the region is very much on the Commission's 'radar' at the most senior levels. This creates a context in which advice is more readily sought and given, senior officials and Commissioners are more readily accessible and Commission officials more willing to give their time, and travel to participate in meetings, seminars and conferences locally. Consequently, we are better placed to influence key decisions in Europe such as the allocation of 150 million euros to a 4th peace programme. This ultimately translates into jobs and growth, and helps support and strengthen our economy.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list the victims groups being funded by the Victims Support Service.

(AQW 33909/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The table below lists the Victims groups funded by the Victims and Survivors Service under its Victim Support Programme.

Group Name (Under £75k)	Group Name (Over £75k)
	Aisling Centre
County Armagh RUC GC	Antrim Youth Information and Counselling Centre
UDR Regimental Association Enniskillen	Ashton Community Trust
	Aurora Counselling
Newry and Mourne Voluntary Welfare Group	

Group Name (Under £75k)	Group Name (Over £75k)
	CALMS
	Centre for Health and Wellbeing
USCA North Antrim	Colin Community Counselling Project
Larne Voluntary Welfare Group	
UDR Association Lisnaskea	Corpus Christi
Royal Irish Rangers Enniskillen	County Armagh Phoenix
Green Shoot Productions	Crossfire Trust
Ulster Human Rights Watch	Cruse Bereavement Care
	Cunamh
Eglinton Building Bridges	Derry Well Woman
Royal Irish Regiment Fermanagh and South Tyrone	Ely Centre
Military and Police Support of West Tyrone	Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society
Wounded Police and Families Association	FAIR
UDR Regimental Association Castlederg	Families Beyond Conflict
RUC GC Association Omagh	Families Moving On
Omagh Police Wives	Firinne
FAIR	FASA
Regimental Association of UDR CGC Clogher	HAVEN
	Have Your Tomorrows
Workers' Educational Association	Holy Trinity Centre
	HURT
Koram Centre	JIVT
Disabled Police Officers' Association	Lenadoon Community Forum
	MAST
	Military and Police Support of West Tyrone
Castle Hill Foundation	MUVE Project
East Belfast Community Counselling Centre	N I Music Therapy Trust
USCA Omagh	NI Phoenix
	New Life Counselling Service
	NOVA
Carers' Association	Omagh Support and Self Help Group
Tullyvallen Family Support	Pat Finucane Centre
	Peace Factory
	Praxis Care
	REACT
	Regimental Association of UDR Coleraine
	Relatives For Justice
	SDAHW
	SEFF
	South Armagh Rural Women's Network
	Springhill Community House

Group Name (Under £75k)	Group Name (Over £75k)
	Survivors of Trauma
	Tyrone East Phoenix
	VAST
	Wave Belfast
	West Tyrone Voice

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the applications received for funding for anti-racism projects since May 2011; and which of these applications took longer than six months to process.

(AQW 34431/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Around 100 applications have been received under the Minority Ethnic Development Fund (MEDF) since May 2011. These include projects relating to racial equality – such as the provision of English language classes, information, help and advice.

In addition to the MEDF, organisations can also apply to the Central Good Relations Fund. We gave formal approval to the establishment of a Central Good Relations Fund in July 2012 and the 2012/13 scheme was launched on 8 January 2013.

OFMDFM also supports a wide range of good relations work through the District Council Good Relations Programme. This includes work to tackle racism and improve race relations across all 26 District Councils. However, this work is delivered by the Councils and applications for project funding do not come to the Department directly. OFMDFM provides 75% of the cost of the District Council Good Relations Programme with Councils providing the remaining 25%. The number of applications is not known.

Ms Ruane asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict which was attended by the junior Ministers.

(AQO 6405/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Junior Minister Bell and Junior Minister McCann attended the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which took place in London between 10 and 13 June.

The aim of the Summit was to create a sense of irreversible movement towards ending the use of rape and sexual violence in conflict.

The Northern Ireland Gender Equality Strategy strives to eliminate gender-based violence in our society and to ensure the equal participation of women in conflict resolution.

At the Summit, Junior Ministers met with a delegation of women who work in community organisations across Northern Ireland. They will be looking at how good practice shared at the conference can be applied in Northern Ireland.

Mr Rogers asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the action plan to address Child Poverty under commitment 37 of the Programme for Government 2011-15.

(AQO 6406/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We gave a Commitment in the Programme for Government to fulfil our statutory obligations under the Child Poverty Act.

The Strategy – Improving Children's Life Chances – set the context for an action plan which all departments gave a commitment to contribute. In accordance with the requirements of the Act, we have conducted annual reviews of our Child Poverty Strategy, and we have laid reports emerging from those reviews in the Assembly.

The Child Poverty Act also requires that we revise the Strategy every three years. To help inform the revised Strategy, which we hope to lay in the Assembly shortly, we commissioned work from the National Children's Bureau to establish a cross governmental approach in which every department understands its role in reducing child poverty and makes an effective contribution to improving outcomes. A Child Poverty Outcomes Framework was published last October. The framework is based on the key principles of Outcomes Based Accountability which has a track record of delivering improvements in outcomes internationally.

Fulfilling our statutory requirements is clearly important, but it is only one element of our efforts to tackle child poverty and its impacts.

Our Department is driving the Delivering Social Change Framework to address priority social policy areas.

Seven Signature Projects are being taken forward, across departments to:

- support families;
- address barriers to learning;

- improve literacy and numeracy; and
- support job creation within local communities.

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what consideration is being given to safeguarding legislation to protect older people.

(AQW 34866/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Work on the development of an Adult Safeguarding Policy is being taken forward by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in partnership with the Department of Justice. Both departments intend to engage with key stakeholders over the summer months and commence public consultation on the draft policy in Autumn 2014. This consultation will also seek views on a range of legislative options to underpin the policy.

Mr Easton asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list the Community Houses in North Down and Ards that have applied to the Social Investment Fund for building extensions to increase capacity and training facilities.

(AQW 34915/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Subject to approval of the Economic Appraisal, a scoping exercise will be undertaken to ascertain the potential value to improve the community houses listed below:

- 32 South Avenue, Whitehill (Bangor);
- 26 Rathgill Park, Rathgill (Bangor);
- 21 Breezemount Park, Breezemount (Bangor);
- 189 Ballyree Drive, Bloomfield (Bangor);
- 2 Kilcooley Square (Bangor);
- 18B Cuan Place, Scrabo Estate (Ards);
- 60D Beechfield Drive, (Donaghadee); and
- 23a Queens Square, East End (Ards).

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 33877/11-15, what projects are supported by the Minority Ethnic Development Fund; and how much funding has been received by each project in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35093/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Awards from the Minority Ethnic Development Fund for each of the past complete financial years were as follows:

2009-10	Development Funding
An Munia Tober Regional	£ 45,000
An Munia Tober Belfast	£ 30,000
Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum (BIEF)	£ 45,000
Barnardos' Tuar Ceatha	£ 41,436
Belfast Islamic Centre	£ 45,000
Chinese Welfare Association	£ 45,000
Craigavon Intercultural Programme	£ 45,000
Craigavon Travellers Support Committee	£ 45,000
Derry Travellers	£ 45,000
East Belfast Independent Advice Centre	£ 38,000
Foyle Multicultural Forum	£ 43,716
GEMS NI	£ 22,528
Indian Community Centre	£ 45,000
Multicultural Resource Centre (MCRC)	£ 45,000
NICRAS	£ 45,000
NICEM	£ 45,000
Old Warren Project	£ 43,278
Polish Association NI	£ 45,000

2009-10	Development Funding
South Belfast Partnership Board	£ 45,000
STEP	£ 45,000
Wah Hep	£ 45,000
Youth Action	£ 45,000

	Project Funding
An Munia Tober	£ 15,000
Arts Ekta	£ 15,000
Belfast Jewish Community	£ 15,000
Beyond Skin	£ 15,000
Chinese Welfare Association	£ 15,000
Craigavon Intercultural Programme	£ 10,100
Saint Vincent De Paul Armagh	£ 15,000
Windsor Women's Centre	£ 12,036

2010-11	Development Funding
An Munia Tober	£45,000.00
ArtsEkta	£45,000.00
Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum	£45,000.00
Barnardo's Tuar Ceatha	£45,000.00
Ballymoney Community Resource Centre	£35,002.48
Chinese Welfare Association	£45,000.00
Craigavon Intercultural Programme	£45,000.00
Craigavon Travellers Support Committee	£45,000.00
Derry Travellers	£45,000.00
East Belfast Independent Advice Centre	£40,124.60
EMBRACE	£33,693.14
GEMS	£25,087.65
Homeplus NI	£38,284.40
MCRC	£45,000.00
NICEM	£45,000.00
NICRAS	£45,000.00
Old Warren Partnership	£45,000.00
Polish Association	£45,000.00
SEEDS	£45,000.00
South Belfast Partnership Board	£45,000.00
STEP	£45,000.00
Wah Hep	£45,000.00

	Project Funding
Barnardo's	£15,000.00
BIEF	£5,000.00

	Project Funding
Business in the Community	£12,400.00
Craigavon Intercultural Programme	£14,836.00
Chinese Welfare Association	£15,000.00
South Belfast Partnership Board	£15,000.00
SEEDS	£14,750.00
STEP	£15,000.00
Training for women network	£15,000.00
Wah Hep	£15,000.00
Willowfield Parish	£8,900.00
Windsor Womens' Centre	£14,410.00

2011-12	Development Funding
African and Caribbean Support Organisation ACSONI	£30,432.60
An Munia Tober	£45,000.00
ArtsEkta	£45,000.00
Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum	£45,000.00
Ballymoney Community Resource Centre	£43,894.60
Barnardo's Tuar Ceatha	£44,992.00
Belfast Islamic Centre	£45,000.00
Chinese Welfare Association	£45,000.00
Community Foundation NI	£45,000.00
Cookstown and Western Shores	£36,844.00
Craigavon Intercultural Programme	£45,000.00
Derry Travellers	£45,000.00
EMBRACE	£44,388.00
Foyle Multicultural Forum	£27,750.00
Homeplus NI	£45,000.00
Multi- Cultural Resource Centre	£45,000.00
NICEM	£45,000.00
NICRAS	£45,000.00
Omagh Ethnic Minorities	£44,974.00
SBPB	£45,000.00
STEP	£45,000.00
The Welcome Project	£45,000.00
Wah Hep	£45,000.00

	Project Funding
ArtsEkta	£15,000.00
BIEF	£6,500.00
Barnardo's	£15,000.00
Multi- Cultural Resource Centre	£15,000.00
NICRAS	£14,983.00

	Project Funding
North Down YMCA	£14,903.00
STEP	£15,000.00

2012-13	Development funding
African and Caribbean Support Organisation ACSONI	£30,434.00
An Munia Tober	£44,551.50
ArtsEkta Ltd	£45,000.00
Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum (BIEF)	£45,000.00
Ballymoney Community Resource Centre	£43,881.77
Barnardo's Tuar Ceatha	£44,500.00
Bryson Intercultural	£22,500.00
Chinese Welfare Association	£45,000.00
Community Foundation for Northern Ireland	£45,000.00
Cookstown & Western Shores Area Network	£41,991.14
Craigavon Intercultural Programme	£45,000.00
EMBRACE	£44,693.00
Foyle Multicultural Forum	£27,735.00
Homeplus Ltd	£45,000.00
Multi-Cultural Resource Centre (MCRC)	£22,500.00
NICEM	£45,000.00
NICRAS	£45,000.00
Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group	£44,993.83
South Belfast Partnership Board	£10,440.31
South Belfast Roundtable	£34,559.69
South Tyrone Empowerment Programme	£45,000.00
The Welcome Project	£45,000.00
Wah Hep Chinese Community Association	£45,000.00
Law Centre NI	£32,500.00

2013-14	Development funding
ACSONI - (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
An Munia Tober- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Armagh Travellers Support Group- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
ArtsEkta - (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
ArtsEkta - (Tier 1)	£15,000.00
Ballymena Inter Ethnic Forum Tier 2	£45,000.00
Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum Tier 1	£3,670.00
Ballymoney Community Resource Centre- (Tier 2)	£44,292.52
Barnardo's Tuar Ceatha- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Belfast Islamic Centre- (Tier 2)	£14,975.00
Bryson Intercultural- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Chinese Welfare Association - (Recruitment Costs)	£1,500.00

2013-14	Development funding
Chinese Welfare Association- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Connect NICEM (Tier 1)	£15,000.00
Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Craigavon Intercultural Programme - (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Craigavon Travellers Support Committee- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Dialogue for diversity(Tier 1)	£3,573.65
EMBRACE- (Tier 2)	£44,386.36
GEMS NI- (Tier 2)	£27,985.74
Homeplus NI- (Tier 2)	£44,996.99
NICEM (Tier 1)	£15,000.00
NICEM North West (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
NICEM (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
NICRAS (Tier 2)	£39,722.81
North Down YMCA- (Tier 2)	£20,076.00
North Down YMCA - (Recruitment Costs)	£545.00
North West Migrants Forum - (Tier 2)	£1,139.10
Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group - (Tier 2)	£44,984.50
South Belfast Roundtable (Tier 1)	£10,125.00
South Belfast Roundtable (Tier 2)	£43,122.00
South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (Tier 1)	£2,300.00
South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (Tier 3)	£75,000.00
The Welcome Project- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00
Wah Hep Chinese Community Association- (Tier 2)	£45,000.00

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether there are any ongoing investigations relating to any Public Private Partnership projects that their Department is associated with; and if so, to detail the projects.

(AQW 35103/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: OFMDFM is not involved in any Public Private Partnerships for which there are ongoing investigations.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what assurances they can give that childcare for children with a disability will remain a priority; and that the current and future funding allocation for summer schemes, training provision and small capital grants to cater for children with a disability will be guaranteed.

(AQW 35187/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Childcare for children with a disability is and will remain a priority of the Bright Start Childcare Strategy. Childcare for children with a disability is currently addressed in the first phase of the Strategy under Key First Action 6, responsibility for which rests with DHSSPS. To date, Bright Start has allocated approximately £500,000 to help childcare providers meet the needs of children with a disability. OFMDFM and DHSSPS officials are currently liaising to confirm the resources needed to deliver further assistance, including training, small grants and summer schemes, in the present financial year.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the current funding amount secured for the childcare strategy Bright Start; and how any shortfall will be found.

(AQW 35188/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The first phase of the Bright Start Childcare Strategy, including 15 Key First Actions to address the main childcare priorities identified during consultation and research, was launched in September 2013. There is currently provision of £13 million to resource the Key First Actions up to 2017/18. OFMDFM will continue to liaise with

the departments responsible for the Actions to confirm funding needs. Further resources will, if required, be secured under normal public expenditure processes.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what projects the Department is prioritising for children with disabilities through the disability strategy; and to list the projects funded as part of the disability strategy.
(AQW 35189/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Since publication of the Executive's Disability Strategy, we have taken forward several projects for children with disabilities. OFMDFM worked with Disability Action to develop a Schools Educational Resource Pack for teachers and youth workers to help teach pupils and young people about the rights of people with disabilities. We have also supported Special Olympics Ulster to provide young people with learning disabilities an opportunity to actively participate in public life.

We are currently considering a number of further projects submitted by Departments to deliver outcomes under the Strategy, to be taken forward within the Delivering Social Change Framework. An annual report on the Strategy will provide a full account of our work under the Strategy and will be published in due course.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much funding is available to realise the disability strategy, particularly for children and young people with disabilities.
(AQW 35190/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We are currently considering a number of proposed projects submitted by departments to deliver outcomes under the Executive's Disability Strategy, to be taken forward within the Delivering Social Change Framework. The proposed projects cover a range of disabilities and a range of ages from children through to older people. Funding for agreed projects will need to be bid for in the normal manner.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the disability strategy has improved the lives of children and young people with disabilities and their families.
(AQW 35191/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Since the publication of the Executive's Disability Strategy in February 2013, we have taken forward a number of actions that impact positively on the lives of children and young people with disabilities and their families.

On 2 May 2013, OFMDFM hosted a major, inclusive disability awareness conference with representatives from across government and the disability sector to consider how current arrangements met the needs of all people with disabilities on the basis of equality.

Our officials have worked in partnership with Disability Action to develop a resource pack for teachers and youth workers to assist in teaching pupils and young people about the rights of people with disabilities. The Resource Pack was issued to 341 schools and youth clubs in December 2013. Feedback has been very positive.

We have also provided funding to Special Olympics Ulster to give young people with learning disabilities with an opportunity to actively participate in public life. Participation in this programme has helped these young people to thrive and grow in confidence, improving their quality of life.

An annual report on the delivery of the Disability Strategy for 2013/2014 will be published setting out these and other actions that all departments have undertaken under the Strategy in its first year.

We are currently considering a number of further projects submitted by departments to deliver outcomes under the Disability Strategy, to be taken forward within the Delivering Social Change Framework.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the gender balance on the public bodies linked to her Department; and to detail the steps that she has taken to ensure that women are not under-represented.
(AQW 35083/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): Earlier this year I met with the Commissioner for Public Appointments, John Keanie, and discussed with him his report into Under Representation and Lack of Diversity in Public Appointments. As his report makes clear, women, young people, ethnic minorities and people with a disability are under-represented on the boards of public bodies.

I have instructed my Department to initiate a review, led by a senior official, to address the under-representation of women on the boards of DARD's five NonDepartmental Public Bodies, and prepare a report recommending specific actions, goals and timetables. I believe that this work will also inform how we improve diversity more generally on our departmental public bodies and other fora for which my Department is responsible.

This review is ongoing.

Department of Education

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the language classes replacing the Woodlands Speech and Language unit, (i) how many children require Speech and Language Therapy provision in the new proposed units; (ii) how many children will require ongoing provision in the Woodlands Language Unit; (iii) what speech and language therapy assistant provisions will be in place; and (iv) what therapy resources and budget have been set aside for the new units to meet the needs of the children.

(AQW 35131/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The Western Education and Library Board (WELB) has advised as follows:

- (i) 18 children will require speech and language therapy provision in the proposed new classes;
- (ii) 20 children currently require ongoing provision at the Woodlands speech and language classes;
- (iii) the provision of speech and language therapy will be determined by the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHST) Speech and Language Therapy Department;
- (iv) an allocation of £10k has been made to each of the three schools concerned from the WELB to facilitate the purchase of resources for the new speech and language classes. This will include the purchase of specific resources which have been recommended by the WHST Speech and Language Therapy Department.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education why St Columbkille's Primary School, Carrickmore was not included in the list of Major Capital Projects to be Advanced in Planning, which was announced on Tuesday 24 June 2014; and whether his Department will be in a position to include this school in his next list of proposed new build schools to be advanced in planning.

(AQW 35199/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Catholic Council for Maintained Schools identified St Columbkille's Primary School along with its other priorities for major capital investment. I approved a protocol which was used to prioritise those schools included in my latest announcement of 24 June. St Columbkille's Primary School was scored under the protocol however it did not attract a sufficient score to be included in my announced list of schools to be advanced in planning due to budget constraints.

There are many school building projects I would like to fund and difficult decisions have to be made on how to invest the capital budget available to me. This in no way implies that the project for St Columbkille's will not be considered for a new build at some later stage. If the precise nature of any capital works required is determined, bids should continue to be made through the Minor Works or Schools Enhancement programme.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education how his Department plans to progress the issue of capital funding for Dean Maguirc College, Carrickmore.

(AQW 35200/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Dean Maguirc College was one of the schools CCMS included in its list of priorities to be considered for my June 2014 capital investment announcement.

It was considered under 'The Major Works Projects Protocol for Selection of Projects to Proceed in Planning' dated June 2014. The protocol subjected the potential projects to 'Gateway' checks for sustainability and area planning issues prior to the remaining projects being prioritised. Ongoing sustainability issues with Dean Maguirc College – current enrolment is below the level set out in the sustainable schools policy - meant that it did not pass the 'Gateway' and hence could not be included in my 24 June announcement.

Subject to Department of Education (DE) approval, the Western Education & Library Board (WELB) plans to take forward, on behalf of DE and Trustees, works to replace three single mobile classrooms with a new permanent three classroom new-build block with toilet provision at Dean Maguirc College. WELB is progressing with the design, statutory approvals and appointment of a Contractor by March 2015. It is anticipated that works will begin on site in April 2015 with completion in October 2015.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Education to detail the annual average cost of educating a child in (i) primary; (ii) post-primary schools in County Fermanagh in each of the last ten years, broken down by sector.

(AQW 35218/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not hold information on annual average costs at phase, region or sector level, as particular costs, including central costs, are not disaggregated to these levels. However, the specific costs of the schools are held and the tables below show average expenditure per pupil in County Fermanagh primary and post-primary schools, broken down by sector, in each of the ten financial years from 2004/05 to 2013/14 inclusive.

County Fermanagh Primary Schools 2004/05 to 2013/14

Year	Average Expenditure per Pupil £			
	Controlled	Maintained	Irish Medium	Grant- Maintained Integrated
2013/14	£4,187	£4,020	£6,419	£3,897
2012/13	£4,020	£3,883	£6,045	£3,817
2011/12	£4,344	£3,911	£6,719	£3,988
2010/11	£4,261	£4,031	£5,927	£3,890
2009/10	£4,044	£3,949	£6,006	£3,618
2008/09	£4,174	£3,743	£5,919	£3,487
2007/08	£3,455	£3,336	£5,773	£3,197
2006/07	£3,535	£3,140	£4,401	£3,094
2005/06	£3,247	£3,034	£4,062	£2,847
2004/05	£2,772	£2,823	£2,257	£2,716

County Fermanagh Post-Primary Schools 2004/05 to 2013/14

Year	Average Expenditure per Pupil £				
	Controlled	Maintained	Controlled Grammar	Voluntary Grammar	Grant- Maintained Integrated
2013/14	£7,733	£6,338	£4,436	£4,814	£6,074
2012/13	£7,967	£6,270	£4,017	£5,008	£6,172
2011/12	£7,112	£6,577	£5,312	£5,122	£5,989
2010/11	£6,493	£5,800	£4,432	£4,863	£5,923
2009/10	£5,827	£5,621	£4,416	£4,814	£5,495
2008/09	£5,764	£5,534	£4,691	£4,790	£5,566
2007/08	£5,030	£5,286	£4,032	£4,712	£5,566
2006/07	£5,406	£5,274	£4,032	£4,217	£5,174
2005/06	£4,799	£5,233	£3,872	£4,092	£5,095
2004/05	£4,327	£4,389	£3,403	£3,877	£4,531

Notes:

- (i) Data for Primary Schools include Nursery Classes within Primary Schools. It is not possible to disaggregate the costs of Nursery Class pupils from those of primary pupils in the parent school;
- (ii) Data included for 2013-14 are still provisional pending publication of audited outturn statements by the appropriate Funding Authority – the Western Education and Library Board, in respect of Controlled and Maintained schools; and the Department of Education, in respect of Voluntary Grammar and Grant-Maintained Integrated Schools.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education whether he will ensure that all teachers and staff, including those employed by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, can access the Cycle to Work Scheme.

(AQW 35220/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The decision whether to offer a 'Cycle to Work' Scheme to employees is a matter for individual employers.

I understand that the Chief Executives of the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) have determined that in the current challenging financial environment they cannot support such a scheme. This decision was recently reviewed by the employers who decided that they will continue not to fund the scheme due to current budget constraints. I am advised that the matter has and is being kept under regular review.

Voluntary Grammar schools are employers in their own right and a decision on whether or not to offer a Cycle to Work Scheme through salary sacrifice arrangements to all staff is a matter for the Board of Governors of each school.

Department for Employment and Learning

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether there are any ongoing investigations relating to any Public Private Partnership projects that his Department is associated with; and if so, to detail the projects.

(AQW 35104/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): There are no ongoing investigations in relation to Public Private Partnerships within my Department other than the standard value for money assessments which are conducted from time to time.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what percentage of the incubation unit at Carn Industrial Estate is currently utilised; and to detail the nature of the current businesses on site.

(AQW 34689/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): Carn Industrial Estate is not owned by Invest NI having been disposed of by the Industrial Development Board by way of public auction in 1995.

Invest NI understands that the incubation unit within the Carn Estate is owned by the Craigavon Industrial Development Organisation (CIDO). As Invest NI has no financial or operational responsibility for the organisation you may wish to contact their management directly.

The contact details for CIDO can be found on their website www.cido.co.uk.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether there are plans to create an enterprise zone in North Down.

(AQW 34966/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There are no immediate plans to create an enterprise zone in North Down.

There was one pilot Enterprise Zone announced in the Budget statement on 19 March and it will only offer Enhanced Capital Allowances (ECAs) as an incentive. This pilot Enterprise Zone will be designated in Coleraine.

The Chancellor's budget announcement on 19 March has extended the current legislation for ECAs for a further three years to 2020. This allows us to consider the potential option to propose other Enterprise Zones offering ECAs in other regions within Northern Ireland, subject to the existence of a potential capital-intensive project which could demonstrate economic benefit and where the benefits of an ECA would clearly outweigh the benefit from other forms of support.

The final decision to designate a zone offering ECAs is ultimately one for HM Treasury who would consider the cost to HMT, the extent to which Northern Ireland is benefiting in line with other parts of the UK, and the cost to the NI Block should additional zones be designated beyond those funded by the UK Government.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of enterprise zones.

(AQW 34967/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The UK Government's Economic Pact, published on 14 June 2013, set out 3 commitments in relation to Enterprise Zones, focusing on Enhanced Capital Allowances (ECAs) which permit 100% first year allowances for qualifying plant and machinery expenditure.

There was one pilot Enterprise Zone announced in the Budget statement on 19 March and it will only offer ECAs as an incentive.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the criteria an area must meet to be designated as an enterprise zone.

(AQW 34969/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The UK Government's Economic Pact, published on 14 June 2013, set out 3 commitments in relation to Enterprise Zones, focusing on Enhanced Capital Allowances (ECAs) which permit 100% first year allowances for qualifying plant and machinery expenditure.

The pilot Enterprise Zone announced in the Budget statement on 19 March will only offer ECAs as an incentive. State Aid rules stipulate that ECAs cannot be offered alongside other forms of regional aid such as Selective Financial Assistance, business rate discounts etc.

The over-riding criteria therefore for any zone is that it will only be attractive to large capital-intensive projects where ECAs would provide an attractive incentive and would outweigh other forms of available financial support.

The final decision to designate a zone offering ECAs is ultimately one for HM Treasury who would consider the cost to HMT, the extent to which Northern Ireland is benefiting in line with other parts of the UK, and the cost to the NI Block should additional zones be designated beyond those funded by the UK Government.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the action she has taken following each public petition presented to the Assembly and forwarded to her Department.

(AQW 34973/11-15)

Mrs Foster: On 6 December 2011, a public petition tabled by Stephen Agnew, MLA called “on the Northern Ireland Assembly to place an immediate and permanent ban on the process known as hydraulic fracturing and all related preparatory and exploratory work in Northern Ireland.”

On 6 December 2011, a No Day Named Motion stated that “a moratorium should be placed on the onshore and offshore exploration, development and production of shale gas by withdrawing licences for hydraulic fracturing.”

In discharging my Executive authority, my decisions are informed both by the terms of Assembly resolutions on matters for which I am responsible and a range of other relevant policy and practical considerations.

As my Department had not issued any licences for hydraulic fracturing there were none to withdraw – this remains the position.

In 2012, in conjunction with the then Environment Minister, I established the Shale Gas Regulators Forum in recognition of the need for collaboration between Government Departments and bodies involved in the preparation for shale-gas exploration in Northern Ireland, and possibly in due course its regulation.

The Forum is continuing to work to coordinate the activities of a number of regulatory bodies and to ensure a joined-up approach to regulation and monitoring.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 34376/11-15, of the total funding approved for Project Definition support, how much was taken up by businesses, in each of the last four years.

(AQW 35082/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Please see table below which shows payments made to businesses in respect of Project Definition support in the years 2010 – 2014.

Year	Total paid to businesses £m
2010-11	0.91
2011-12	0.43
2012-13	0.51
2013-14	0.42

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Directive and Online Dispute Resolution Regulation and how it will be implemented in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 35090/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) is leading on implementation of Directive 2013/11/EU (the “ADR Directive”) but my Department has a particular interest in view of its consumer affairs, trading standards and energy responsibilities.

The Directive does not make alternative dispute resolution mandatory for either the consumer or business but requires Member States to ensure alternative dispute resolution is available for any contractual dispute that a consumer has with a business.

Many consumers and traders are not aware of existing alternative dispute resolution, with only a small proportion of consumers knowing how to make use of such schemes or indeed which scheme to use. I consider that the ADR Directive addresses many of these issues and should bring benefits for both consumers and businesses.

I support UK wide implementation by regulations to be made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972. This is the most effective and timely way to achieve implementation by the due date of July 2015. There are no unique Northern Ireland considerations which merit separate Northern Ireland implementation, particularly as most consumer legislation is UK wide and the ADR Directive permits existing schemes to be recognised for the purposes of the Directive provided they meet minimum standards. My Department will continue to liaise with DFP and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to ensure that Northern Ireland considerations are fully taken into account in the UK legislation.

The Regulation on Online Dispute Resolution (“ODR”) is linked with the ADR Directive and will automatically come into force in January 2016 across the European Union. Under ODR each Member State must designate one Online Dispute Resolution

contact point. ODR suggests that the role of contact point could be fulfilled by the European Consumer Centres (ECCs). The UK ECC is hosted by the Trading Standards Institute. The UK Government in conjunction with the relevant Northern Ireland Departments are considering who should take on the role.

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how she will ensure that the existing protections in place for energy consumers are not weakened by the implementation of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Directive.
(AQW 35091/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Department of Finance and Personnel is leading on the implementation of Directive 2013/11/EU (the "ADR Directive") in Northern Ireland. My Department will continue to engage closely with the Department of Finance and Personnel and the UK Department of Business Innovation and Skills to ensure that the interests of NI energy consumers are taken into account in the proposed UK-wide implementing Regulations to be made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972.

There is a legislative framework and a wide range of measures already in place through licences, dispute and complaints arrangements, price and tariff controls to protect the interests of energy consumers.

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what direct engagement she and her officials have had with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in regards to the implementation of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Directive.
(AQW 35096/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has been fully engaged with both DFP and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to ensure that Northern Ireland interests are protected. My Department will also continue to engage closely with DFP and BIS to ensure that NI considerations are fully taken into account in the proposed UK wide implementing Regulations to be made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) her assessment of the prospect for the underground gasification of coal as a method of extracting hydrocarbons; and (ii) the applicants and current and past holders of petroleum exploration licences that have referenced this process with her Department as a potential method of extraction of hydrocarbons; in the last five years.
(AQW 35120/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) The historical coal mining districts of Northern Ireland in County Tyrone and Ballycastle do not have any significant Underground Coal Gasification (UCG) resource potential because of extensive coal extraction and the relatively complex geology. Some deposits at Crumlin, Ballymoney and east Tyrone contain thick lignite seams at depths suitable for the UCG process. However, UCG is not yet a well-proven technology; without Carbon Capture and Storage the UCG process produces high greenhouse gas emissions and has associated environmental issues. As such it is highly unlikely that UCG could be used to produce gas in Northern Ireland in the foreseeable future.
- (ii) UCG is not permitted under the Petroleum Production Act (Northern Ireland) 1964 in which the definition of "petroleum" includes any mineral oil or relative hydrocarbon and natural gas existing in its natural condition in strata, but does not include coal or bituminous shales or other stratified deposits from which oil can be extracted by destructive distillation. UCG produces 'syngas' from coal and is excluded by this definition.

In the last 5 years no applicants or holders of petroleum licenses have referred to UCG in supporting documentation.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether there are any ongoing investigations relating to any Public Private Partnership projects that her Department is associated with; and if so, to detail the projects.
(AQW 35152/11-15)

Mrs Foster: DETI has one Public Private Partnership project and there has not been any investigation into this project.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how her Department can assist people who are economically inactive.
(AQW 35155/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Executive has recognised in the Programme for Government and Northern Ireland Economic Strategy that Economic Inactivity is one of the most persistent problems facing the local economy. It is only through adopting a coordinated and strategic approach across Departments that we can hope to address some of the structural issues which are restricting individual's access to the labour market.

I have been working with Minister Farry, supported by Ministers McCausland and Poots, to develop a strategy to reduce economic inactivity through skills, training, incentives and job creation.

A public consultation on a Strategic Framework was carried out earlier this year and officials are now working to finalise the Strategy which Minister Farry and I hope to bring to the Executive later in the year. The overarching strategic goal is to

contribute towards a stable and competitive employment rate of over 70% by 2023. The Strategy will target two major inactive categories; individuals with family commitments and the long-term sick and disabled.

Within DETI, our focus is to improve the economic competitiveness of the Northern Ireland economy in line with the ultimate aim of the Executives' Economic Strategy. We are doing this by supporting businesses to grow and to export more – this focus will increase employment and opportunity for all.

Contributing to the rising number of employment opportunities, Invest NI has delivered its most successful year in 2013/14 in terms of job promotion. Over the course of the year, Invest NI promoted 10,800 jobs and secured investment totalling £775million in the Northern Ireland economy.

Specifically there are elements of Invest NI's Jobs Fund which are designed to provide opportunities for the economically inactive. Since its introduction in April 2011, 2405 of the jobs created through the Jobs Fund have gone to people who were either unemployed or economically inactive. These jobs have been created in existing private sector businesses, social enterprises or through jobs created by new business start-ups by individuals living in a Neighbourhood Renewal Area and young people aged 16 – 24 not previously in employment, education or training (NEET).

Invest NI also provides sponsorship support to the Women in Business Network's

Women into Business programme. The programme is aimed at promoting, supporting and empowering economically inactive women in Northern Ireland to start their own business or aid them into sustained employment.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what licences must be obtained from her Department for consent to drill exploratory bore holes in relation to petroleum extraction and storage; and how the licensing regime differs from that in (i) the rest of the United Kingdom; and (ii) the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 35185/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Petroleum Licence holders in Northern Ireland are obliged to seek written permission from my Department before they start drilling operations. DETI only grants a consent to drill if it is satisfied that all regulatory obligations will be met and that either planning permission or permitted development rights have been approved by DOE Planning.

DETI will also assess the proposed operations to ensure that they are in accordance with good industry practice.

A range of regulatory authorities are likely to be involved in determining whether drilling may proceed, and under what conditions - DOE has primary responsibility for planning and environmental matters, HSENI has broad responsibility for health and safety, and local councils regulate environmental health aspects such as noise, light and dust.

The licensing regime in Northern Ireland is broadly similar to that of the rest of the United Kingdom. In December 2013 the Department of Energy & Climate Change published a Regulatory Roadmap: Onshore oil and gas exploration in the UK regulation and best practice which illustrates a similar approach to regulation throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In the Republic of Ireland the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) grants the statutory consent, either an Exploration Licence or a Prospecting Licence, under the relevant legislation. The detailed proposal for a well is evaluated by the DCENR and requires administrative approval and approval to begin to drill the well. Exploration drilling is a designated activity pursuant to the Petroleum (Exploration and Extraction) Safety Act 2010 and requires a Safety Permit from the Commission for Energy Regulation as the safety regulator. Exploration drilling is subject to Irish environmental legislation but this shares many similarities with UK environmental legislation, as both must be in accordance with the relevant EU Directives.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much electricity is currently generated by (i) small scale; and (ii) large scale renewable sources; and for her assessment of the number of jobs created and sustained in these sectors.

(AQW 35210/11-15)

Mrs Foster: In the 12 month period to end March 2014, 1,595,051 MWh¹ was generated from renewable sources which equates to 19.45% of total electricity consumption. While a breakdown of this renewable generation between small and large scale projects is not available, the vast majority of this generation comes from large scale projects (over 5 MW).

My Department does not hold information on jobs created and sustained in these sectors.

¹ Figures provided by Northern Ireland Electricity

Department of the Environment

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of confirmed incidents of birds of prey persecution involving the (i) poisoning; (ii) shooting; and (iii) trapping of (a) red kite; (b) golden eagle; (c) white-tailed eagle; (d) peregrine; (e) hen harrier; and (f) buzzard, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 34531/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, DOE has no power to investigate or prosecute wildlife offences of this nature. These powers lie with the PSNI. As this is the case, my Department does not hold, or is in a position to collect, the information sought.

I understand that my officials have been in touch with PSNI at officer level and have made them aware of your recent question. PSNI officers confirmed that they would be happy to respond to your query. I would therefore suggest that you refer your question regarding bird of prey persecutions directly to the PSNI Wildlife Liaison Officer, PSNI Headquarters, Brooklyn, Tel No: 07825166206.

MARIANNE.BREEN@psni.pnn.police.uk

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the funding that his Department, and its arm's-length bodies, invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014.

(AQW 34901/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department pays grants to third parties through a range of established grant schemes. The Department also undertakes a limited amount of capital investment in urban areas. Although departmental records of spend are not kept at constituency level a manual analysis of all grants disbursed and all construction projects undertaken, based on postcode, has been carried out for the North Belfast area.

On the basis of this analysis the table below provides details of funding provided by the Department for the financial years 2011-12 to date where the ultimate beneficiary is based in the North Belfast area.

No capital expenditure has been disbursed in the North Belfast area during this period.

The Department's arms-length bodies do not provide funding to third parties.

Funding Recipient	Purpose	£			
		2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Belfast City Council	Funding for dereliction schemes in North Belfast	-	139,172	28,857	-
East Belfast Mission	Funding for their furniture and bicycle repair and reuse facility in North Belfast	33,433	82,137	-	-
The Conservation Volunteers	Ballysillen Community Garden	3,640	-	-	-
Belfast Hills Partnership	Belfast Hills Interpretation Plan	5,000	-	-	-
Belfast Hills Partnership	Belfast Hills Wildfire Project	3,803	-	-	-
Ligoniel Improvement Association	Ligoniel Environmental Rejuvenation Project	-	-	17,600	-
Belfast Buildings Trust	Carlisle Memorial Enterprise Garden	-	-	8,900	-
Groundwork NI	Colin Glen Community and Wildlife Garden	-	-	8,877	-
Friends of Grove Park	Growing Together in Grove	-	-	2,150	-
Former Duncairn Presbyterian Church	Preservation of Listed Building	-	162,850	337,150	-
Lisbreen, Somerton Road	Preservation of Listed Building	-	42,870	206,840	-
St Malachy's College, Antrim Road	Preservation of Listed Building	-	-	114,250	-
Carlisle Memorial Church, Carlisle Circus	Preservation of Listed Building	350,027	42,473	-	-
Old School House, 32 Townsend Street	Preservation of Listed Building	95,015	3,350	-	-
Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, QUB	Vegetation removal at the Scheduled Historic Monument known as Fort William Artillery Fort, Skegoneill Townland	15,247	-	-	-
Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, QUB	Partnership with the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, based in Queen's University, Belfast, the National Trust, and the Belfast Hills Partnership	11,000	-	10,000	6,000

Funding Recipient	Purpose	£			
		2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Totals		517,165	472,852	734,624	6,000

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment how many applications have been received for the next tranche of Dereliction Intervention Funding.

(AQW 34907/11-15)

Mr Durkan: At the end of May 2014, 23 of the 26 councils applied for an allocation of Dereliction Intervention Funding.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, following PSNI investigations into alleged criminal activity based around taxi drivers and operators in West Belfast and County Down that was announced on 27 June 2014, whether any of those suspected of being involved in this activity are registered taxi licence or operator licence holders.

(AQW 34941/11-15)

Mr Durkan: This was a multi agency enforcement operation which targeted illegal taxi related activities and as such a number of licensed taxi drivers and operators are under investigation. It would be inappropriate at this stage to elaborate further as the investigation is ongoing.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of the Environment whether it is against European law for a taxi without a fixed meter to be hailed on-street.

(AQW 34953/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am not aware of any European law that restricts the practical operation of a taxi based on whether a taximeter is fitted or not.

One area of the taxi industry which is, however, regulated in European law is in respect of the manufacture and sale of taximeters. As they are considered to be a 'measuring instrument' they fall within the Measuring Instruments Directive (2004/22/EC). The Directive is implemented in UK wide law by the Measuring Instruments (Taximeters) Regulations 2006 (S.I. 2006 No. 2304). These regulations establish the essential requirements that taximeters have to satisfy prior to their being placed on the market and put into use. This legislation prescribes the requirements that must be fulfilled by equipment for it to be considered a taximeter, but not the circumstances in which it can or must be used.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of the Environment what progress has been made on (i) establishing Approved Taxi Meter Centres; (ii) the definition of an Approved Taxi Meter Centre; and (iii) the number of Approved Taxi Meter Centres required.

(AQW 34954/11-15)

Mr Durkan: On 19 June 2014, in a written statement to the Assembly, I outlined my intentions to make taximeter regulations before the end of the year, with the requirements coming into force from September 2015.

My Department continues to develop the operational model within which taximeters will be tested and sealed and I anticipate being able to provide further information on the details of the arrangements after the summer recess.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of the Environment to list the planning applications that have been approved for the Kiltonga Industrial Estate in Newtownards in each of the last five years; and what conditions have been applied in each case.

(AQW 34959/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A total of 6 planning applications have been approved for Kiltonga Industrial Estate during the last five years. A list of those applications, the date on which they were approved and the conditions attached in each case is provided at Annex A.

Annex A

Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision	Date	Applicant
X/2008/1052/F	Proposed temporary improvement to Kiltonga Estate entrance to facilitate large container vehicles pending implementation of approval of X/2004/1530/F.	Kiltonga Estate, Belfast Road, Newtownards, BT23 2TT	Approval	15/10/09	Mr Will Hollinger

Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision	Date	Applicant
Ref:	Conditions				
X/2008/1052/F	<p>The access hereby permitted, shall be removed and the land restored to its former condition on or before the expiration of 4 years from the date of this permission.</p> <p>Reason: In order to assess the impact the development may have on the character/amenities of the area.</p>				
	<p>The highway improvements indicated generally on 'Drawing No. 11308.01(B)' dated 16th April 2009 shall not be commenced until the developer/applicant has submitted to and received approval from DRD Roads Service.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of road safety.</p>				
	<p>Details of sign and road markings to control the flow of traffic on to the public road shall be provided at the applicant's expense in accordance with the DRD Roads Service requirements prior to the site becoming operational.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of road safety.</p>				
	<p>The development hereby permitted shall not become operational until effective vehicle wheel washing facilities have been installed and brought into operation.</p> <p>Reason: To prevent the carry-over of mud or debris onto the public road in the interests of road safety and convenience.</p>				
	<p>A hard standing and turning area is to be provided and retained during the period of construction within the cartilage of the site.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of road safety.</p>				

Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision	Date	Applicant
X/2009/0914/F	Change of use from warehouse B4 to B2 light industrial.	Unit 2, Kiltonga Industrial Estate, Newtownards	Approval	25/03/10	Bradley Thallon Properties Ltd
Ref:	Conditions				
X/2009/0914/F	<p>As required by Article 34 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, the development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission.</p> <p>Reason: Time Limit.</p>				
Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision	Date	Applicant
X/2010/0060/F	Permanent improvement to Kiltonga Estate entrance to facilitate large container vehicles.	Kiltonga Estate, Belfast Road, Newtownards, Co Down BT23 2TT	Approval	09/06/10	Mr Will Hollinger
Ref:	Conditions				
X/2010/0060/F	<p>As required by Article 34 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, the development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission.</p> <p>Reason: Time Limit.</p>				
	<p>The highway improvements indicated generally on Drawing No. 610-01 dated 22nd January 2010 shall not be commenced until the developer/applicant has submitted to and received approval from DRD Roads Service.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of Road Safety.</p>				

Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision	Date	Applicant
	<p>Details of sign and road markings to control the flow of traffic on to the public road shall be provided at the applicant's expense in accordance with the DRD Roads Service requirements prior to the site becoming operational.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of Road Safety.</p>				
	<p>The development hereby permitted shall not become operational until effective vehicle wheel washing facilities have been installed and brought into operation.</p> <p>Reason: To prevent the carry-over of mud or debris onto the public road in the interests of road safety and convenience.</p>				
	<p>A hard standing and turning area is to be provided and retained during the period of construction within the cartilage of the site.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of Road Safety.</p>				
Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision	Date	Applicant
X/2010/0285/F	Extension to existing factory to provide additional production area, new milk intake area, new waste handling area with chemical storage and new security hut. Siteworks to include relocation of staff car parking. Completion of site road and new on site roadway.	Pritchitt Foods, Kiltonga Industrial Estate, 46 Belfast Road, Newtownards.	Approval	15/07/10	L E Pritchitt & Co Ltd.
Ref:	Conditions				
X/2010/0285/F	<p>As required by Article 34 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, the development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission</p> <p>Reason: Time Limit.</p> <p>The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until hard surfaced areas have been constructed within the site in accordance with the approved drawing no. X/2010/0285/08 which was received on 29 March 2010. This area shall not be used at any time for any purpose other than for parking and movement of vehicles in connection with the approved development.</p> <p>Reason: To ensure there is adequate in curtilage parking for the safety and convenience of road users.</p>				
	<p>Waste handling operations in the skip/compacter area as shown on drawing X/2010/0285/08 which was received on 29 March 2010 shall not take place outside the hours of 07:00 – 19:00 Monday to Friday and 09:00 – 13:00 Saturday. No waste handling operations shall take place in this area on a Sunday.</p> <p>Reason: In order to protect the amenity of the adjacent residential properties.</p> <p>Lorry movements to or from the Despatch area shall not take place outside the hours of 07:00 – 23:00.</p> <p>Reason: In order to protect the amenity of the adjacent residential properties.</p>				
Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision	Date	Applicant
X/2010/0792/F	Extension to existing factory to provide new automated storage facility.	Pritchitt Foods, Kiltonga Industrial Estate, 46 Belfast Road, Newtownards BT23 4TU	Approval	05/04/11	L E Pritchitt & Co Ltd.
Ref:	Conditions				
X/2010/0792/F	<p>As required by Article 34 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, the development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission.</p> <p>Reason: Time Limit.</p>				

Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision	Date	Applicant
X/2013/0071/F	Two storey extensions to warehouse and facilities building, alterations to existing warehouse to provide additional loading docks and two storey detached plant room including amendments to the previous approval Ref X/2010/0792/F.	46 Belfast Road Newtownards BT23 4TU	Approval	26/11/13	L E Pritchitt & Co Ltd.
Ref:	Conditions				
X/2013/0071/F	As required by Article 34 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, the development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this permission. Reason: Time Limit.				
	The roller shutter doors to the proposed loading bays shall be kept closed when a loading bay is not occupied by a truck. Reason: In order to protect the amenity of the adjacent residential properties.				
	All loading of trucks, in area of the proposed loading bays, shall occur internally. Reason: In order to protect the amenity of the adjacent residential properties.				
	Vehicle movements to and from the loading bays, shall not take place outside the hours of 07:00 – 23:00. Reason: In order to protect the amenity of the adjacent residential properties.				

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of the Environment (i) to list the planning approvals in force in the Kiltonga Industrial Estate in Newtownards; (ii) on what dates the approvals were granted; and (iii) who were the applicants.
(AQW 34960/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Please be advised that for the purposes of answering this question, I am interpreting the term 'planning approvals in force' to mean 'extant planning permissions'.

A list of all planning approvals in force for Kiltonga Industrial Estate, together with the date of the approvals and the names of the respective applicants, is provided at Annex A.

Annex A

Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision	Date	Applicant
X/2008/1052/F	Proposed temporary improvement to Kiltonga estate entrance to facilitate large container vehicles pending implementation of approval of X/2004/1530/F.	Kiltonga Estate, Belfast Road, Newtownards BT23 2TT	Approval	15/10/09	Mr Will Hollinger
X/2009/0914/F	Change of use from warehouse B4 to B2 light industrial.	Unit 2, Kiltonga Industrial Estate, Newtownards	Approval	25/03/10	Bradley Thallon Properties Ltd
X/2010/0060/F	Permanent improvement to Kiltonga Estate entrance to facilitate large container vehicles.	Kiltonga Estate, Belfast Road, Newtownards, Co Down BT23 2TT	Approval	09/06/10	Mr Will Hollinger

Application Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision	Date	Applicant
X/2010/0285/F	Extension to existing factory to provide additional production area, new milk intake area, new waste handling area with chemical storage and new security hut. Siteworks to include relocation of staff car parking. Completion of site road and new on site roadway.	Pritchitt Foods Kiltonga Industrial Estate, 46 Belfast Road, Newtownards	Approval	15/07/10	L E Pritchitt & Co Ltd.
X/2010/0792/F	Extension to existing factory to provide new automated storage facility.	Pritchitt Foods Kiltonga Industrial Estate, 46 Belfast Road, Newtownards, BT23 4TU	Approval	03/04/11	L E Pritchitt & Co Ltd.
X/2013/0071/F	Two storey extensions to warehouse and facilities building, alterations to existing warehouse to provide additional loading docks and two storey detached plant room including amendments to previous approval Ref: X/2010/0792/F.	46 Belfast Road Newtownards BT23 4TU	Approval	26/11/13	L E Pritchitt & Co Ltd

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment how much was spent on planning enforcement in each year since 2007; and whether any cuts to planning enforcement will result from the proposed reduction in planning fees.

(AQW 34982/11-15)

Mr Durkan: At this time the Department is not proposing a reduction in planning fees. There are also currently no proposals to cut the planning enforcement undertaken by the Department.

The table below provides details of enforcement legal costs for the period 2009/10 to 2013/14. Comparable financial data for the two years 2007/08 and 2008/09 is not held by Planning.

Financial Year	Amount
2009/10	£77,996
2010/11	£136,902
2011/12	£82,469
2012/13	£121,223
2013/14	£188,635

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the action he has taken following each public petition presented to the Assembly and forwarded to his Department.

(AQW 34988/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A public petition on "Exploris" was laid in the Assembly on 5 November 2013 and was subsequently sent to me by the Speaker and copied to the Chair of the Environment Committee.

The petition contained over 11,000 signatures calling for the Assembly and the different departments to provide regional funding and work with Ards Borough Council to draw up a plan to save "Exploris".

Prior to the laying of the petition, in my paper to the Executive on 17 October 2013 I had already indicated my view that financial assistance should be provided from central government in recognition of the contribution a revitalised "Exploris" could make to the Executive's PfG priorities in terms of boosting the local economy, securing jobs and tackling disadvantage.

I continue to support funding for a revitalised "Exploris" and have committed to meeting the cost of the seal sanctuary up to a limit of £120k per annum. I have also asked the Executive to provide a once only capital grant to upgrade the facilities at "Exploris" but as yet no decision has been made.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the PSNI investigations into alleged criminal activity based around taxi drivers and operators in West Belfast and County Down that was announced on 27 June 2014 (i) whether

the Driver and Vehicle Agency are assisting in the investigation; and (ii) whether his Department will carry out their own investigation into the allegations to determine if any statutory or licensing regulations have been breached.

(AQW 34999/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Driver and Vehicle Agency is assisting the PSNI with its investigation into allegations of criminal activity involving taxi drivers and operators and is currently conducting its own investigation in respect of alleged breaches of taxi licensing requirements.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment, given that food processing and pharmaceuticals are singled out and identified in PED 8 as industries which require a containment free environment, and that slaughterhouses are specifically listed in the Supplementary Planning Guidance as a source of emission of dust, odour or other contaminants which may have the potential to impact upon sensitive industrial enterprises, whether a slaughterhouse would attain planning permission within a food park.

(AQW 35030/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department assesses such applications against Policy PED 8 of Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 4. In doing so, each application will be considered its own merits and will include consultation with expert bodies such as NIEA (Industrial Pollution & Radiochemical Inspectorate and Land and Resource Management) and the Environmental Health Departments of local Councils. The issues raised by such bodies will form an important part of the consideration.

In addition, the Department will also conduct an assessment of possible mitigation measures that can be put in place to ameliorate harmful impacts of the development.

However, I am unable to predict the outcome of such a proposal until a planning application has been subject to the normal statutory process and full rigour of the planning system.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the Glenavy River pollution reported to the Northern Ireland Environmental Agency on 30 June 2014, for an estimated time for completion of a report on investigations into the incident.

(AQW 35067/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The investigation regarding water pollution in the Glenavy River is ongoing. Once all of the evidence is available, a decision on the appropriate further action will be made in accordance with standard procedures. This case will be reviewed on 29 August 2014 and following this it is likely that a case file for the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) will be prepared. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has a target that enforcement action will be taken within 7 months (where the offender can be identified) on 90% of breaches in legislation which lead to significant environmental consequences.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment how many prosecutions for taxi offences have taken place in (i) Belfast; and (ii) Northern Ireland, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35069/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The numbers of prosecutions for taxi offences that have taken place in (i) Belfast; and (ii) Northern Ireland, in each of the last five years are contained in the table below.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Taxi offences prosecuted at Court in Northern Ireland (Belfast included)	Figures not available(1)	175	217	154	172
Taxi offences prosecuted at court in Belfast only	Figures not available(1)	8	139	64	67
Taxi offences – FPNs * issued in Northern Ireland	N/A*	0	257	277	323
Taxi offences – FPNs * issued in Belfast only	N/A*	0	96	80	197

(1) There are no figures available for offences prosecuted in 2009/10 as the database currently in use was not introduced until the 2010/11.

* FPNs (Fixed Penalty Notices) were not introduced in Northern Ireland until 2011.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of the Environment whether he plans to alter the arrangements for neighbour notification which are currently operated by Planning Service.

(AQW 35076/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Since 1985, as part of the process of managing applications for planning permission, the Department has carried out a non-statutory policy of sending neighbour notification letters to occupiers of buildings who are most likely to be affected by a proposed development.

Currently the Department notifies those occupiers of buildings which meet two criteria i.e. the buildings are situated on land directly adjoining the application site (or which would adjoin it but for an entry or road of less than 20 metres in width) and are within a 90 metre radius from the boundary of the application site.

I regard neighbour notification as an important element of the planning system and believe that there is merit in its continuation after the transfer of powers to local councils on 1 April 2015.

However, when planning powers transfer to the new councils it is possible that there would be scope for confusion and variation in practice within and across council areas if the neighbour notification system was to continue on a non-statutory, administrative basis. I believe that the best way to ensure clarity and consistency is to establish a clearly defined minimum statutory requirement on the basis of the current criteria applied by the Department.

This is one of a range of proposals for subordinate legislation under the Planning Act (NI) 2011 which are currently out to public consultation and which can be accessed on the Department's website at the following address:-

http://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/policy_legislation/consultations.htm

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 34002/11-15, whether he will bring forward a Climate Bill to the Assembly in sufficient time to ensure that it can be passed before the end of the current Assembly mandate.
(AQW 35085/11-15)

Mr Durkan: As I stated in my response to AQW 34002/11-15, whilst I see the benefits of a Northern Ireland Climate Change Bill, I also recognise that there are concerns about how we tackle this issue and at what cost. I continue to meet with stakeholders to hear views and build on a successful partnership approach to tackling climate change. In the circumstances, it would not be sensible to rush into legislation without attaining consensus on a way forward.

In saying that, my officials have considered the timeline needed to introduce a Bill and even if I had the full support of the Executive and Environment Committees, it will be impossible to bring forward a Climate Bill to the Assembly in sufficient time to ensure that it can be passed before the end of the current Assembly mandate.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 34149/11-15, (i) whether the Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme (ALCS) Code of Practice required that planning permission was received before an ALCS certificate was granted; and if so, under what circumstances can it be claimed that the Code of Practice was followed in relation to ALCS certificates issued in relation to Lough Neagh Special Protection Area, given that he has already confirmed that his Department was aware no planning permissions exist for extraction.

(AQW 35123/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In accordance with section 2.3 (Membership of the Scheme) of the ALCS Code of Practice, the Department was required to verify that all relevant permits or licences were in place (or had been applied for) and be satisfied that the operation was operating within the current regulatory framework.

The sites referred to pre-date the Planning (NI) Order 1972 and as such Planning Service had no powers to require that planning permission be obtained for these pre-1972 sites. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), on whose behalf the Department administered the ALCS, advised that certificates should be issued in such cases provided all other aspects of the regulatory framework was in order.

One of the reasons the ALCS was established was to incentivise site operators to improve environmental standards over a range of areas and, consequently, the decision was taken to invite the site operators to join the scheme. The scheme has been suspended since 1 December 2010.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the timetable for the clearing of each of the illegal waste dumps identified by his Department.

(AQW 35133/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There were originally seventeen sites in total requiring repatriation; nine of these sites have now been completed. This leaves eight sites still to be repatriated. Four in the South Armagh region, scheduled for completion by 2015; one in Co Tyrone outside Cookstown and one in Co Down outside Mayobridge scheduled for completion by 2016; one in Co Londonderry outside Portglenone and one in Co Antrim outside Crumlin scheduled for completion by 2017.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment whether there are any ongoing investigations relating to any Public Private Partnership projects that his Department is associated with; and if so, to detail the projects.

(AQW 35153/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There are no Public Private Partnerships currently associated with my Department.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether he intends to bring decisions relating to proposals to undertake hydraulic fracturing and extreme energy to the Executive; and to detail the power the Executive has to veto proposals for hydraulic fracturing without financial consequences if proposals are legally compliant.

(AQW 35202/11-15)

Mr Durkan: As Minister of the Environment I have made my position of unconventional hydraulic fracturing very clear. No decisions will be made until all the facts and scientific evidence have been established and to proceed to permit the technique at this time would be reckless. Current research being undertaken by Officials in my Department will establish a broader evidence base which will aid decision making on the issue.

I can advise that should any application be received by my Department, it will be subject to the full scrutiny of the planning process and will have to go through due process before any decision is made. I have always said that all appropriate planning and environmental standards will be strictly applied on the issue of unconventional hydraulic fracturing. As Planning and Environment Minister this approach will not be compromised.

I will keep my Executive colleagues informed of the position on key developments in proposals for unconventional hydraulic fracturing.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action (i) his Department; and (ii) Health and Social Care Trusts are taking to address pressures caused by an increase in community dietetic referrals for paediatric patients.

(AQW 34845/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The Public Health Agency (PHA) and Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) are leading a regional review of current demand patterns and trends across Northern Ireland for Allied Health Professional (AHP) services, including community dietetic referrals for paediatric patients and the capacity available in individual Trusts to meet the demand.

Following implementation of the recommendations from the review, concerning revised data definitions and performance monitoring processes, the HSCB, PHA and individual Trusts will be able to define whether there is any additional pressure in community dietetic referrals for paediatric patients and address it via the appropriate local commissioning groups.

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) who has the authority to call a major incident within hospitals; (ii) to outline the procedure involved; (iii) whether this procedure has changed within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust since January 2014; and if so, (iv) what were the reasons for the change.

(AQW 35017/11-15)

Mr Poots:

Part (i)

Across all HSC Trusts the authority to call a major incident rests with the Director on call on the site in question, in consultation with other senior staff such as the Emergency Department consultant, Co-Directors on call for Acute / Unscheduled Care, the Patient Flow Co-ordinator and / or the Senior Nurse on duty.

Part (ii)

Trusts each have a Major Incident Plan, which is activated in line with a regionally recognised communication process for major incidents and in adherence to the NI Civil Contingency Framework and Controls Assurance Standard for Emergency Planning. It provides extensive procedures to guide the major incident response.

The first call about a potential major incident may be received by Ambulance Control or by a hospital Emergency Department. In either case, a communications plan is used to direct actions to ensure all relevant parties are alerted as soon as possible. This plan is subject to ongoing review and assessment to ensure it is fit for purpose and reflects lessons learned from previous experience. Communications are conducted face to face, via telephone, text, email and pager and are proportionate to the scale and potential impact of the incident and to help ensure consistency in the message delivered to responders.

When a potential major incident is alerted to one Trust site, other sites within that Trust, or indeed in other Trusts depending on the scale of the incident, may also be alerted to ensure there is sufficient capacity on standby to handle casualties.

Depending on the nature of the incident and the level of disruption, other major incident plans may be invoked, eg Business Continuity Plan, Fire Plan, etc..

Part (iii)

This procedure has not changed within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust since January 2014.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the limitations of spend that pertain to the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme.

(AQW 35074/11-15)

Mr Poots: The 2014 Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) has been developed to deliver stability and predictability in the cost of branded medicines in the next 5 years. The system of PPRS payments from the pharmaceutical industry which has been put in place is designed to ensure that the allowed growth in spend on medicines is not exceeded.

One of the overarching principles of the 2014 PPRS is to improve access to medicines commensurate with the outcomes they offer patients by ensuring that medicines approved by NICE are widely available in the Health Service. The PPRS scheme does not require the Department to support improved access to all branded medicines regardless of their clinical or cost effectiveness over agreed spending limits.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current nurse shortages in (i) private; and (ii) statutory care homes, in each Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 35097/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are no statutory nursing homes in Northern Ireland and nurses are not required in statutory residential care homes as these facilities do not provide nursing care.

My department does not hold data on staffing issues in care homes in the private sector.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average weekly rate that each of the Health and Social Care Trusts have paid to independent care homes for each of the four main Programmes of Care in each of the last ten years; and whether this has increased at the same rate as these business's incurred costs.

(AQW 35143/11-15)

Mr Poots: The tables below detail the available information on the regional rate set annually by the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board negotiated with the independent sector for residential and nursing home care. These rates represent a guide to what the HSC considers fair and affordable and is not a fixed price for a care placement. It should be noted that there will be instances where HSC Trusts will be required to procure a more expensive placement.

Elderly Programme of Care (POC)

	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08	2008/ 09	2009/ 10	2010/ 11	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15
Nursing Home Rate	£450	£470	£490	£510	£526	£537	£537	£550	£567	£581
Residential Care Rate	£300	£360	£390	£405	£418	£426	£426	£437	£450	£461

Learning Disability (POC)

	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08	2008/ 09	2009/ 10	2010/ 11	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15
Nursing Home Rate	£450	£470	£490	£510	£526	£537	£537	£550	£567	£581
Residential Care Rate	£300	£360	£390	£405	£418	£426	£426	£437	£450	£461

Mental Health (POC)

	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08	2008/ 09	2009/ 10	2010/ 11	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15
Nursing Home Rate	£450	£470	£490	£510	£526	£537	£537	£550	£567	£581
Residential Care Rate	£300	£360	£390	£405	£418	£426	£426	£437	£450	£461

Physical Disability (POC)

	2005/ 06	2006/ 07	2007/ 08	2008/ 09	2009/ 10	2010/ 11	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2014/ 15
Nursing Home Rate	£450	£470	£490	£555	£566	£577	£577	£591	£609	£624
Residential Care Rate	£400	£422	£457	£460	£469	£478	£478	£490	£505	£518

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the concerns of owners of independent care homes in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area regarding the increasing financial pressures they are experiencing.

(AQW 35144/11-15)

Mr Poots: Circular HSC ECCU 1/2010 provides the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board and Trusts with guidance on the care management process and highlights their duty to ensure that quality services are procured and delivered in response to assessed need at a cost that represents best value for money within available resources.

Each year a Regional Rate is negotiated by the HSC Board with the independent sector for residential and nursing home care. The Regional Rate is a guide to what the HSC considers fair and affordable, not a fixed price for a care placement. HSC Trusts are required to contract for the full cost of the assessed care needs, even where that is not obtainable at the regional rate. Furthermore, HSC Trusts are reminded of the need to achieve optimum quality, flexibility of supply and value for money in procuring services.

This negotiation process ensures that all HSC Trusts engage with providers on an ongoing basis regarding various issues including service provision and tariffs.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average weekly cost in (i) statutory; and (ii) independent care homes for (a) residential; and (b) nursing packages, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 35145/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is only possible to provide details of costs provided by Health and Social Care Trusts to independent residential and nursing homes from the establishment of the five new integrated HSC Trusts in April 2007.

Average costs per occupied resident week from 2007/08 to 2012/13 are set out in the table below.

Average Cost per Occupied Resident Week £

	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09	2007/08
Statutory Residential Homes	1,399	1,260	1,140	1,101	1,032	936
Independent Residential Homes	538	531	529	516	504	475
Statutory Nursing Homes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Independent Nursing Homes	598	588	596	576	562	521

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what additional support (i) his Department; and (ii) the Health and Social Care Trusts can offer independent residential and nursing care homes in areas where there is no statutory provision.

(AQW 35146/11-15)

Mr Poots: Circular HSC (ECCU) 1/2010 Care Management, Provision of Services and Charging guidance reminds the HSC of its overriding duty to procure quality services at a price which represents value for money.

Each year the HSC Board negotiate a regional rate with the independent sector for residential and nursing home care. The regional rate is a guide to what the HSC considers to be fair and affordable, not a fixed price for a care placement.

The rate of remuneration for independent sector residential/nursing homes is not dependent on the availability of statutory sector provision in a locality. It is based on the regionally determined rates and any additional costs for services which are negotiated and agreed with the local Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust and/or the individual's family.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the implementation of the Action Plan for Quality Palliative and End of Life Care detailed in his Department's report, Living Matters, Dying Matters, which was launched in March 2010.

(AQW 35168/11-15)

Mr Poots: A Regional Implementation Board is in place to take forward the implementation of the recommendations contained in 'Living Matters:Dying Matters', the Palliative and End of Life Care Strategy for Adults in Northern Ireland. The Implementation Board has been working across a number of key areas including:

- Increasing understanding of palliative and end of life care through:
 - Ensuring palliative care induction is in place for staff;
 - Undertaking a collaborative research project in partnership with the Patient and Client Council to explore public awareness in palliative care;
 - Hosting events to raise understanding and awareness of palliative care.
- Developing responsive and competent staff to deliver quality care:
 - A palliative and end of life care competency assessment tool for staff across the HSC and independent sectors has been developed and implemented;
 - A regional palliative and end of life care learning and development programme has been implemented in nursing homes.
- Recognising and talking about what matters:
 - A Regional Local Enhanced Service is in place for Advance Care Planning for people in nursing homes;
 - The All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care (AIHPC) in collaboration with the Public Health Agency (PHA) has completed the first phase of data collections to gather the experience of people affected by or caring for someone with palliative and end of life care needs.

- Timely information and choice:
 - An information booklet - 'Your Life and Your Choices - Plan Ahead' has been developed in collaboration between the PHA and Macmillan Cancer Support.
- Co-ordinated care, support and continuity:
 - The End of Life Care Operational System (ELCOS) has been developed to help identify people who may be in the last year of life and to prompt identification of their needs and preferences;
 - A business case has been established to support the development of a Key Information System to capture and record information on palliative care needs.

In addition, an initiative is currently being taken forward by the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency in partnership with Marie Curie Cancer Care to improve palliative and end of life care in Northern Ireland. This 2 year initiative, Transforming Your Palliative and End of Life Care, which was launched in September 2013 and is based on Marie Curie's nationally developed Delivering Choice Programme, aims to support the delivery of co-ordinated services to enable people with palliative and end of life care needs to have choice in their preferred place of care.

Following a series of workshops held in Spring this year, 8 priority areas have been identified to progress the Transforming Your Palliative and End of Life Care programme and a series of design groups have been set up to facilitate this. These priority initiatives include, improving training for healthcare providers; enhanced access to palliative care services at home; palliative pharmacy; supporting planned discharge and provision of equipment; and support for patients and carers.

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total cost of Health Service procedures and treatments on Northern Ireland patients carried out by each private health provider in (i) Northern Ireland; (ii) England; (iii) Scotland; (iv) Wales; and (v) the Republic of Ireland, in each year since May 2007.

(AQW 35209/11-15)

Mr Poots: Total costs, by provider, are provided in the table below for the financial years 2010/11 to 2013/14. Total costs, by provider, are not available for the financial years 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10.

Country	Provider	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Northern Ireland	352 Medical Limited	33,701	30,990	19,675	7,506
	Action Cancer	-	-	50	-
	All Clear Laser Eye Clinic	86	189	355	184
	Allergy Solutions	-	312	36	-
	Alliance Medical	3,681	294	698	275
	Belquin	16	32	-	-
	Bloomfield Laser Clinic	25	20	22	1
	Cathedral Eye Clinic	2,908	2,148	864	49
	Curren	-	-	-	12
	EEG Ireland	250	484	119	245
	Fitzwilliam Clinic	3,968	2,717	349	562
	Fortwilliam Clinic	81	51	55	-
	Hillsborough Private Clinic	770	1,157	398	23
	Medica	120	-	-	-
	Medinet	1,201	2,113	1,839	425
	Neurology NI	61	65	135	2
	North West Independent Hospital	11,187	13,160	7,365	3,839
	Northern EEG	180	378	128	-
	Northern MRI	-	-	36	-
	Orthoderm	1,356	758	974	1,064
Rheumatology Consulting NI	272	231	-	-	
Rosconnor	97	-	-	-	

Country	Provider	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2010/11
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
	South Down Dental	129	-	-	-
	The Belfast Clinic	-	-	-	323
	The Scan Centre	-	-	-	458
	TMR Health Professionals	-	-	-	26
	Ulster Independent Clinic	1,287	1,037	222	219
	Windsor Medical Group	-	16	-	32
Republic of Ireland	Anaplastology Ireland	32	51	37	28
	Blackrock Clinic Dublin	2,200	2,598	323	130
	Bon Secours Health System	130	25	-	-
	James Cook University Hospital	30	-	-	-
	Mater, Dublin	-	655	3,463	2,870
	Sports Surgery Clinic, Dublin	2,317	2,265	726	116
	St Francis Health Village	553	1,069	-	-
VFM Healthcare Ireland LTD	203	93	-	-	
England	BMI Healthcare	300	120	-	-
	Guys and St Thomas Hospital	-	-	1,077	1,073
	McIndoe Surgical Centre	-	-	-	79
	Royal National Orthopaediatric	1,800	550	132	33
	Spire Healthcare	3,001	900	2,273	3,395
Total		71,942	64,478	41,351	22,969

Source: HSC Board and HSC Trusts

Department of Justice

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, following the conclusion of a Serious Case Review, whether any staff member within any departmental agency has (a) been subject to disciplinary proceedings, including warnings; (b) been retrained; and (c) transferred to another post.

(AQW 35057/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): No staff members within any departmental agency have a) been subject to any disciplinary proceedings; b) been retrained; or c) transferred to another post following the conclusion of a Serious Case Review commissioned by the Strategic Management Board responsible for oversight of Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the recommendations by the Public Protection Arrangements in Northern Ireland that have been implemented following the conclusion of the Serious Case Reviews into Barry Johnston; Thomas Ward and David Paige, citing the changes and from which review they originate; and (ii) the recommendations that have not been implemented.

(AQW 35112/11-15)

Mr Ford:

(i) **Recommendations following conclusion of PPANI Serious Case Reviews**

Table A below sets out the recommendations arising from the Serious Case Reviews commissioned (for the cases listed) by the Strategic Management Board responsible for oversight of the Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland.

Table A

Barry Shay Johnston (Executive Summary published 9/01/2012)	
Recommendations	
1	Northern Ireland Prison Service should review the availability of forensic psychologists for treatment of sex offenders in custody and seek to identify any ways to resolve limitations on this;
2	PPANI should remind all involved in managing sex offenders under the Manual of Practice on the need for the highest standards of administration and interagency communication in order to ensure joined up handling;
3	It should be normal practice for there to be one-to-one discussions between prison DRM (Designated Risk Manager) and the agency representative taking over that duty on the prisoner's release. This should be specified in the Manual of Practice. It should be a standing item of business for such handovers that the question of a special LAPPP (Local Area Public Protection Panel) be considered;
4	In conjunction with other Health and Social Care Trusts and involving PPANI as appropriate, the Northern Trust should ensure that a protocol is in place which, among other things, both advises representatives on the need to be fully briefed by other Trusts in advance of LAPPP meetings considering cases from their area, and sets out the need to ensure a full flow of information to those Trusts on the course and outcome of the discussion;
5	The Strategic Management Board should put in hand consideration of the term 'compelling evidence' in relation to the threshold for classification to Category 3 Risk of Harm;
6	PPANI should consider a revision to the Manual at paragraph 6.2.4 or guidance relating to it might facilitate an inter agency meeting in circumstances where difficulties about offender management arise in the immediate run up to release;
7	PPANI, in conjunction with NIPS, PBNI and health and social care trusts, should consider whether the requirements contained in the social care sector's guidance 'Co-operating to Safeguard Children' and 'Sharing to Safeguard' should be more explicitly reflected in the Manual;
8	Information from medical staff such as doctors or psychiatrists could have a significant bearing on risk assessment and categorisation and subsequently how those risks are managed in the community. PPANI should consider exploring with prisons, PBNI and Trust personnel whether there is an issue over availability to LAPPP meetings of information based on medical assessments and second how it might be resolved;
Thomas Ward (Executive Summary published 25/02/2014)	
Recommendations	
1	In all cases where bail is being sought and police officers become aware it is prudent to fully check NICHE and keep appropriate records of enquiries and the decision making process;
2	In bail cases involving a non-PPANI eligible offence, PPANI personnel should ensure that those involved in the prosecution of such offences receive a clear and consistent message in respect of bail applications and conditions thereof. This should involve written confirmation to those involved in prosecuting such cases – all PPANI Agencies;
3	The SMB should consider amending the Manual of Practice to allow for LAPPP reviews to be held in respect of particular remand in custody cases;
4	The on-going Department of Justice led work on victims issues may allow for a rebalancing of the rights of victims in respect of information sharing about offenders. The SMB through its victim reference group may wish to make a collective contribution to this on-going work
David Page (Executive Summary published 11/06/2014)	
Recommendations	
1	The independent reviewer recommended that before an offender's risk assessment category is classified downwards PPANI should consider requesting an up to date Stable SA07 assessment if some time has elapsed since the previous assessment was completed.

(ii) Implementation of Serious Case Review Recommendations

All the Serious Case Review recommendations outlined above have been implemented by PPANI agencies.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 34383/11-15, whether he will specifically address the point on the approved residence being in an area of families with young children, and given the victim in the case was a child of the neighbourhood to detail whether (i) this point was considered prior to the approval of residence and due cognisance given

to the offender's previous behaviour and targets; (ii) he will amend risk assessments in these instances taking on board vulnerability of potential victims; and (iii) he will tighten residence criteria to remove or reduce reoffending in similar instances.
(AQW 35113/11-15)

Mr Ford: I shall reply to the points raised as soon as possible.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice following the conclusion of a Serious Case Review, whether any departmental agency has found to have missed opportunities, neglected responsibilities, or defaulted in any way which could have prevented re-offending; and if so, to cite the relevant instances.

(AQW 35193/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Independent Reviewers conducting Serious Case Reviews commissioned by the Strategic Management Board responsible for oversight of Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland did not identify any failings in the management of the cases which could have prevented re-offending.

Department for Regional Development

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Regional Development he will ensure that the existing protections in place for water consumers are not weakened by the implementation of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Directive.

(AQW 35201/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): The Alternative Dispute Resolution Directive aims to ensure that consumers are able to access quality alternative dispute resolution bodies for all kinds of contractual disputes they encounter with traders. The UK Government has recently consulted on this issue, to facilitate the transposition of the Directive into law.

NI Water already has statutory arrangements for dealing with disputes between customers and the company through the Consumer Council. My Department considers that we are currently in compliance with the new regulations but continues to liaise with all of the relevant bodies such as the Consumer Council and the Utility Regulator to ensure that Northern Irish consumers continue to have access to high quality water and sewerage services.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 5 September 2014

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether their Department has given all possible help to the Gallagher family, from Londonderry, in their humanitarian quest to identify the murderer of their 9 year old son, Gordon.
(AQW 8802/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): We would refer the member to the answer to AQO 3823/11-15 which was given in the Assembly on 22 April 2013.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the appointment of the Special Adviser by Junior Minister McCann, to detail (i) who is her current Special Adviser; (ii) when and how he/she was appointed; (iii) when he/she took up the post; and (iv) which salary band he/she is being paid.
(AQW 13640/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The requested information is as follows:

- (i) Aine McCabe;
- (ii) appointed on 13 June 2012 in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Appointment of Special Advisers;
- (iii) 13 June 2012;
- (iv) Salary band B.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) how many procurement credit cards are held by staff in their Department; (ii) how much has been expended by this route since May 2007; and (iii) on what was the expenditure incurred.
(AQW 20037/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister currently holds 12 procurement cards.

£2,659,480 has been purchased using procurement cards during the period May 2007 to 28 June 2014 by our office.

Each procurement card is electronically restricted to specific types of expenditure. The procurement cards are used mainly for travel and accommodation expenses and other costs would include items such as office stationery and equipment expenditure.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the (i) number; and (ii) position of the people who travelled to Brazil on the business and tourism mission in March 2013; and the total cost of the trip.
(AQW 20978/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We were each accompanied by a special adviser, a private secretary and a press officer. We also brought an official photographer with us, who had been selected through the normal tendering process. Support on the ground was provided by staff from the NI Bureau in Washington, DC.

The total cost of the trip is published on the OFMDFM website.

Mr McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the (i) total cost of their recent trip to Brazil; (ii) the cost of the accommodation; and (iii) the number of civil servants, advisors and other people who accompanied them on the trip at public expense.
(AQW 21101/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We were each accompanied by a special adviser, a private secretary and a press officer. We also brought an official photographer with us, who had been selected through the normal tendering process. Support on the ground was provided by staff from the NI Bureau in Washington, DC.

The total cost of the trip is published on the OFMDFM website.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 24291/11-15, to specify the resource and budgetary needs of the NI Memorial Fund as opposed to the budget allocation.

(AQW 25041/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Northern Ireland Memorial Fund (NIMF) budget allocation as stated in AQW 24291/11-15 is based on the current resource and budgetary needs as identified by the NIMF.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on progress of the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit review of departmental responses to the serious flooding in June 2012.

(AQW 25639/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Executive received a comprehensive follow-up report on 4 July 2013 setting out progress on the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit's recommendations on the flooding of 27 and 28 June 2012. The Executive noted progress and future proposals on a wide range of issues including mitigating flood risk, the provision of flood alerts, performance of the Flooding Incident Line and collaboration between relevant agencies and stakeholders. The recommendations were agreed which included an outline of the future programme of work. This programme is being taken forward by departments through the structures which are in place to monitor and co-ordinate implementation.

Mr Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action is being taken to improve the timeliness of interactions with the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

(AQO 4594/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Member will be aware that, in response to concerns raised by the Chairman of the Committee for OFMDFM about aspects of its relationship with our Department, the Permanent Secretary met with the Committee on 5 March 2014 and outlined a range of measures that were being put in place to promote more effective engagement with the Committee. These include: -

- regular meetings between the Committee Clerk and our DALO (Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer) to progress and resolve outstanding issues relating to the Forward Work Programme,
- awareness sessions for departmental staff on engagement with the Committee focusing on the priority which the Department places on its business with the Committee; and
- arrangements to ensure effective monitoring of the progress of key issues of interest to the Committee.
- We believe it is in our shared interest to support the role of the Committee in advising and assisting us in the development of policy, and that these measures will make an important contribution to optimising the future benefits of our interaction.

Ms Fearon asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list the organisations from which their Department is considering reclaiming funding.

(AQO 4772/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: At this time the Department is not reclaiming funding from any organisation.

Mr Dunne asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether their Department has any plans to mark Holocaust Memorial Day in 2014.

(AQW 28823/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The 2014 Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration was held in Belfast City Hall on Holocaust Memorial Day, Monday 27 January at 7:30pm.

The theme for the event was "Journeys" and the Belfast Rabbi, David Singer, delivered the keynote address. Pelagie Buchanan, a survivor of the genocide in Rwanda 20 years ago also spoke about the journey that brought her to live here. The Statements of Commitment were read by people representing each of the groups persecuted by the Nazis during the Holocaust, this reflected the diverse nature of the commemoration. The event also included a welcome address by the former Lord Mayor of Belfast Máirtín Ó Muilleoir and all of his Chaplains were in attendance. Approximately 380 people from a wide range of backgrounds attended the event.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many entries Special Advisers have made in the Department's Register of Gifts and Hospitality since their appointment; and what is the total value of such entries.

(AQW 28961/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Special Advisers have made a total of 18 entries in the Department's Gift and Hospitality register with a total value of £1932.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for a breakdown of the costs associated with the Haass talks.
(AQW 29518/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The costs relating to the work of the Panel of Parties is available on the OFMDFM website at <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/financial-publications-archive> .

Mr Kinahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail their plans for (i) continuing the legacy of the Primary Integrating/Enriching Education programme along with other shared education projects; and (ii) using the project as a pilot to encourage further shared education, as part of their responsibilities under Together: Building a United Community.
(AQW 30106/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department of Education has the lead on delivering the Programme for Government commitments in relation to advancing shared education. We understand that you tabled a similar question to the Minister of Education and he provided a substantive response . AQW 30105/11-15 refers.

Ms Lo asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what departmental support is available to the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association.
(AQW 30139/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: OFMDFM does not have a suitable funding stream that could support the core funding of the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association. The Association may have been eligible to apply to the Central Good Relations Fund for project funding, however the 2014/15 fund closed for applications on 10 February 2014.

Ms Lo asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what consideration is given to devising good relations and equality policy on the difficulties faced by people in mixed marriages or mixed relationships in accessing services or housing.
(AQW 30166/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Together: Building a United Community strategy was devised with the goal of establishing a new, reconciled and shared society. The strategy commits us to the creation of more shared neighbourhoods and to ensure that there is greater choice open to those who wish to live in a mixed area. Equally, the strategy sets out our commitment to creating a community where everyone feels safe and where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety.

Mr McMullan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether Departments are on course to reach their targeted draw down of European funding.
(AQO 5370/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Under Programme for Government commitment 1.26, drawdown of competitive EU funds will be increased by 20% over the budget period 2011-15, equating to drawdown of £64.4 million over the four-year period.

Progress is monitored by the all party Ministerial Budget Review Group and the Programme for Government monitoring team.

Departments continue to make good progress towards meeting the 20% target. In 2011-12, Year 1, we drew down £23.0 million and in 2012-13, Year 2, we drew down £18.3 million. At the halfway point in the budget period, £41.3 million has been drawn down which represents 64% of the target.

As soon as figures for 2013/14, Year 3, have been validated, we will publish the updated drawdown value.

We are well on target to meet our 2013/14 forecast drawdown of £11.6 million.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister on how many occasions since May 2007 their Department has not accepted the recommendations contained in an Ombudsman's finding.
(AQW 30425/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: During this period, OFMDFM has only received one recommendation from the Northern Ireland Ombudsman, which was accepted.

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list the current membership of the Community Relations Council.
(AQW 30435/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The current membership of the Board of the Community Relations Council is available to view on the Community Relations Council's website at: <http://www.community-relations.org.uk/about-us/community-relations-council-council-members-and-staff-list/>

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps are being taken to ensure that east-west linkages between Northern Ireland and the other parts of the United Kingdom are built upon and enhanced.
(AQW 30462/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Northern Ireland Executive continues to play an active role in furthering the objectives of the British-Irish Council (BIC). We attend the biannual Summit meetings of the BIC and were pleased to host the successful 20th BIC Summit in Derry~Londonderry in June last year. The BIC also meets at sectoral Ministerial level as required and regularly at official level. The Executive also leads on three of the twelve BIC work sectors: Collaborative Spatial Planning, Housing and Transport

In addition to funding an agreed proportion of the running costs of the BIC Secretariat, the Executive enhances its east-west linkages through the assignment of a Policy Officer on secondment to the BIC Secretariat in Edinburgh.

The Northern Ireland Executive is also a member of the Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) together with the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government. The JMC meets annually in plenary format, and also at intervals during each year in Domestic and European formats to discuss matters of common interest and concerns to all administrations.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the progress of the delivery of the economic package Building a Prosperous and United Community.

(AQW 30633/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: An annual summit with the Prime Minister was held on 2 July 2014 prior to the publication of the annual progress report, Building a United and Prosperous Community: One Year On. A written statement on progress was made to the Assembly on 3 July 2014.

Progress has been made in areas such as job promotion, research and development, investment and infrastructure and we have been working together on a range of issues, for example, through the Ministerial Taskforce on Banking and Access to Finance, to address the economic issues faced by our local economy.

The Executive has brought forward shared education and shared housing proposals to use the £100 million additional borrowing available as part of Building a Prosperous and United Community. This will allow the prioritisation of spending on a package of measures including integrated primary schools in Omagh, Portadown and Corran, shared neighbourhood schemes such as Ravenhill Road and further education facilities at Craigavon.

A number of further commitments will also be met by the end of 2014 including: a final report from the Executive's Red Tape Review; proposals will be made to Government and Executive Ministers about the scope for further fiscal devolution; and consideration of the Implementation Panel's interim report on access to finance.

While this progress is welcome, it is important that we continue to take action to ensure all commitments are delivered in a timely manner.

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the findings that in the last twenty years economic inactivity rates amongst Protestants have increased whilst for Roman Catholics it has decreased, what action will be taken to increase economic activity rates for all communities.

(AQW 30657/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The 2012 Labour Force Survey Northern Ireland Religion Report showed that the working age economic inactivity rate among Protestants had moved from 24% in 1992 to 25% in 2012 and for working age Catholics from 34% in 1992 to 30% in 2012.

Although the survey is based on a sample, with attendant confidence level issues around small changes, and there was also a change in relation to definition of working age females over the period, the key policy message is the high level of economic inactivity here.

Irrespective of the religious composition, the rate of economic inactivity here has been persistently higher than the UK average for decades and we need to encourage those inactive individuals who, with the right level of support and assistance, will be able to participate in the labour market.

In November 2013 the Executive agreed to a full public consultation on the draft Strategic Framework "Enabling Success: Driving Social Change through Economic Participation – A Strategic Framework to Tackle Economic Inactivity in Northern Ireland". Its proposed overarching strategic goal is to contribute towards a stable and competitive employment rate of over 70% by 2023, through a reduction in the proportion of the working age population classified as economically inactive.

The public consultation exercise is now complete and DEL and DETI, together with DSD and DHSSPS, are developing a final draft strategy for consideration by the Executive before the end of the year. If early agreement can be secured, implementation will begin in early 2015.

Mr Hilditch asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the delivery of the Economic Pact.

(AQO 5496/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: An annual summit with the Prime Minister was held on 2 July 2014 prior to the publication of the annual progress report, Building a United and Prosperous Community: One Year On. A written statement on progress was made to the Assembly on 3 July 2014.

Progress has been made in areas such as job promotion, research and development, investment and infrastructure and we have been working together on a range of issues, for example, through the Ministerial Taskforce on Banking and Access to Finance, to address the economic issues faced by our local economy.

The Executive has brought forward shared education and shared housing proposals to use the £100 million additional borrowing available as part of Building a Prosperous and United Community. This will allow the prioritisation of spending on a package of measures including integrated primary schools in Omagh, Portadown and Corran, shared neighbourhood schemes such as Ravenhill Road and further education facilities at Craigavon.

A number of further commitments will also be met by the end of 2014 including: a final report from the Executive's Red Tape Review; proposals will be made to Government and Executive Ministers about the scope for further fiscal devolution; and consideration of the Implementation Panel's interim report on access to finance.

While this progress is welcome, it is important that we continue to take action to ensure all commitments are delivered in a timely manner.

Mr Wells asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they will consult the Executive on an International Development Strategy.

(AQW 30819/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The International Relations Strategy was agreed by the Executive on 27th February 2014.

The Strategy includes an objective to take forward international development activities, within the remit of the Devolution agreement, and in consultation and partnership with appropriate organisations.

Mr McKay asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what investment has been secured as a result of the Investment Conference in October 2013.

(AQW 31041/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Hosting the conference provided an excellent opportunity to build an economic legacy from hosting the G8.

We had the opportunity to showcase the local economy to an international audience of 121 international companies plus a further 14 key influencers from overseas governments. This enabled us to highlight to senior executives what we have to offer as a place to do business and invest in. Importantly it provided the opportunity for them to hear first hand the positive experiences from existing investors.

The feedback from delegates was hugely positive, and we have most certainly enhanced our reputation at a national and international level with potential customers.

As a result of the conference, we announced expansions by Fujitsu for 192 jobs in Derry/Londonderry and Ryobi for 100 jobs in Carrickfergus.

Invest NI has also more recently managed to secure two major new investments bringing over 800 jobs here: Convergys is to create 333 new jobs establishing a new customer service centre in Derry/Londonderry working in collaboration with mobile phone company EE as their client.

EY (Ernst and Young) is to create almost 500 new jobs as part of a £24.5 million investment creating a new business unit. Hearing about the talent of workers available here from other big businesses together with investment success stories at the Investment Conference helped to persuade them to locate here.

We anticipate further announcements in the coming months of projects that can be linked to the Investment Conference.

Mrs Hale asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what civil contingency plans are in place to deal with major or catastrophic incidents.

(AQW 31124/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA) are a special set of multi-agency arrangements maintained by OFMDFM to deal with the most serious emergencies. Under these arrangements, the Civil Contingencies Group chaired by OFMDFM and comprising senior representation from departments and their agencies, the Emergency Services and District Councils can be convened to provide strategic co-ordination of the response to and recovery from such emergencies. In delivering this function the NICCMA interface with other key groups of responders.

These arrangements are well established and tested and have been used to very good effect during recent emergencies. We will continue to apply learning from emergencies and test exercises to further strengthen our collective capability to deal with future emergencies.

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what new initiatives are being taken to tackle racism.

(AQW 31720/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Racial Equality Strategy, "A Sense of Belonging" which is currently out for consultation until 10th October will underpin all our work in tackling all forms of racism. The strategy has been developed in consultation with minority ethnic representatives.

We have also agreed a programme of interventions to deal with the increase in race crime incidents in recent months.

Tackling racism also aligns with the Together: Building a United Community (TBUC) strategy. This commits us to ensure that good relations – including good race relations - are mainstreamed into the revised arrangements following the review of public administration. This will help to bring about a proper recognition of the importance of good relations in tackling wider social issues.

TBUC commits to encourage reporting of intimidation or harassment and to seek to build a culture where people feel comfortable to report when they have been the victim of intimidation or harassment.

OFMDFM is also working with the Department of Justice on the implementation of the Community Safety Strategy and the elements in that strategy that are aimed at addressing hate crime.

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the progress made in creating an international development strategy.

(AQW 31754/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The International Relations Strategy was agreed by the Executive on 27 February 2014.

The Strategy includes an objective to take forward international development activities, within the remit of the Devolution agreement, and in consultation and partnership with appropriate organisations.

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what funding their Department provides to the Confucius project.

(AQW 31932/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: OFMDFM do not provide any funding to the Confucius project.

Mr D Bradley asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they discussed the Haass process with Vice-President Joe Biden during their recent visit to Washington DC.

(AQO 5820/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We were pleased to have had the opportunity to spend over 50 minutes with the Vice President in his office at the White House on Friday 14 March. That was our third encounter with him in the space of two days. We were at his table at the American Ireland Fund Dinner the previous evening and we had lunch with him, the President and the Taoiseach at the Speaker's Lunch on Capitol Hill directly before the White House meeting. We used both those occasions to further our agenda in advance of the formal meeting.

We gladly accepted the Vice President's invitation to the White House where we discussed a range of issues including the All Party Talks.

Mr McNarry asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the number of Motions debated in the Assembly that they have responded to in the last two years; and (ii) the action that they have taken following any Motion that was passed.

(AQW 32499/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:

- (i) Since September 2012 we have responded to seven Private Members motions, of which five were agreed by the Assembly. Details are provided below:

September 2012 – July 2013

Date	Title of Motion	Outcome of Debate
8 October 2012	Economic Recovery	Motion negated
19 November 2012	Child Poverty Action Plan	Agreed with Amendment
05 February 2013	Internet Safety for Children	Agreed
13 May 2013	Child Poverty Targets	Motion negated
21 May 2013	Shared Future	Agreed with Amendment

September 2013 – July 2014

Date	Title of Motion	Outcome of Debate
10 February 2014	Safer Internet Day 2014 Campaign	Agreed with Amendment
11 March 2014	European Union Funds: Drawdown - UUP	Agreed with Amendment
3 June 2014	Racial Attacks	Agreed with Amendment

- (ii) We take account of all Assembly resolutions to help inform future policy development in relation to our Departmental responsibilities.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what is the annual cost of the Executive offices in the USA; and for a breakdown of the costs.

(AQW 32511/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Executive is represented in the USA by the Northern Ireland Bureau. The Bureau has its main office in Washington DC with a further member of staff based in the British Consulate General in New York City. The table below lists the costs of the Bureau for the last complete financial year (2013-14).

Annual cost of the NI Bureau in Washington DC and New York	2013-14 £'000
Running costs	643
Salary costs	404
Depreciation / Impairment Charges on Capital	15
Total	1,062

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail how much money their Department, or its arm's-length bodies, have given to the Community Relations Council since 2007; and for breakdown of how this money was spent in each year. **(AQW 32714/11-15)**

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The full accounts for the Community Relations Council from 2007 onwards are available via the research and publications page on the CRC's website at – <http://www.community-relations.org.uk/research-publications/>

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much money the Community Relations Council has distributed on behalf of their office since 2007; and to detail the total paid to the Community Relations Council each year for the administration of this money. **(AQW 32715/11-15)**

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The full accounts for the Community Relations Council from 2007 are available via the publications and research page on the CRC's web-site at – <http://www.community-relations.org.uk/research-publications/>

Ms Boyle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action their Department is taking to offer comprehensive occupational health services to its employees, including early access to services such as physiotherapy. **(AQW 32723/11-15)**

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Northern Ireland Civil Service Occupational Health Service (OHS) provides a comprehensive occupational health service to all of the NICS Departments and this is available to all employees.

Further details of OHS services can be found at www.nicsohs.gov.uk

The NICS does not provide early access to physiotherapy services.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) to detail the number of Freedom of Information Requests they have received in each year since 2007; (ii) how many and what proportion were not answered within the statutory timeframe; (iii) how many and what proportion were not answered within six months; and (iv) how many and what proportion were not answered within twelve months. **(AQW 32752/11-15)**

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Statistical information on the Department's Freedom of Information performance from 2005 up to the 4th quarter of 2013 is published within the Annual Reports and Statistics section of the OFMDFM website at:

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/improving-public-services/information_management_and_central_advisory_branch/annual-reports-and-statistics.htm

Information from the 1st quarter of 2014 onwards will be published at the same location, once the validation process is concluded.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) how many times in each year since 2007, following the submission of Freedom of Information requests to their Department, they have been asked to carry out an internal review into the response provided; and (ii) on how many occasions a Freedom of Information request to their Department, or a response provided, was referred to the Information Commissioner's Office.

(AQW 32753/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Statistical information on the Department's Freedom of Information performance from 2005 up to the 4th quarter of 2013 is published within the Annual Reports and Statistics section of the OFMDFM website at:

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/improving-public-services/information_management_and_central_advisory_branch/annual-reports-and-statistics.htm

Information from the 1st quarter of 2014 onwards will be published at the same location, once the validation process is concluded.

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the current budget of the Northern Ireland Executive's office in Brussels.

(AQW 33239/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The table below lists the breakdown of the allocated budget for the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels for this complete financial year (2014-2015).

Annual cost of the Executive Office in Brussels	2014-15 £'000
Running costs	491
Salary costs	535.5
Depreciation/Impairment charges on Capital	111

Mr Copeland asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the number of reports that have been produced by Colliers International at the request of their Department, in each of the last five years; and the cost of producing each report.

(AQW 33465/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Colliers International produced two reports in the last five years at a total cost of approximately £104,000, one in 2010 and one in 2012.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what is a Urban Village under the terms of the Together: Building a United Community; and to detail how it will facilitate meaningful contact and integration for people from a diverse background.

(AQW 33519/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: An Urban Village under the terms of the Together: Building a United Community will be a designated development zone. A local project board will be created and tasked with coordinating and overseeing the planning and design of the urban village. The board will be given the ability to enable large scale urban village development in a coordinated and needs based way. Each urban village will have a community focus. The aim is to produce an agreed design and model for development that is deliverable, sustainable and makes a contribution to the wider social, economic and physical regeneration of the area. The proposals will prioritise community focus to stabilise and create positive change within the community by creating and sustaining increased community social capital therefore leading to an increase in intra and inter-community stability and meaningful and robust improvement in community relations.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what was the total cost of hospitality provided by (i) their Department; and (ii) its arm's-length bodies in 2013/14.

(AQW 33796/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The total spend on hospitality by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) and arm's length bodies within its accounting boundary in 2013/14 was £162,595. The arm's length bodies which were outside the accounting boundary of OFMDFM spent a total amount of £31,518 on hospitality during 2013/14.

Mr Swann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether recent comments by the First Minister about a lack of trust in Muslims were raised during their meeting with the Turkish Ambassador on 28 May 2014.

(AQO 6279/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We met with Ambassador Cevikoz prior to his retirement, following our initial meeting with him in December 2011. Ambassador Cevikoz's visit to Belfast was primarily to perform the official opening of an Honorary Consul office for the recently appointed Honorary Consul, Mr David Campbell, who also attended the meeting.

At our meeting we discussed the Ambassador's two-day visit programme to Belfast, business relations between the two jurisdictions and the promotion of further business with Turkey, including the potential introduction of a direct Belfast to Istanbul air route.

Also discussed was the implication of the European election results and Turkey's aspirations to formally join the European Union, the current Turkish political situation, Syria, refugee camps, and the centenary anniversary next year of the Gallipoli Landings.

Ms McGahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to what extent their Department has implemented the Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment that all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction works will include social clauses; and to what level such clauses have been implemented.

(AQW 34274/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department has implemented the Programme for Government commitment to include social clauses in all procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction works where they relate to the subject matter of the contract or the performance of the contract. The Department has set community benefits (including social clauses) targets for all contracts over £30,000 in 2014-15 which will be monitored periodically throughout the year.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when all the Central Good Relations Fund for the 2014/15 financial year will be allocated; and how the June Monitoring Round bid of £2.424m will be allocated if successful.

(AQW 34372/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The 2014/15 Central Good Relations Fund (CGRF) closed for applications on 10 February 2014. There was a very significant demand for funding. To date, some £0.5m of funding has been allocated to priority projects.

The CGRF is not designed to pick up mainstream core or project funded activities. It is a small in-year scheme designed to support project delivery and to utilise available funding. Further funding will be released as it becomes available. We will contact applicants as soon as a decision has been made regarding their applications

The £2.424m June monitoring bid, if successful, will provide additional support for the 2014/15 Central Good Relations Fund and a range of other activities to support delivery of the Together: Building a United Community Strategy.

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what consideration has been given to the development of a refugee integration strategy.

(AQW 34418/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: As part of our ongoing consultation on a Racial Equality Strategy we are asking for views on a specific refugee integration strategy.

Officials have already met with key stakeholders such as the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership and the NI Council for Refugees and Asylum Seekers to collect views on the subject.

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many British-Irish Council meetings, in all formats, have been held between June 2007 and June 2014.

(AQW 34510/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Since June 2007 there have been two hundred and forty British Irish Council meetings, including fourteen Summit meetings; seventeen sectoral Ministerial meetings; and two hundred and nine official level meetings.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what provisions are in place to provide gap funding for victims groups whose funding is running out under PEACE III.

(AQW 34756/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: All Peace III projects are time limited with the funding for particular projects for the period of the letter of offer. All organisations receiving Peace III funding are aware of this and were notified some time ago that Peace III funding was coming to an end.

The Executive does not have the resources to replace Peace III funding where that has come to an end for a particular project.

Ms Lo asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the proposed timetable for the consultation, publication and implementation of the Racial Equality Strategy.

(AQO 6408/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Racial Equality Strategy is now available on the Department's website. The consultation will last until 10 October 2014 and details of consultation events will be listed soon.

A number of events will be held in the areas of highest population for minority ethnic people and events will be facilitated in different languages when relevant.

The events are taking place between 19.00 and 21.00 hours at:-

- Ballymena – The Braid Art Centre – 9 September 2014
- Dungannon – Unit 2 Ballysaggart Business Complex – 10 September 2014
- Derry/Londonderry – NICE North West – 16 September 2014
- Belfast – Chinese Welfare Association – 17 September 2014
- Craigavon - Craigavon Civic & Conference Centre – 24 September 2014
- Newry – Ballybot House – 25 September 2014

We will also be inviting feedback and opinion via e-mail, online and through social media.

Once the consultation exercise is completed, the evidence gathered will inform the revised Strategy.

Proposals for implementation (including timetabling) will be developed by the Racial Equality Panel.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the action they have taken following each public petition presented to the Assembly and forwarded to their Department.

(AQW 34849/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Our Department has received one public petition from WAVE's Injured Support Group who, as part of their 'Campaign for Recognition of the Injured', presented a petition of 10,000 signatures to the Assembly on 17 May 2012 following the launch of WAVE's 'Injured Research Study' funded by OFMDFM.

WAVE's 'Injured Research Study' concluded that there was a shortfall in services for many people physically injured as a result of the conflict. Our officials had already met with the chief researcher, Professor Marie Breen-Smyth, and chief executive of WAVE to discuss the report and the implications for future services for Victims and Survivors. In addition, the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors commissioned an independent piece of research on the issue. This has recently been received and is under consideration.

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the omission from the Historical Abuse Inquiry of both clerical abuse victims and women aged 18 and over in Magdalene Laundries and equivalent institutions, what action they have taken in response to the recommendations of May 2013 of the UN Committee Against Torture.

(AQW 34872/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The UN Committee Against Torture has recommended that the State should conduct prompt, independent and thorough investigations into all cases of institutional abuse, including abuse of women who were in Magdalene Laundries, and that where possible and appropriate, all perpetrators are prosecuted and punished, and victims receive redress and compensation.

Officials have been tasked to undertake a high level scoping exercise on those areas which fall outside the Terms of reference of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry and intend to bring forward a paper for our consideration in the autumn.

Mr Easton asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the applications to the Social Investment Fund for Community Houses in North Down for building extensions to increase capacity and training facilities.

(AQW 34914/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: This project is currently being processed through the economic appraisal process. Following initial consideration, we have agreed with the Steering Group a two-stage approach; first stage to complete a scoping study to ascertain the potential to improve the community houses identified and what works can feasibly be progressed; the second stage to fund the resulting works identified.

Funding for both stages is subject to approval of the economic appraisal.

Mr Craig asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of decisions being made by single Commissioners, whether they plan to review the workings of the Planning Appeals Commission, in particular the decision making processes.

(AQW 35078/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) is an independent Tribunal Non-Departmental Public Body which operates at arm's length from Government, free from influence by the Department or any other body. OFMDFM has sponsorship responsibility within relevant legislation for providing financial and administrative support to PAC, for the appointment of its Commissioners, for the making of rules of procedure and setting of fees. We have no plans to review the workings of the Planning Appeals Commission.

Mr Gardiner asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what projects funded by the Social Investment Fund are planned for the Upper Bann Constituency.

(AQO 6410/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Six projects have been prioritised by the Steering Group within the funding allocation for the Southern Social Investment Fund Zone, in which the Upper Bann constituency is situated. Three of these projects have been formally approved:

- Employment Work It – a revenue project designed to improve employability;
- New Directions – a capital cluster; and
- Sustaining the Infrastructure – a further capital cluster.

Final letters of offer for each of the approved projects will begin to issue to the Lead Partners over the next few weeks to enable delivery to commence.

The remaining three projects, details of which can be found at

<http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/delivering-social-change/social-investment-fund/sif-projects.htm> ,

are currently being progressed through the economic appraisal approval process. We hope to be in a position to secure approvals for these and move to delivery over the remainder of the year.

Mr P Ramsey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on Together: Building a United Community. **(AQO 6411/11-15)**

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Work is progressing across all 7 headline actions that were announced alongside the publication of Together: Building a United Community.

The Department of Education has received 16 expressions of interest under the Shared Education Campuses Programme. The proposals submitted are currently being assessed with a view to successful projects being announced before the summer break. It is forecasted that contracts will be issued by September 2015 and project delivery commenced by January 2016.

In respect of the United Youth Programme, significant stakeholder engagement has taken place culminating with the United Youth Programme Design Day in January of this year, which involved over 250 stakeholders. A Project Board has been established and work is progressing across a broad range of issues including stipend, engagement and communications, procurement strategy and programme design approach. A pilot programme has already been established to test elements of the design and further pilots are expected to commence later this year.

Pilots for the summer schools/camps will be operated in the Belfast area this summer with roll out in other Council areas too (subject to available funding). One-hundred summer schools/camps will be in operation in 2015. We plan to hold a workshop in early autumn with stakeholders to finalise how the summer camps/schools should operate in 2015.

The locations of the first 2 Urban Villages were announced on 20 March 2014 as Colin and Lower Newtownards Road. Each area will be recognised as a zone for development, and the Department for Social Development will convene Project Boards to co-ordinate and oversee the planning, design and delivery of all aspects of the urban villages. The Department for Social Development and other departments and statutory agencies will use the completed master plans for the areas to develop resourcing plans for each urban village.

The 10 Shared Neighbourhood Developments will be delivered through the Social Housing Development Programme. The projected project plan has been developed which outlines key milestones and targets for the 3 strands of this programme.

In relation to the Cross Community Sports Programme, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is taking the lead and has developed proposals on a Programme.

With regard to the removal of Interface Barriers, a model has been developed to create an Interface Action Team to support project delivery, subject to the receipt of set-up costs. A list of pilot proposals and plans has been identified with anticipated delivery over the next 12-18 months.

Work is also progressing with the establishment of the Equality and Good Relations Commission and the associated underpinning legislative changes required. It is intended that a Bill to establish the Equality and Good Relations Commission will be introduced during the 2014/15 financial year and that a public consultation will commence shortly. A Transition Board chaired by the Department's Director of Equality and Strategy, and comprising the respective chief executives and chairs of the Equality Commission and the Community Relations Council, is taking forward the operational aspects of implementation.

The Review of Good Relations Funding is a central commitment given within the Strategy and its key findings will inform and shape a future funding delivery model aligned to the priorities of the Strategy. Phase one of the Review was completed in April and phase two is at an advanced stage. The second phase consists of extensive and focused stakeholder engagement to seek views on funding delivery to date and to help inform options on a future funding delivery model.

Work is also continuing with departments to identify actions in relation to the range of commitments that fall outside the 7 headline actions.

A Strategy of this depth and scale requires collective commitment and leadership across all departments and sections of our society. The Ministerial Panel and thematic sub-groups will be central to achieving this, and work on establishing the range

of sub-groups is at an advanced stage with a view to meetings taking place shortly. The Ministerial Panel has met once and plans to meet again before the summer.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) for an update on the funding application for the refurbishment of the IRA monument in Crossmaglen; (ii) who will be responsible for making a decision on the application; and (iii) why this person is responsible for making this decision.

(AQW 15984/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): I presume the Member is referring to an application from the Crossmaglen Memorial and Heritage Committee to preserve, upgrade and complete a monument in the square in Crossmaglen. The application was deemed ineligible and the Crossmaglen Memorial and Heritage Committee was advised of this on 21 October 2013.

A decision on the eligibility of the application was made jointly by the SOAR Joint Council Committee and DARD and not by any individual person.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what percentage of the funding for the GAA's Tyrone County Centre of Participation at Garvaghey, that she jointly announced with the Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, will come from her Department; and under which scheme this funding was allocated.

(AQW 18609/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As the member will be aware the Quality of Life Axis (Axis 3) of the EU Rural Development Programme is delivered through the EU LEADER approach by seven Joint Council Committees (JCCs) working in partnership with a Local Action Group (LAG) in Council Cluster areas.

Assisting Rural Communities (ARC) North West (NW) is responsible for delivery across the council areas of Omagh, Strabane, Derry and Limavady, and has awarded two project Letters of Offer to Tyrone County GAA Committee following two separate open, competitive calls for project applications:

Tyrone County GAA's first Letter of Offer, dated 22 May 2012, provided a grant of £250,000 (50% DARD and 50% EU), which was 34% of total eligible project costs of £730,184 toward a Environmental and Heritage Project under Measure 3.6 'Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage' under Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013.

The second Letter of Offer dated 27 November 2012 provided a grant of £594,656 (50% DARD and 50% EU), which was 72% of total project costs of £824,041 towards a synthetic 3G multi activity facility & all other associated works. The project was funded under Measure 3.4 'Basic Services for the economy and rural population' under Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when a decision will be made on the application for Axis 3 funding under the Rural Development Programme for the Crossmaglen republican monument; and for her assessment of whether the project is eligible for funding due to its nature.

(AQW 18883/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A decision on the eligibility of the application for Axis 3 funding under the Rural Development Programme from Crossmaglen Memorial and Heritage Committee to preserve, upgrade and complete a monument in the square in Crossmaglen was made on 21 October 2013.

I have no involvement in the assessment of projects.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department has advised the Southern Organisation for Action in Rural areas joint committee that funding the refurbishment of the Crossmaglen republican monument under the Rural Development Programme would be discriminatory.

(AQW 18885/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department has not advised the Southern Organisation for Action in Rural areas joint committee that funding the refurbishment of the Crossmaglen monument under the Rural Development Programme would be discriminatory rather that some may perceive it in this way.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how the Tapestry of Colours Online Educational Programme, which was developed with departmental funding, allows people to reflect their Irish identity.

(AQW 33846/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The Tapestry of Colours Online Educational resource was designed to highlight the complexity of inter-culturalism issues and the fusion of cultures emerging in the North of Ireland. Funded by my Department through NI Screen, its aim was to increase cultural understanding and insights at a personal level as well as having the potential to change attitudes in a significant number of young people and adults.

The resource was not intended to target any one specific ethnic minority or religious group, nor was it designed to reflect Irish identity.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the expected tourism benefits that will result from the Built Heritage Study of the Lower Bann in the next two years.

(AQW 33882/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Built Heritage Study of the Lower Bann identifies locations and features that may be of interest to both tourists and the local population and will enable visitors to plan a more interactive visit to the Lower Bann Navigation.

This study is the first step of the process whereby Waterways Ireland, working with local Councils, the NI Tourist Board and the NI Heritage Lottery Fund can develop an enhanced visitor experience for both the Lower Bann Navigation and the north of Ireland as a whole. The main benefits for the wider Lower Bann corridor and the specific places of interest that have been identified by the study may take some time to be realised.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the location of the properties that are being considered for disposal as a result of the recent North South Ministerial Council Inland Waterways meeting.

(AQW 33883/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: At the North South Ministerial Council Inland Waterways meeting on 3 April 2014 Ministers approved properties for disposal at the following locations: the Jolly Mariner, Athlone; Slaghty Shore, Coos North, Woodford, Co Longford; the south side of the Royal Canal at Phibsborough; and Grand Canal Dock Station, Dublin.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, following the recent award of Community Impact Grants to groups in Kilkeel, Newtownstewart and Belfast, what efforts will be made to ensure that groups and events, which are not in the immediate vicinity of these areas, will be catered for.

(AQW 33884/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Groups outside the areas receiving Community Impact Grants can apply for a range of funding support from the Ulster-Scots Agency to run community festivals, summer schools and music and dance tuition programmes. They can also avail of community development support from the Ulster-Scots Community Network, which is resourced via the Agency.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether any sanctions can be imposed against the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) for the incidents at Ballyshannon Power Station that resulted in large number of eel deaths.

(AQW 33885/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is currently investigating this incident and is assessing ESB's statutory obligations in relation to the matter.

As such it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the possible outcome at this time.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the number of salmon smolts in Lough Erne in each of the last thirteen years.

(AQW 33886/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: There is no facility to measure the wild salmon smolt run in the Erne system and consequently there is no data held on this by my Department.

The Electricity Supply Board (ESB), as part of its commitment to the conservation of salmon in the Erne, releases hatchery bred smolts into the system annually and the numbers are detailed in the table below:

Year	Number of hatchery smolts released
2000	71,297
2001	99,622
2002	55,361
2003	103,200
2004	92,714
2005	102,664
2006	104,000

Year	Number of hatchery smolts released
2007	65,000
2008	50,000
2009	52,590
2010	52,764
2011	50,108
2012	51,328
2013	53,252

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the funding Foras na Gaeilge granted to Iontaobhas na Gaeilge; (ii) the purpose of the funding; and (iii) how the funding was spent.

(AQW 33913/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Foras na Gaeilge has confirmed that it has never provided any funding to Iontaobhas na Gaeilge. Iontaobhas na Gaeilge is a charity funded primarily from the profits of the social enterprises it operates and through the generosity of individual and corporate donors.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the total (i) capital; and (ii) recurring costs of the new computer system for Libraries NI.

(AQW 33997/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The total (i) capital cost for the new e2 computer system is £8.7m over 2 years while the (ii) recurrent cost is £19.2m over 5 years.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 33394/11-15, to detail the comparable amounts of money drawn down for Lough Erne.

(AQW 34009/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The circumstances which allow money to be drawn down to support the purchase of elvers for restocking in Lough Neagh do not exist for Lough Erne and no comparison can be made.

The North West Eel Management Plan approved by the Commission on 4th March 2010, showed that the eel stock in Lough Erne was below safe biological limits and therefore it was necessary to introduce a cessation of the commercial eel fishery on the Lough.

The Neagh Bann Eel Management Plan, which was approved at the same time, allowed for a restricted continuation of commercial eel fishing in Lough Neagh.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of (i) the impact that the community radio station Blast 106 has had on youth and alliterative culture in Belfast; and (ii) the impact of the decision by Ofcom to refuse to grant the station a renewed licence.

(AQW 34481/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department is supportive of activity that supports any of the creative industries, including radio, which can be a powerful tool for promoting local music, artists and events.

The awarding of licences in respect of community radio is the responsibility of Ofcom and I understand that Blast 106 is currently appealing Ofcom's decision through a Judicial Review. In light of this, it would not be appropriate for my Department to make any further comment at this stage.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what progress has been made in securing the right of athletes from Northern Ireland to represent the United Kingdom at international level; and what specific steps she has taken to advance this cause.

(AQW 34604/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department is fully supportive of the principle that sports people from the north of Ireland can choose to represent either Britain, or Ireland, at International Events. My Department will support Sport NI in its collaborations with other sports councils operating in Britain and Ireland with the aim of agreeing a joined up approach to sports governing bodies on their responsibilities under the Good Friday Agreement.

In addition, work is also being progressed by Sport NI under Good Relations in Sport, the aim of which is to provide training and education opportunities for sports bodies.

Furthermore, my Department, through Sport NI, provides support to local athletes to enable them to meet the performance standards necessary to qualify for international competition.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the expenditure by Waterways Ireland on hospitality in 2013/14.

(AQW 34909/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Waterways Ireland has a financial year based on the calendar year, 1 January to 31 December. Total expenditure on hospitality during the 2013 year by Waterways Ireland was €7827/£6647.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the expenditure by Foras na Gaeilge on hospitality in 2013/14.

(AQW 34911/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Foras na Gaeilge financial year is based on the calendar year, 1 January to 31 December. For the 2013 financial year, Foras na Gaeilge spent £346.83 on hospitality.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the expenditure by the Ulster-Scots Agency on hospitality in 2013/14.

(AQW 34912/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Ulster-Scots Agency's financial year is based on the calendar year, 1 January to 31 December. For the 2013 financial year, the Ulster-Scots Agency spent £1,040.37 on hospitality.

Department of Education

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education how much, as a percentage of the total recurring funding in his Department, was spent on integrated education in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34994/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The percentage of my Department's recurrent budget which was allocated to Integrated Education in each of the 5 Financial Years 2009/10 to 2013/14 is provided in the table below:

Year	Percentage of Recurrent Budget allocated to Integrated Education
2013/14	5.20%
2012/13	5.18%
2011/12	5.24%
2010/11	4.87%
2009/10	5.07%

Notes:

- In calculating the percentage of total recurrent funding allocated to Integrated education, it is not possible to include all recurrent costs associated with Integrated education.
 - All pre-school provision is non sectoral and open to all. It is, therefore, not possible to draw out affiliations in the pre-school sector;
 - Also excluded are certain central costs such as funding for milk and meals and transport which are not allocated at individual school or sector level.
 - The percentage figures represent identifiable school-level recurrent funds (delegated budgets, centre funding and applicable programme funding), divided by the overall resource budget for all education services for those years.
- The percentage figure for 2013/14 Financial year is currently to be treated as provisional as it contains unaudited figures.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to the Private Member's Motion on 4 February 2013 on school transport and AQW 23442/11-15, for an update on the feasibility study into providing free public transport for all school pupils which was to form a component of his Department's wider Review of Home to School Transport Policy.

(AQW 35335/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In December of 2013 I commissioned an Independent Review of School Transport led by transport expert Dr Sian Thornthwaite. The Terms of Reference for the Independent Panel included, "consideration of the feasibility of

providing free (public) transport for all school pupils". The Panel presented its final report to me on 28th August. It contains a considerable number of proposals for change which I now intend to consider before making decisions on the way forward. I will publish the report in due course.

Department of the Environment

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33430/11-15, whether the proposals that he made with the Minister of Finance and Personnel for Driver and Vehicle Agency staff, will be put in place before 5 July 2014.

(AQW 33843/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): In your question you have queried whether the proposals would be put in place before 5 July and this date is now passed. I apologise for not replying to you before this date. The following outlines the up-to-date position.

With the agreement of the Minister for Finance and Personnel, arrangements have been in place since April that mean that, in effect, any suitable vacancy in any Department has been offered to the affected staff in DVA in the first instance. To date, 46 staff have secured new posts through these arrangements.

In addition, I have announced the relocation of functions to Coleraine from my Department, comprising of 70 jobs; 50 of which will be suitable for surplus staff in the DVA who have been affected by the decision taken by the Department for Transport to centralise vehicle licensing in Swansea. The training for staff in DVA taking up these jobs will begin around the end of July, as soon as the staff can be freed up from vehicle licensing activities and the work will transfer permanently to Coleraine as soon as the staff have been fully trained.

I have encouraged all of my Executive colleagues to continue their efforts to identify functions in their departments that could be relocated to Coleraine and officials are finalising details of the offer from the Minister for Social Development for temporary work to be undertaken by up to 100 of the surplus staff in Coleraine. The intention is also to have this temporary work in place by around the end of July.

Mr Brady asked the Minister of the Environment, given the local opposition to the proposed development at Carnbane, Newry, whether he will consider reversing the decision to grant planning permission.

(AQW 34048/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am confident that my announcement to approve this application is the right decision for Newry and the public interest overall when the various economic, social and environmental issues are considered in the round. It is my opinion that the development will bring benefits to the local environment including the restoration of part of the Newry Canal, a Scheduled Monument, enhanced landscaping along the Canal and Newry River and enhanced protection for the setting of SpringHill Rath, also a Scheduled Monument. I also consider it will bring an economic boost to the local area, providing much needed jobs.

Since announcing my decision I have met with representatives from Newry Chamber of Trade and Commerce and listened to their concerns. I have asked my officials to consider their representations and provide further advice to me on the matter. I will make a final decision in due course.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the funding awarded to Crawfordsburn Country Park in each of the last five years.

(AQW 34655/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The programme resource funding allocation awarded to Crawfordsburn Country Park in each of the last five financial years is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1

Financial year	Allocation
2010/11	£149,000
2011/12	£139,000
2012/13	£174,000
2013/14	£192,000
2014/15	£195,000

Funding for Crawfordsburn Park has been increased over the past five years.

There are currently no specific plans to increase funding for Crawfordsburn Country Park. I have directed the Department to continue to explore ways of bringing additional resources to the country parks and historic monuments that it manages. These are great community assets and I am keen to increase community use of them.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment whether there are any plans to increase funding for Crawfordsburn Country Park.

(AQW 34656/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The programme resource funding allocation awarded to Crawfordsburn Country Park in each of the last five financial years is detailed in Table 1.

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There are currently no specific plans to increase funding for Crawfordsburn Country Park. I have directed the Department to continue to explore ways of bringing additional resources to the country parks and historic monuments that it manages. These are great community assets and I am keen to increase community use of them.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of the Environment what advice has been given to local councils on preventing the burning of tyres and other dangerous materials on bonfires.

(AQW 34676/11-15)

Mr Durkan: We are mindful that the issue of bonfires does not rest fully with one organisation and of the tensions that occur relating to bonfires which we are not statutorily tasked with or competent to make decisions about.

Responsibility for bonfire management, under the Good Relations Strategy, rests with the Good Relations Officers in each local Council who have a duty to examine bonfire issues. Under the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 Councils do have the powers to remove illegally deposited waste in order to remove or prevent pollution of land, water or air or to harm human health or to take other steps to eliminate or reduce the consequences of the deposit.

NIEA gives advice to Councils on a case by case basis in relation to our statutory role in implementing environmental legislation.

Many Councils have been doing excellent work with community groups to prevent the use of tyres at celebratory fires. Officials have been working together as a matter of course, in this case through an ongoing pilot exercise in four District Council areas where NIEA staff and Council Environmental Health Officers are carrying out joint inspections of part worn and waste tyres at tyre retailer premises.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, given the designation of Lough Neagh as an Area of Special Scientific Interest, including for rare and endangered species, why his Department does not consider it appropriate to recommend it for designation as a Special Area of Conservation.

(AQW 34830/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (known as the Habitats Directive) requires member States to take measures to maintain or restore natural habitats and species listed on the Annexes to the Directive. These measures include contributing to a coherent European ecological network of protected sites by designating Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for habitats listed on Annex I and for species listed on Annex II.

Lough Neagh in its entirety does not qualify for designation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) according to the Habitats Directive selection criteria. However, a small part of the shoreline near Antrim (Rea's Wood and Farr's Bay) has been designated as a SAC for its wet woodland habitat. Lough Neagh is a Special Protection Area (SPA) for its bird assemblage under the related Birds Directive. Article 7 of the Habitats Directive applies the same protection to SPAs as afforded to SACs, thus SAC designation would not materially add to the protection currently afforded to Lough Neagh.

Lough Neagh is already a Special Protection Area (SPA) for its bird assemblage under the related Birds Directive. SACs and SPAs together form a network of protected sites throughout the European Union, collectively known as European or Natura 2000 sites. Article 7 of the Habitats Directive applies the same protection to SPAs as afforded to SACs. Therefore SAC designation would not materially add to the protection currently afforded to Lough Neagh.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment when he will answer AQW 33843/11-15.

(AQW 34832/11-15)

Mr Durkan: AQW 33843/11-15 was answered on 29 July 2014.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of the Environment what work he has undertaken to establish the extent of the risk of serious injury being caused by unregulated taxi meter electronic installation.

(AQW 34955/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has considered the risks posed by the unsafe installation of taximeters, including investigating what action is undertaken in other jurisdictions, and will consider these risks further before the final regulations and guidance governing the testing of taximeters are finalised.

In the meantime, I note that, already, in regulation 115 of the Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999, there is a general safety provision which enables the Department to prevent vehicles being used when they are likely to cause danger to a person in the vehicle.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment (i) what knowledge he has of proposals for a private visitor centre on land adjoining the archaeological discoveries at Dunluce Castle; (ii) for his assessment of the need to ensure high quality building design compatible with the local environment; and (iii) how such a proposal can be taken forward.

(AQW 34981/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am aware that there are currently two live planning applications for a visitor centre at this location (Refs: C/2012/0158/F and C/2014/0109/O). I acknowledge the importance of the application site and I have asked my officials to take this into account when considering any development proposals.

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department has issued any Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme Certificates relating to Campsie Sand and Gravel at Mobuoy Road.

(AQW 35011/11-15)

Mr Durkan: An ALCS Certificate was issued on 18 November 2004 to Campsie Sand & Gravel Ltd for a sand and gravel site at Mobuoy Road, Campsie, Londonderry BT47 3JG.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment how many of the jobs transferred to Coleraine will be filled by staff who are currently carrying out the functions of that role; and how many will be filled by staff currently based in Coleraine.

(AQW 35070/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A total of 51 posts have been permanently relocated from Belfast to Coleraine to offset some of the job losses resulting from the centralisation of vehicle licensing services in Swansea. My officials are currently engaged in the process of allocating staff to these posts and dealing with the consequent surpluses in Belfast.

The relocated posts were existing posts in my Department in the Road Transport Licensing Division, Learning & Development Unit and Finance and Business Planning Division.

A total of three posts will be filled by staff currently carrying out the functions of the role in Belfast. A further three posts will be filled by Coleraine based staff in the Finance and Business Planning Division who would otherwise be surplus as a result of the centralisation decision.

Out of the 51 posts relocated to Coleraine, 46 are available to be filled by staff currently based in Coleraine with three Belfast based staff transferring with their posts.

A further two posts are specialist technical accounting posts one of which has been filled by a Belfast based surplus member of staff. As there is currently no surplus of staff at the relevant accounting grade the other post will be filled through the normal selection method which may result in it being allocated to a member of staff currently based in Coleraine.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to the pollution of waterways incidents, to what level does an incident have to impact environmentally for a classification of high severity.

(AQW 35102/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) classifies confirmed water pollution incidents, using the Water Pollution Incidents Severity Classification System, as being of High, Medium or Low Severity. A full copy of the classification system has been placed in the Assembly Library. The classification system used by the NIEA has been independently reviewed and is consistent with that employed by the other UK Environment Agencies.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33768/11-15, from which council areas will the exported waste be received.

(AQW 35118/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The information that the Department required from the applicant to process an application for the Shipment of Waste regulated under Regulation EC 1013/2006 details 11 council areas, namely:- Armagh City and DC, Banbridge DC, Belfast City Council, Craigavon DC, Cookstown DC, Down DC, Dungannon & South Tyrone DC, Fermanagh DC, Magherafelt DC, Newry & Mourne DC and Omagh DC. It should be noted, in addition, that the application also details sources from other waste management companies which may receive waste from the other district councils not listed above.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the illegal dumps that are due to have waste repatriated.
(AQW 35132/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There were originally seventeen sites in total requiring repatriation; nine of these sites have now been completed. This leaves eight sites still to be repatriated. Four in the South Armagh region, one in Co Tyrone outside Cookstown, one in Co Londonderry outside Portglenone, one in Co Antrim outside Crumlin and one in Co Down outside Mayobridge.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment what action take he will take to alert cyclists of the dangers of ignoring red traffic light signals and riding against approaching traffic and that these actions are against the law.

(AQW 35158/11-15)

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 publicity information campaigns, education programmes and promotion of the Highway Code. Many of these reference and highlight the rules that apply to cyclists.

A bicycle is legally a vehicle and a cyclist is a driver, therefore a cyclist is required to obey all the standard rules of the road. To help support this, my Department promotes the Highway Code as essential reading for all road users. The rules, techniques and advice are there to help us all to use the roads both safely and legally.

The Highway Code contains general rules for using the road which apply to all vehicles including bicycles as well as rules and advice which apply specifically to cyclists. The Rules for Cyclists section (Rules 59 to 82) outlines legal requirements and advice on many issues including road positioning, procedures to be followed at road junctions, as well as other safety requirements. For example, Rules 69 and 71 clearly state that a cyclist **MUST** obey all traffic signs and traffic light signals and **MUST NOT** cross the stop line when the traffic lights are red. The use of the wording **MUST / MUST NOT** within the Code indicates that the rule is a legal requirement and if you disobey these rules you are committing a criminal offence.

It is essential that all road users are aware of the rules of the road and are considerate towards each other – this applies to cyclists as much as to drivers, riders and pedestrians. Knowing and applying the rules contained in the Highway Code could significantly reduce road casualties and this is why my Department will continue to promote the Code as essential reading for everyone. This important publication must continue to be as accessible as possible: a copy is already free to download or read online in a number of languages, and there are now also Facebook and Twitter accounts offering regular topical reminders for road users.

Turning to advertising campaigns, in April this year I launched a television advertising campaign addressing cyclist safety. The campaign entitled “Don’t Forget” focuses on the vulnerability of cyclists and the responsibility both drivers and cyclists have towards each other on their respective journeys.

In April 2013, my Department launched the ‘Share the Road to Zero’ campaign. This campaign underlines the Department’s vision of zero road deaths, where we do not accept that anyone should ever die on our roads. Community engagement is a key element to this campaign and, as such, we want to encourage road users to sign up to www.sharetheroadtozero.com and show their commitment to the ambition of zero road deaths in Northern Ireland. Those who pledge to Share the Road to Zero receive a regular email with road safety advice which is tailored to the roles that they have declared as a road user (one of the options is cyclist). Likewise, advice and Highway Code Rules are also posted on the Share the Road to Zero Facebook and Twitter pages.

My Department in cooperation with Department for Regional Development and cycling groups produced a booklet called ‘Cycling Skills and Cycling Safety’ This booklet provides information on the benefits of cycling and safety requirements and the rules of the road and is available in both hard copy and on NIDirect.gov.uk.

In terms of cyclist education, the Cycling Proficiency Scheme (CPS) is offered by the DOE to all primary schools in Northern Ireland. This year over 530 schools representing 9,400 pupils have registered to take part in the scheme. The aim of CPS is to teach children to ride their bicycles safely and is a combination of theory and practical (playground) exam. Children from P5 to P7 can participate on the scheme but only children aged 9 or over can take the test.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment, given that food processing and pharmaceuticals are singled out and identified in PED 8 as industries which require a containment free environment, and that slaughterhouses are specifically listed in the Supplementary Planning Guidance as a source of emission of dust, odour or other contaminants which may have the potential to impact upon sensitive industrial enterprises, whether it would be appropriate to approve planning application N/2014/0148/F.

(AQW 35166/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The purpose of any planning application is to determine whether the proposed use of land and the detail of buildings and ancillary development associated with this is considered acceptable taking account of planning policy and all material considerations.

The application that you refer to is for a proposed abattoir in the Carn Industrial Estate, Craigavon (reference N/2014/0148/F) and is at present still under consideration by the Department. I am aware that strong concerns have been raised locally regarding this proposal and I have asked my officials to ensure that these are comprehensively considered and also that the

application is dealt with in an expeditious manner. It would nevertheless be inappropriate for me to comment specifically on the proposal at this stage as this could pre-determine the outcome of the planning process.

I do however wish to reassure you that all material planning matters, including the clear advice set out in Policy PED8 of Planning Policy Statement 4 and its supplementary policy guidance, will be fully and carefully taken into account by my planning officials in arriving at a decision on this application.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment whether he plans to survey the composition of the new councils, in relation to minority ethnic councillors.

(AQW 35167/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I understand your concern about this and believe that research to determine the composition of new Councils by minority ethnic group and indeed by other categories, would be a worthwhile exercise.

I think that the appropriate body to take this forward would be Equality Commission Northern Ireland (ECNI) in consultation with Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA).

Accordingly, I have asked my officials to explore this further with the ECNI and NILGA.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment whether consideration is being given to ensure that planning permission is required for exploratory drilling operations under the Strategic Planning Policy Statement rather than continuing to allow permitted development rights to apply to the drilling of exploratory boreholes for mineral exploration under Part 16 of Schedule 1 of the Planning (General Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 1993.

(AQW 35175/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Permitted development rights for mineral exploration are provided for under Part 16 of Schedule 1 to the Planning (General Development) Order (NI) 1993. These rights have been carefully written to ensure that while they allow for mineral exploration to ascertain the presence and extent or quality of any deposit of a mineral with a view to exploiting that mineral, they also include certain limitations, conditions and safeguards.

A developer, should they wish to invoke these permitted development rights, must provide the Department with details of the location, target mineral, details of plant and operations and anticipated timescale prior to commencing development. This allows for a decision to be taken on whether or not the permitted development right should be removed and the proposal made subject to the full planning application process.

In addition to notifying the Department, the developer must also ensure that:-

- any operation is not within an area of special scientific interest or a site of archaeological interest;
- any explosive charge of more than 1 kilogram is not used; and
- any structure assembled or provided is not more than 3 metres in height where such a structure would be within 3 kilometres of an aerodrome.

Part 16 permitted development rights also provide conditions which the developer must adhere to, including adequate sealing of any boreholes, protection of trees on the site and restoration of the land to its condition before the development took place.

The draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) states that there should be a presumption against unconventional exploitation of hydrocarbons until the Department is satisfied that there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts. The consultation on the SPPS has now closed and my officials are currently considering the responses received.

I have no plans to amend or revoke the current permitted development rights provided for under Part 16 of Schedule 1 to the Planning (General Development) Order (NI) 1993.

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33952/11-15, (i) why no detailed drawings of the explosives store were included with the planning application; (ii) why his Department did not request these details; (iii) whether full permission can be granted to a development in the absence of such details or planning conditions; and (iv) how this planning application came to be approved at this location.

(AQW 35198/11-15)

Mr Durkan: As part of planning application K/2013/0072/F, the applicant's project description document refers to a portable explosives store. The development as approved is temporary in nature (3 years). As advised in AQW 33952/11-15, the explosives store location was shown by the applicant on their Site Layout drawing and annotated 'Proposed temporary surface explosives store'.

Again as advised in AQW 33952/11-15, this facility may only be used for the storage of explosives once a licence has been given by the DOJ under the Management and Storage of Explosives (NI) Regulations 2006, subject to the facility satisfying an explosives inspector from Health and Safety (Great Britain) and meeting security requirements set out by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). This process takes place without the planning process. Strategic Projects Division is content that sufficient detail was provided given that the facility was subject to a further process to establish its details from a security perspective.

In order to meet the clearance requirements of the Management and Storage of Explosives (NI) Regulations 2006, the developer has proposed a minor amendment to the explosive store location as approved in accordance with K/2013/0072/F. The proposed minor amendment details remain under consideration by my officials.

This application was approved after going through the statutory planning process, including assessment against relevant policy and a full consultation.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33768/11-15, whether the need to export waste is related to the unavailability of the Mobouy Road landfill site or any of the other waste sites currently under investigation by his Department.

(AQW 35203/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The need to export waste is not driven by any current investigations. The export of waste for energy recovery is common throughout the United Kingdom and occurs within the terms of the EU's regulatory framework.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what percentage of the cost of monitoring, application and policing of the environmental regulation of a company which is given permission to search for and obtain petroleum will be met by the company; and to detail how his Department will collect this revenue.

(AQW 35204/11-15)

Mr Durkan: NIEA seeks to safeguard the quality of the environment through effective regulation of activities that have the potential to impact on air, water and land. This involves issuing consents, licences, permits and authorisations and enforcing standards for compliance.

The Agency is required to achieve full cost recovery for such regulatory functions through the application of fees and charges on companies it regulates. The operation of NIEA's Regulatory Charging Policy, including the collection of fees and charges, is detailed within NIEA's existing fees and charging schemes.

Further detail on NIEA's Regulatory Charging Policy and on individual schemes is publicly available on NIEA's website: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/business_and_industry-2/charges.htm

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 11111/11-15, whether the regulations do not subject those proposals for hydraulic fracturing that are below a certain threshold to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); and what action he will take to ensure that all proposals for extreme energy exploration and extraction will be subject to an EIA.

(AQW 35208/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The SPPS (Spatial Planning Policy Statement) provides a new set of overarching core planning principles to underpin delivery of the planning reforms set out in the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 ('the Planning Act'). The SPPS states in relation to unconventional hydrocarbon extraction there should be a presumption against their exploitation until the Department is satisfied that there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Directive will play a central role and in the decision making process ensuring that the environmental implications of this project are taken into account before final decisions are taken.

I have always said that all appropriate planning and environmental standards will be strictly applied on the issue of unconventional hydraulic fracturing. As Planning and Environment Minister this approach will not be compromised.

Should any application be submitted for high volume hydraulic fracturing, a planning application will be required to be accompanied with an Environmental Statement which identifies and provides mitigation against all identified environmental impacts.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to what extent his Department has implemented the Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment that all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction works will include social clauses; and to what level such clauses have been implemented.

(AQW 34275/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): My Department fully supports the Programme for Government 2011-15 commitment that all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction works will include social clauses.

In relation to contracts let by my own Department in 2013-14, 84 of these (78%) include wider community benefits as appropriate, and a number of contracts have been let with employment and training clauses.

More widely Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) within my Department has supported the Programme for Government commitment through the development of guidance on integrating social considerations into contracts. Responsibility for

implementing the guidance lies with departments. However, CPD also works with departments and Centres of Procurement Expertise to encourage and support both commissioners and practitioners in the delivery of social clauses in public contracts.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has any plans to adjust the responsibility for the payment of rates between a landlord and a tenant for capital values above £150,000.

(AQW 34601/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In April 2013, the Department carried out a limited consultation on changes to simplify the law around landlord rates liability. These proposed removing conditionality relating to the frequency of rent payment and extending the discount for prompt rates payment to include empty properties. These amendments were introduced in the Financial Provisions (NI) Act 2014, which obtained Royal Assent at the end of April and will take effect from the start of the next financial year, April 2015.

It was clear from that consultation that more fundamental reform will not attract universal approval. On the one hand, tenants and those who represent their views believe that landlords should be liable in all cases. On the other hand, landlords consider that tenants should be liable, as they are normally under the Council Tax System in the rest of the UK.

While I recognise the need to review liability in this sector, this cannot precede wider policy decisions on Welfare Reform which will have an effect on rental arrangements in Northern Ireland.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is the policy and practice of permitting departments, which have not controlled their expenditure within agreed targets, to benefit from monitoring rounds.

(AQW 34665/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There are no rules stating that a department exceeding its Budget Control Total in one year cannot receive additional funding in future monitoring rounds.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel when he will resume talks with the Prime Minister and HM Treasury on the devolution of corporation tax powers.

(AQW 34739/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Prime Minister has indicated that the Government will announce its decision on the devolution of corporation tax powers no later than the 2014 Autumn Statement and the timing and nature of any discussions will be dependent on that.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) what was the annual expenditure on food in Civil Service facilities in each of the last three years; (ii) of this total expenditure, what was the expenditure on food produced in Northern Ireland; and (iii) whether this food is clearly identified as having been produced in Northern Ireland on menus and at point of service.

(AQW 34789/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department does not hold this information for each of the last three years.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the funding that his Department, and its arm's-length bodies, invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014.

(AQW 34902/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The funding my Department has invested in North Belfast during financial years 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 is £1.5million.

No expenditure in my Department's arm's length bodies was spent in North Belfast in this period.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of (a) direct; and (b) indirect jobs in the local marine sector for the most recent consecutive five years for which data is available.

(AQW 35109/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: It is not possible to differentiate between direct and indirect jobs. The table details the number of employee jobs in industries related to the maritime sector as defined by Eurostat in the years for which data is available. The definition used includes processing of fish and the building, repair and maintenance of ships.

Table 1: Northern Ireland Employee Jobs in Industries Related to the Maritime Sector

Maritime Sector	Number of Employee Jobs
2009	1,946
2011	1,874

Source: NI Census of Employment

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why his departmental officials pursue tenants for unpaid rates, in cases where the rental agreement states that rent payments were inclusive of rates, rather than the landlord who collected rates from his tenant but did not make payment to the Department.

(AQW 35139/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Article 20(1) of the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 determines who is legally responsible for paying rates on rental homes, regardless of any tenancy agreement. I am aware of a number of cases where the landlord has taken payment from the tenant in respect of rates as part of the tenancy agreement, but not passed on to the Department. Such instances are unfortunate (and AQW 34500/11-15 refers), however my departmental officials have no option but to pursue the tenant for unpaid rates. Land & Property Services is sympathetic to these cases and works closely with the tenant to agree a suitable repayment plan.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether there are any ongoing investigations relating to any Public Private Partnership projects that his Department is associated with; and if so, to detail the projects.

(AQW 35154/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There are no ongoing investigations relating to any Public Private Partnership projects within my Department.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, following reports that a 25 year old patient with a disability was denied physiotherapy treatment at Tyrone County Hospital and referred to a private nursing home where they had to pay for the treatment, whether a new policy on the treatment of patients has been implemented in the hospital.

(AQW 34664/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): In the Western Trust Physiotherapy services are offered at the Tyrone County Hospital for clients of all ages, on an out-patient basis.

Regarding those who are over 65, in-patient rehabilitation services are available at the Hospital for those who meet the admission criteria. For those patients under 65 years who meet the admission criteria, the Western Trust has a nurse-led service which includes 10 orthopaedic rehabilitation beds in the Waterside Hospital, Londonderry.

There has been no change of policy on the treatment of patients in relation to Physiotherapy services at Tyrone County Hospital.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the usage and uptake of insulin pumps in each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 34808/11-15)

Mr Poots: As at 30 June 2014 there were 730 patients using insulin pump therapy in Northern Ireland, with 153 patients waiting to commence treatment. The table below sets out the number of adults and children both receiving and waiting for insulin pump therapy in each Health and Social Care Trust.

Trust	No. adults receiving insulin pump therapy	No. adults waiting for insulin pump therapy	No. Paediatric patients receiving insulin pump therapy	No. Paediatric patients waiting for insulin pump therapy	Total no. patients receiving insulin pump therapy	Total no. Patients waiting for insulin pump therapy
BHSCT	117	45	40	19	157	64
NHSCT	68	2	72	10	140	12
SEHSCT	82	3	54	25	136	28
SHSCT	94	5	88	7	182	12
WHsCT	68	19	47	18	115	37
TOTALS	429	74	301	79	730	153

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether Health and Social Care Trusts are offered financial incentives for putting patients on terminal care templates, such as the Liverpool Care Pathway.

(AQW 35169/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Liverpool Care Pathway is the only end of life care tool which has been used in Northern Ireland to support the care of people who are identified in the final days and hours of life. No Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland has been offered financial incentives for placing patients on the Liverpool Care Pathway.

In line with advice already issued in England and Scotland, advice that the use of the Liverpool Care Pathway should be phased out in Northern Ireland has been issued by my Department.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown by Health and Social Care Trust of the primary diagnoses resulting in patients being initiated on terminal care pathways.

(AQW 35170/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP) is the only tool which has been used in Northern Ireland to support the care of a person who has been identified as being in the probable final days or hours of life. A decision to use the Liverpool Care Pathway to support care at the end of life will have been made on a case by case basis with regard to the individual circumstances of each patient and would not therefore have been either dependent on or as a result of a person's diagnosis or condition.

In line with advice already issued in England and Scotland, advice that the use of the Liverpool Care Pathway should be phased out in Northern Ireland has been issued by my Department.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the measures which his Department has implemented to monitor the use of terminal care pathways.

(AQW 35171/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP) is the only clinical pathway which has been used in Northern Ireland to provide care for people who are in the final days and hours of life. Health and Social Care Trusts have never been set targets for placing patients on the Liverpool Care Pathway and the Department has not implemented measures to monitor the frequency of use of the LCP in Health and Social Care Trusts.

The Liverpool Care Pathway has been subject to national audit by way of the National Care of the Dying Audit - Hospitals (NCDHAH) led by the Marie Curie Palliative Care Institute Liverpool in collaboration with the Royal College of Physicians, Northern Ireland has participated in two of these audits. The aim of the NCDHAH was to improve the standards of care for patients who are expected to die, and who die in acute hospitals, whilst supported by the Liverpool Care Pathway. The audit incorporated Key Performance Indicators which enabled hospitals and Trusts which participated to identify the quality of care provided to dying patients where care was supported by the Liverpool Care Pathway, benchmark their performance against other hospitals and consequently drive up the continuous quality of care.

In line with advice already issued in England and Scotland, advice that the use of the Liverpool Care Pathway should be phased out in Northern Ireland has been issued by my Department.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to protect the funding for the Condition Management Programme.

(AQW 35241/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department does not provide funding to the Condition Management Programme (CMP). The CMP is funded and managed by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and is delivered, on behalf of DEL, by healthcare professionals in Health and Social Care Trusts.

The Minister for Employment and Learning has advised me that following a review of the CMP by his Department, it has been concluded that the current model is not sustainable and that funding for the programme in its existing format will cease at the end of 2014/15. Officials from my Department are liaising with officials from DEL and other key stakeholders to explore potential options for the CMP after 2014/15.

Department of Justice

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 2053/11-15, to detail the offence(s) for which the officer is being prosecuted.

(AQW 2674/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): A police investigation file into allegations of voyeurism was submitted to the Public Prosecution Service in April 2011. Prosecution decisions are a matter for the independent Director of Public Prosecutions and any further information required should be sought from the Director's office.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 1825/11-15, for his assessment of whether charges of perverting the course of justice should be rigorously pursued to avoid the corruption of cases, witness interference and the wasting of PSNI, Public Prosecution Service and Court time.

(AQW 3128/11-15)

Mr Ford: Perverting the course of justice is a serious matter and should, of course, be dealt with in the appropriate manner. Decisions on how best to proceed are made on a case by case basis and are a matter for the independent Public Prosecution Service.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice what plans he has to reform the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, in line with the announcement made by the Justice Secretary, Ken Clarke MP.

(AQW 7355/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme broadly mirrors the schemes in England, Wales and Scotland. I have no current plans to reform the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme. However, my Department will examine the Ministry of Justice proposals, and consider their relevance for Northern Ireland, particularly in terms of practical support for victims. Consideration will also be given to the recommendations from the Inquiry by the Justice Committee into the services available to victims and witnesses of crime.

Mr Weir asked Minister of Justice to detail (i) the quangos to which his Department makes appointments; (ii) how many members are appointed; and (iii) the remuneration paid to (a) the Chair; and (b) other members.

(AQW 9796/11-15)

Mr Ford: The information requested is set out in the, "Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Report 2010-11", published by OFMDFM which lists all of my Department's public bodies. The Annual Report is available from the Assembly Library under Reference number, R351.41609 NOR.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Justice to detail all occasions in the last 12 months when his Department has made a presentation to an Assembly committee and provided papers pertaining to that presentation to the committee less than 48 hours beforehand.

(AQW 10036/11-15)

Mr Ford: There has been one occasion in the last 12 months on which the Department of Justice has made a presentation to its Assembly Committee and provided papers pertaining to that presentation to the Committee less than 48 hours beforehand.

The presentation in question was in reference to the 'Legal Aid Dispute', which was listed for the Justice Committee meeting on 23 June 2011. The papers pertaining to this issued to the Committee on 21 June 2011; this had been agreed in advance with the Committee Clerk.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the community groups he has met since taking office; (ii) the community groups he has met with in regard to dealing the past; and (iii) the community groups which have sought to meet him but that have been declined a meeting.

(AQW 14226/11-15)

Mr Ford: Since taking up office on 12 April 2010, until 25 September 2012, I have met the following community groups:

- Ardoyne Representatives
- Black Mountain Shared Space Project
- Cavehill Antrim Road Regeneration (CARR)
- Crumlin and Ardoyne Residents Association (CARA)
- Holyland Regeneration Association
- Kilcooley Community Forum
- North & West Belfast Forum
- North & West Belfast Parades Forum
- Rural Community Network
- Short Strand Partnership
- Upper Springfield Community Safety Forum

None of these groups raised the issue of dealing with the past.

It is not possible to provide the information requested on any meetings declined as to locate, retrieve and extract the relevant information would require a manual search of records which could only be carried out at disproportionate cost.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what consultation his Department has carried out with key stakeholders, including serving police officers, on pension changes; and to provide copies of the reports of these consultations.

(AQW 35230/11-15)

Mr Ford: In January 2012, my Department commenced consultation, at the Police Negotiating Board (PNB), on the policy for the new Police Pension Scheme. In line with normal practice, such consultations are carried out in confidence.

On 8 March 2012, the Executive took the decision to adopt a new Career Average Revalued Earnings scheme model, in line with the equivalent scheme in Great Britain and not to adopt different approaches for Northern Ireland.

On 3 July 2014, my Department published a statement detailing the bodies we would consult when making changes to pensions regulations. Consultation is targeted at those bodies with a direct responsibility for police pensions and the recognised staff associations and representative bodies. This approach is consistent with that of other Departments in relation to the changes to public sector pension schemes. Consultation on the draft regulations will close on 16 October 2014.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to outline the reasons for the delay in making payments to police widows who have had their entitlement to widow's pension restored, with effect from 1 July 2014; and when will the relevant administrative approval issue to enable payments to commence.

(AQW 35257/11-15)

Mr Ford: I remain keen to give effect to the will of the Assembly that, under Section 30 of the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, police widows remarrying after 1 January 1989 should retain, or have reinstated, their pensions. However, there are a number of technical issues that need to be resolved with the Department of Finance & Personnel and with HM Treasury before I can give approval for payments to commence.

I have written to the Finance Minister seeking to address these issues urgently and I understand he is engaging with HM Treasury on the matter. I await a substantive response.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice whether a person travelling to Northern Ireland, who is prescribed cannabis for medical purposes in their home country, is permitted to carry and use their prescribed medication in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 35332/11-15)

Mr Ford: Responsibility for this falls under the remit of the Home Office, and I would refer you to them for further information and response.

Department for Regional Development

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the footfall in Belfast city centre, broken down by month, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35018/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): My Department does not measure footfall and, therefore, does not hold the information you have requested. However we receive footfall figures from Belfast City Centre management.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister for Regional Development how his Department measures footfall in cities.

(AQW 35020/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my response to his related question, AQW 35018/11-15.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the number of people who are availing of the Cycle to Work Scheme.

(AQW 35180/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Northern Ireland Civil Service Cycle to Work Scheme, which I launched in June 2012, is managed by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). The scheme enables civil servants to receive substantial discounts on the hire of a bicycle for travel to and from work.

DFP has advised that almost 500 NICS staff are currently availing of the Cycle to Work Scheme and over 1,200 bicycles have been processed under the scheme since its launch in June 2012.

In light of the steps that I have been taking to promote cycling – and everyday cycling in particular – I am encouraged by the number of civil servants who have availed of the scheme.

Department for Social Development

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development how many tickets for the Jubilee Garden Party on 27 June 2012 were allocated to (i) the Minister; (ii) his Department; and (iii) its arm's-length bodies.

(AQW 13291/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): My Department received a total allocation of 150 tickets for the Jubilee Garden Party on 27 June.

Mr Boylan asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the accuracy of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency's current measurement of rural poverty.

(AQO 5550/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My department produces the official poverty estimates for Northern Ireland using the Family Resources Survey, which is an annual survey carried out in the whole of the United Kingdom. My department considers the current measures of poverty, as recognised in legislation through the UK Child Poverty Act 2010, as being robust in their nature. In addition, the Northern Ireland Family Resources Survey publication and associated publications have been assessed by the United Kingdom Statistics Authority and have been designated as National Statistics, which demonstrates the quality and reliability of the statistics.

All Family Resource Survey data can be categorised by both Urban Rural and East-West classifications. These breakdowns are also considered to be robust and are presented in the Family Resources Survey Urban Rural report for Northern Ireland.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 33737/11-15, (i) how many investigations the Investigation Strategy Group has overseen since it was established; (ii) how many have been reported to his Department; and (iii) to outline the nature of each investigation.

(AQW 34026/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that;

- (i) The Investigation Strategy Group (ISG) has overseen 97 cases since it was established;
- (ii) 75 cases were reported to the Department for Social Development. All internal disciplinary cases are not required to be notified to the Department. However, all ISG cases are reported at the Housing Executive's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee which is attended by Departmental officials on a quarterly basis.
- (iii) Due to the numbers of cases it would be impractical to outline each case. However, the Housing Executive advise that the most common types of cases relate to alleged breaches of the Housing Executive's Code of Conduct, for example:-
 - Allegations of Staff Misconduct of which there were 14 cases,
 - Allegations of Deficiencies in Contract Management of which there were nine cases,
 - Allegations of improper relationship between employee and contractor of which there were six cases.

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the funding that his Department, and its arm's-length bodies, invested in North Belfast between May 2011 and May 2014.

(AQW 34974/11-15)

Mr McCausland: It is not practical to disaggregate amounts specifically to the period requested. The table below therefore provides details on the total funding invested by my Department and its arm's length bodies in North Belfast, broken down by main business area/function between 2011-12 and 2014-15.

Business Area	Total Funding provided (£m)
Social Security Jobs & Benefits Offices	11.20
Urban Regeneration	13.48
Voluntary & Community	4.22
European Unit Peace III funding	2.16
Housing Executive	101.06
Total:	132.12

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development how many benefit appeals have been completed in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35129/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The number of appeals completed by The Appeals Service in each of the last three financial years is detailed in the table below.

Year	Completed Appeals ¹
2011-12	14,975
2012-13	17,598

Year	Completed Appeals¹
2013-14	22,392

1. Appeals processed and disposed of within each financial year.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the cost associated with an oral benefit appeal hearing. (AQW 35130/11-15)

Mr McCausland: This information cannot be provided in the format requested. Resources are allocated across a wide range of benefit appeals for both oral and paper based appeals and a number of variables influence the costs depending also on the benefit decision being appealed. The table below sets out the actual expenditure for The Appeals Service and the total number of appeals processed and disposed of within the last financial year.

Expenditure 2013-14	Appeal numbers
£8.86m	22,392

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 12 September 2014

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Spratt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Social Investment Fund in the South Belfast constituency.

(AQW 26477/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The Belfast South Social Investment Fund Steering Group has prioritised 5 projects within the funding allocation for the Zone.

Letters of offer have issued and been agreed for three of these projects with work progressing to support delivery:

- Employment - An employment project targeting 375 local people to train in catering, hospitality, retail and IT;
- Taughmonagh - A project to facilitate an extension to the day nursery and healthy living centre at Taughmonagh;
- Sandy Row – A project to refurbish 127-145 Sandy Row to create a training and education centre and social economy asset.

A further two projects are currently within the funding allocation for the zone and, subject to approval through the economic appraisal process and final costs, we intend to issue letters of offer before the end of the year:

- Lanyon Tunnels - This proposal is to open the tunnels at Lanyon Place and turn them into commercial businesses such as cafe, crèche, recycling centre, community space etc;
- Increasing Community Services - A capital cluster to refurbish ten locations within the Belfast South Zone.

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why AQO 4659/11-15 and AQW 25012/11-15 remain unanswered.
(AQW 28394/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: AQO 4659/11-15 - We refer the Member to the answer provided on 1 September 2014. AQW 25012/11-15 - We refer the Member to the answer provided on 20 February 2014.

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why (i) AQW 28009/11-15; (ii) AQW 27842/11-15; (iii) AQW 27804/11-15; (iv) AQW 27359/11-15; (v) AQW 27235/11-15; and (vi) AQO 4659/11-15 remain unanswered.

(AQW 28880/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:

- (i) AQW 28009/11-15 - We refer the Member to the answer provided on 17 December 2013.
- (ii) AQW 27842/11-15 - We refer the Member to the answer provided on 18 December 2013.
- (iii) AQW 27804/11-15 - We refer the Member to the answer provided on 6 March 2014.
- (iv) AQW 27359/11-15 - We refer the Member to the answer provided on 20 February 2014.
- (v) AQW 27235/11-15 - We refer the Member to the answer provided on 28 March 2014.
- (vi) AQO 4659/11-15 - We refer the Member to the answer provided on 1 September 2014.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why AQW 13640/11-15 remains unanswered; and to provide the answer to the same.

(AQW 28900/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We would refer the Member to the answer to AQW 13640/11-15 which was provided on 4 September 2014.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why AQW 8802/11-15 remains unanswered.

(AQW 29265/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We would refer the member to the answer to AQW 8802/11-15 which was provided on 4 September 2014.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why AWQ 20978/11-15 remains unanswered.
(AQW 29267/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We would refer the member to the answer to AQW 20978/11-15 which was provided on 4 September 2014.

Mr Copeland asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the most regular causes of Assembly Questions to their Department not being answered on time.
(AQW 35206/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Since the beginning of this mandate some 2,300 Assembly questions have been tabled for answer by us. It is not possible to respond in the terms requested as, apart from the volume of questions itself, each question will have different implications in terms of researching and preparing an answer. Delays can therefore arise for a variety of reasons, including the nature of the question, the range and complexity of information requested and the unique nature of our responsibilities which requires joint consideration and agreement on an appropriate response.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much revenue was earned from the felling and sale of trees from Belvoir Forest in August 2014.
(AQW 35234/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): The revenue earned from the felling and sale of trees from Belvoir forest in August 2014 amounted to approximately £65,000.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when the felling of trees in Belvoir Forest was initially planned.
(AQW 35235/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The initial detailed planning associated with the felling of trees in Belvoir forest took place in March 2014. This included close liaison with the NI Environment Agency in the development of plans that protected the high biodiversity value of the forest including veteran oak trees as well as managing the public access issues in a highly popular forest.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the loans advanced by her Department through the Financial Transactions Capital Scheme in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) East Londonderry, since 1 April 2013.
(AQW 35264/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has not advanced any loans through the Financial Transactions Capital Scheme since 1 April 2013.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development where the monies raised from the sale of trees in Belvoir Forest were allocated in her departmental budget.
(AQW 35295/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The income generated from the sale of timber, including Belvoir Forest, is factored into the Forest Service budget allocation which then reduces the amount of Departmental funding the Agency requires.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps her Department is taking in the identification of herds with *Mycoplasma bovis*.
(AQW 35296/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: *Mycoplasma bovis* is a production disease of cattle. It is not a notifiable disease and currently my Department takes no steps to identify infected herds.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps her Department is taking to combat the potential infection of *Mycoplasma bovis* in dairy herds.
(AQW 35297/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: *Mycoplasma bovis* is a production disease of cattle. It is not a notifiable disease and currently my Department takes no steps to identify infected herds.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the relocation of her departmental headquarters to Ballykelly.

(AQO 6528/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: On 26 June I received Executive endorsement from FM & DFM to progress the work necessary to relocate my Department's headquarters in a cost effective way and to create a new build at the former military site, Shackleton Barracks, in Ballykelly.

This approach to implementation will be in two phases which will result in the provision of a 400 workstation building in phase 1 to be available from end of 2017 and a further 200 workstations available by end of 2020. I have since directed my Permanent Secretary to press on with this important work.

My headquarters move to Ballykelly is part of a wider programme of work designed to meet the Programme for Government target to advance the relocation of DARD headquarters to a rural area. The other elements of the programme will result in Fisheries Division relocating to Downpatrick and Forest Service to Enniskillen by June 2015 then Rivers Agency to the Loughry College campus in Cookstown by March 2016.

The relocation of my department to these four rural locations will help stimulate the local economy through increased local spending, provision of high quality and high value public sector jobs and potentially jobs associated with the construction and the ongoing servicing, of the new accommodation. It will help to share wealth across the economy and contribute to better-balanced economic growth, by commencing to address disparities in the distribution of public sector jobs in the north of Ireland. By having our headquarters in a rural location we will strengthen our rural roots.

Mr Maskey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the review of animal welfare legislation. **(AQO 6529/11-15)**

Mrs O'Neill: On 31 March 2014 the Assembly debated a Motion calling for a review of the implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011, and particularly sentencing guidelines and practices. I supported the Motion as I want to see sentences imposed by the Courts which fit the crime and act as a deterrent to animal cruelty.

I initiated a review of the implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011, which is being taken forward by my officials working with the Department of Justice. The Terms of Reference are available on my Department's website.

The Review is being overseen by a Steering Group comprising senior officials from my Department and the Department of Justice. The Review is considering the implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 under four themes: Sentencing; Delivery Structures; Working Together; and Serving the Public. Working Groups have been established to consider the various themes.

The Review held five Stakeholder Discussion Sessions during late July and early August with a wide range of stakeholders. Separate Discussion Sessions were held for each of the following sectors: Farmed Animals; Multi Species and Veterinary; Wild Animals; Cats and Dogs; and Equine. Stakeholders attending these events included Statutory Organisations, Welfare Charities, Rescue and Rehoming Charities, Industry Representative Bodies and Special Interest Groups.

Each session was well supported and useful information was exchanged. Attendees welcomed the opportunity to input into the Review. Feedback from those sessions, as well as written evidence submitted by stakeholders, has been provided to the Chairs of each of the Working Groups. That information will help inform their discussions over the coming months.

Working Groups will report to the Steering Group on a regular basis. An interim report will be prepared in November 2014 by the Steering Group and a final report will be published in early 2015.

Mr Irwin asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline any plans she has to extend the current Rural Development Programme project deadline to allow applicants more time to complete projects.

(AQO 6532/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am assuming the Member is referring to the deadlines set for Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme. I have no plans to extend the current deadlines within this programme. The dates set are the latest that can be permitted in recognition of the volume of work (particularly in the area of financial reconciliation) that will be required for effective closure of the Axis 3 contracts of the Programme and the LAG's/JCC's.

The Axis 3 Programme remains on target to achieve full spend.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the loans advanced by her Department through the Financial Transactions Capital Scheme in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) East Londonderry, since 1 April 2013.

(AQW 35355/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): My Department has issued no loans through the Financial Transactions Capital Scheme in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) East Londonderry since April 2013.

My Department, however, continues to review opportunities to participate in the Scheme.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the projects that will be funded as a result of the £1 million allocation to Cultural Programmes in the June Monitoring Round 2014.

(AQW 35416/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department secured an additional £1 million in the June 2014 monitoring round for the purposes of cultural programming. As business cases in relation to the projects likely to be supported through these funds are currently being finalised, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the specifics at this stage. The intention is that the funding will be used to support a range of cultural enterprises connected to arts, sports and creativity projects.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in light of the Comptroller and Auditor General qualifying her Department's Resource Accounts for 2013/14, whether she accepts that grant payments of over £8m made by her Department's North/South Bodies were irregular; and if she will seek approval from the Department of Finance and Personnel for all such payments in accordance with the statutory requirements of the North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

(AQW 35466/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The accounts for both agencies of the North South Language Body and Waterways Ireland for the 2013 and 2014 years have not yet been completed and audited.

My Department's Accounting Officer reported that during the 2013/14 year, DCAL incurred irregular spend in respect of grants to the Language Body and Waterways Ireland as the business plans for these respective periods have not been approved. Draft business plans were in place against which the performance and budget of the bodies were monitored, and Corporate Plans for the period 2011-13 for Waterways Ireland and both agencies of the Language Body, which were approved by Sponsor Department Ministers; both Finance Ministers and the NSMC Ministers were in place.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she will place into the Assembly Library, a copy of the documentation received from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP), or otherwise recording DFP approval, which verifies the claim by her Department's Accounting Officer in the Resource Accounts 2013/14 that DFP approval of grants to North/South Bodies was given for the amount of the grant at estimates or efficiency stage negotiations.

(AQW 35541/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The 2013/14 Main Estimate is published on the Department of Finance and Personnel's website (<http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/main-estimates-2013-14.pdf>). My Department included within the 2013/14 Main Estimate on specific lines entitled "Language Body" and "Waterways Ireland" an estimate of the grants (before any efficiency savings were applied) my Department intended to allocate to the North South Bodies during 2013/14.

Estimates are prepared by departments and examined by DFP Supply to ensure that they meet Assembly propriety requirements and are consistent with the Executive's expenditure plans.

After approval by DFP Supply the Estimates are presented and recommended (as required by Section 63 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998) to the Assembly by the DFP Minister who moves the Supply Resolution/s summing up the requests for Supply for each body.

On the basis of legal advice, the Department considers that the process and published Main Estimate document shows approval by DFP for the grants allocated to the North South bodies. DFP did not approve the final business plan which has resulted in the grants being deemed irregular.

Department of Education

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what schools his Department or the Education and Library Boards are in communication with regarding shared school campuses.

(AQW 35236/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): My Department, the Education and Library Boards and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools are in communication with the schools from each of the three successful proposals; Moy Primary School, St John's Primary School, Moy, Limavady High School, St Mary's High School, Limavady, Ballycastle High School and Cross and Passion College.

All unsuccessful proposals have been provided with feedback against each of the published criteria used to assess their application and were advised that Departmental officials are available to discuss the feedback with representatives of the schools involved in the proposal along with the relevant managing authorities. The respective Managing Authorities and my officials are currently in communication with the following schools:

- Belfast Royal Academy
- Carr's Glen Primary School, Belfast
- St Malachy's College, Belfast
- St Vincent de Paul Primary School

- Duneane Primary School
- Moneynick Primary School
- Cookstown Primary School
- Holy Trinity Primary School, Cookstown
- Newtownhamilton High School
- St Paul's High School, Bessbrook
- Royal School Armagh
- St Patrick's Grammar School, Armagh
- St Catherine's College, Armagh
- Brookeborough Primary School
- St Mary's Primary School, Brookeborough

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education how many children in each Education and Library Board have been (i) provided with a statement of special educational needs; and (ii) formally reassessed and provided with a new statement, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35238/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that the number of children who have been provided with a statement of special educational needs in each of the last five academic years is as follows:

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
BELB	405	399	410	378	544
NEELB	341	353	420	402	410
SEELB	425	424	331	499	487
SELB	319	326	393	449	465
WELB	286	268	373	357	455

In line with paragraphs 6.30 – 6.32 of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, the number of children who have been formally reassessed and provided with a new statement, during the same period, is as follows:

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
BELB	0	0	0	1	0
NEELB	0	1	0	2	1
SEELB	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SELB	0	0	0	0	1
WELB	1	0	1	2	3

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail the average length of time taken in each Education and Library Board from the application to publication, of a statement, or re-statement, of special educational needs being provided to parents or guardians, in each of the past five years.

(AQW 35239/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have advised that the average length of time taken from a request for a statutory assessment of special educational needs (SEN) to the issue of a final statement or restatement of SEN in each of the last five academic years, rounded to the nearest week, excluding permitted exceptions, is as follows:

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
BELB	22	22	22	21	25
NEELB	20	20	19	20	22
SEELB	25	22	23	25	24
SELB	22	21	20	22	21
WELB	24	21	21	23	20

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education to detail the level of uptake of free school meals and school uniform grant assistance in the (a) Omagh; and (b) Strabane districts and to outline his Department's efforts to ensure that there is full uptake of free school meals and school uniform grants in each Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 35314/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The uptake of free school meals and entitlement to free school meals are measured on the day the school census and school meals census are carried out. The level of uptake of free school meals in schools in the Omagh and Strabane District Council areas for 2013/14 is as follows:

	Total Enrolment	Free School Meal Entitlement	Free School Meal Uptake	% Uptake
Omagh	10,486	2,679	2,256	84.2%
Strabane	6,603	2,350	2,038	86.7%

Source: NI school census and school meals census

Notes:

- 1 The census figures provide a snapshot of the position on the day on which the census information is gathered.
- 2 Figures exclude special schools. Data on pupils entitled to free school meals in special schools is not validated.

Entitlement to free school meals generally brings with it entitlement to receive the school uniform grant (with the exception of nursery school pupils) as the eligibility criteria used are similar. The Western Education and Library Board has confirmed that 2,676 pupils attending schools in the Omagh District Council area and 2,283 pupils in the Strabane District Council area were awarded a school uniform allowance in the 2013/14 school year (figures exclude special schools).

A number of actions are being taken forward by my Department, working with the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and the School Catering Service, to ensure that all those entitled to receive free school meals and the school uniform grant receive these important benefits. For example, the Resource Allocation Plans for each of the ELBs include targets to maintain or increase the uptake of all school meals and of free school meals.

Each year the ELBs issue press releases, send out renewal applications and issue letters and posters to schools, the Social Security Agency, the Citizens Advice Bureau and libraries. The School Catering Service continuously seeks to increase uptake of school meals undertaking a range of activities including, for example, the installation of cashless catering systems in a number of postprimary schools to reduce any stigma associated with free school meals, sending menus home and placing these on school websites, providing meal deals, arranging theme days and taster sessions for parents and pupils.

My officials are also working with colleagues in the Department for Social Development to take forward a joint project to encourage the uptake of free school meals as part of the work of the Inter-Departmental Group on Benefit Uptake (IDGBU).

I am pleased to advise that I have also extended the Working Tax Credit eligibility criterion for free school meals and school uniforms to post-primary pupils from September 2014. This will benefit an estimated additional 15,000 children from lower income households.

I would encourage all families entitled to free school meals and the school uniform grant to take up their entitlement.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education whether his Department has made any progress towards holding a procurement seminar in Omagh aimed at explaining to interested businesses any work opportunities which will be associated with the development of the Shared Education Campus at Lisanelly, Omagh.

(AQW 35315/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My officials are currently considering procurement options for the next phase of the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus. Once this work is completed, arrangements will be made for a procurement seminar to take place as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what plans he has to introduce the teaching of coding into the school syllabus. **(AQW 35340/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The revised curriculum has been designed to provide flexibility for schools to develop experiences that suit the needs of their pupils. Embedding mandatory, cross curricular skills and keeping prescribed content to a minimum, allows schools to choose the most appropriate approach to take to ensure that pupils are engaged and challenged, to reach their full potential.

Computer Science, which includes computer coding, is a specialised field and the flexibility already in place within the revised curriculum, enables schools to teach Computer Science in any Key Stage, including at primary school level, if they feel it appropriate.

At this time there are no plans to make computer programming mandatory in the revised curriculum. However, should schools feel it meets the needs of their pupils, there is sufficient flexibility in the curriculum to allow them to teach it.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education whether parents who wish their children to be transported by the South Education and Library Board from Dollingstown to Banbridge High School can pay privately for this service.

(AQW 35398/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The current school transport policy permits the payment of an allowance in lieu of transport for pupils in instances where there are too few pupils on a route to make the provision of a suitable vehicle economically viable. The Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) inform me that this is how assistance has been provided for pupils travelling from Dollingstown to Banbridge High School.

With regard to payment for a Board service, legislation requires that where transport is provided for eligible pupils that it must be provided for free. Therefore, Boards are not licensed to operate services with fare paying passengers and so could not provide the service you suggest. However, once in possession of an allowance in lieu of transport, parents are at liberty to explore options with other transport providers such as Translink, which operates the public transport network, or private companies that are licensed to convey fare-paying passengers.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education for an update on the development of the Lisanelly Shared Education campus, including all current and future capital works.
(AQW 35399/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Steady progress has been made on the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus (LSEC) Programme and it is on target to meet the PfG commitment to initiate the first phase of construction by 2014/15.

Demolition will shortly be completed on the area of the site earmarked for Arvalee School & Resource Centre. The tender process for the construction contract for Arvalee has begun and it is intended that the contract will be awarded before the end of 2014, with construction commencing soon after.

Demolition requirements for the remainder of the site is due to be tendered in September 2014 with site work commencing shortly afterwards.

Planning of future phases (i.e. remaining 5 schools) is moving forward with a review of the concept design to take account of revised enrolments and make-up of the schools relocating. Procurement options for future phases of the work are currently being considered.

The current delivery schedule estimates completion of the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus by 2020, with a view to schools coming into operation in September of that year.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education how his Department consults with the local community, including the voluntary sector and youth representatives, regarding the development of the Lisanelly Shared Education campus.
(AQW 35400/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: From the outset my Department has been acutely aware of the need to engage with the local community and in particular with the young people of the area. To date, three full public consultation exercises have been held and there has been on-going engagement with young people through the Western Education and Library Board (WELB) youth service.

Additionally, my officials are currently setting up a formal Community Stakeholder Group which will explore and advise on opportunities for maximising local economic and social benefits from the delivery of this major construction programme.

The Group will also play a central role in developing a structured programme of communication and engagement with a wide range of community representatives, including those from the voluntary sector, on matters relating to the campus development.

The Programme Team will also continue to engage with young people through the WELB Youth Service and the schools themselves.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of mobile classrooms currently in use at each post-primary school in Ballymena.
(AQW 35403/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The North Eastern Education and Library Board has provided the following information in regard to the current number of mobile classrooms.

Name of School	Current Number of mobiles
Cullybackey High School	6
Dunclug College	7
St Patrick's College (Ballymena)	3
Cambridge House Grammar	1
Ballymena Academy School	3
St Louis VGS	10

The Board has stated that the number of mobiles in the last two years has remained static with the exception of Dunclug College where three modular units were installed over the summer of 2014.

It is not possible to establish how many children are taught in mobile classrooms as class sizes may vary from school to school and year group to year group within the school. It is further complicated in post-primary schools where mobile classrooms are often used to teach a variety of subjects and pupils change location a number of times in any school day.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of mobile classrooms in use in each post-primary school in Ballymena, in each of the last two academic years.

(AQW 35404/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The North Eastern Education and Library Board has provided the following information in regard to the current number of mobile classrooms.

Name of School	Current Number of mobiles
Cullybackey High School	6
Dunclug College	7
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Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of post-primary pupils taught in mobile classrooms in Ballymena during (i) the current academic year; and (ii) the last two academic years.

(AQW 35405/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The North Eastern Education and Library Board has provided the following information in regard to the current number of mobile classrooms.

Name of School	Current Number of mobiles
Cullybackey High School	6
Dunclug College	7
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Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the criteria used to determine which schools received capital funding for new buildings for each funding announcement since 2007, including any weighting given to each category; (ii) whether criteria or weighting have been changed in that period; (iii) the rationale for changes; and (iv) the consultation that took place before making changes.

(AQW 35433/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

- (i) There have been 4 capital funding Announcements for Major Works projects since 2007. The first was in 2010 when projects were identified as a result of additional capital funding allocated in the June 2010 monitoring round. As rapid progress was required to realise the full potential of the allocation the projects were selected on the basis of those well advanced in terms of financial, planning and tendering processes.

The protocols detailing the criteria and scoring mechanisms utilised for the subsequent three announcements in 2012, 2013 and 2014 are available on the Departments Website at the following hyperlink;
<http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2.htm>

- (ii) and (iii) The recent protocols have been derived to be consistent with and supportive of the work for Area Planning. In addition the schools have to be deemed viable and comply with the aims and objectives of the Department's Policy for Sustainable Schools. You will observe that the Major Works protocol has been revised and improved prior to each subsequent announcement. The criteria and weightings defined in the protocol have evolved as a result of learning from previous announcements and in support of my priorities for major capital investment. These include, at the last iteration, the addition of criteria to reflect social issues such as the percentage of children with a statement of educational need and those in receipt of free school meals. In addition no schools were considered for inclusion in my last Announcement unless all outstanding area planning issues had been resolved and Development Proposals approved to preclude any stalling of the projects on these grounds.
- (iv) My officials continue to work closely with all sectors in the delivery of my capital investment programme. Prior to my last announcement, the Education and Library Boards were asked to engage with all sectors and provide the Department with major capital works proposals for consideration within the protocol. The protocol itself has evolved from earlier announcements to reflect a greater emphasis on the outworking of the area planning process through supporting the development and delivery of a network of viable and sustainable schools in all school sectors.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of mobile classrooms currently in use in schools in the South Antrim constituency in each of the last three years, broken down by school.

(AQW 35474/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The North Eastern Education & Library Board has provided the following information in relation to the number of mobile classrooms in use over the last three years in South Antrim schools.

School	2014	2013	2012
Antrim Primary School	9	9	9
Ballyclare Primary School	8	8	8
Ballynure Primary School	1	1	1
Creavery Primary School	2	2	2
Crumlin Controlled Integrated Primary School	2	2	2
Duneane Primary School	2	2	2
Fairview Primary School	9	9	9
Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach	3	3	3
Groggan Primary School	3	3	3
Kilbride Primary School	1	1	1
Loanends Primary School	1	1	1
Maine Integrated Primary School	5	5	5
Mount St Michael's Primary School	2	2	2
Parkgate Primary School	1	1	1
St Comgall's Primary School	4	4	4
St Joseph's Primary School, Crumlin	7	7	7
St Macnisius' Primary School, Tannaghmore	3	3	3
St Oliver Plunkett's Primary School	2	2	2
Straid Primary School	3	3	3
Thompson Primary School	4	4	4
Tildarg Primary School	4	4	4
Ballyclare High School	2	2	2
Ballyclare Secondary School	7	7	7
Crumlin Integrated College	7	7	7
Parkhall Integrated College	5	5	5

School	2014	2013	2012
St Benedict's College	10	10	10
Riverside Special School	1	1	1

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to ensure that eleven to eighteen year olds are made aware of the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

(AQW 35562/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All grant-aided schools must have a drugs education policy in place.

Through the statutory curriculum, opportunities are provided for children and young people to develop the knowledge and skills to deal with issues such as drug and alcohol abuse. At primary school this is provided through the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding Area of Learning and, at post-primary school, through the Learning for Life and Work Area of Learning. As with all aspects of the curriculum the specifics of what is taught and how it is taught is a matter for each teacher/school.

While the decision on resources to be used for delivery of the curriculum is a matter for each teacher/school, the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) in partnership with the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) have made available curriculum resources for primary and post primary schools to support the delivery of the Personal Development Curriculum through a life skills based approach. The current resource for primary schools "Living Learning Together" and post primary schools "Insync" allow for the delivery of universal drug prevention education.

The Department also provides schools with guidance in relation to drugs. CCEA has been commissioned to review and update current guidance. It is intended that this work will be completed during 2014/15.

Funding which is allocated by my Department to the ELBs and the Youth Council for youth provision may be used, as part of an overall youth development programme, to support drugs and alcohol awareness sessions for young people where these are deemed appropriate.

In addition, the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS), which is directly funded by the Department, provides professional counselling to children and young people at vulnerable times in their lives, including those experiencing difficulties as the result of drug and alcohol abuse. It is available to all post-primary schools. In addition, information for pupils developed through the i-Matter programme is issued to all post primary schools and includes information on 'drugs, alcohol and smoking' and details or sources of further information and help.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education what percentage of children with Down Syndrome are in mainstream (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools in each Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 35576/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is detailed in the table below. The percentages are based on the total number of pupils with Down Syndrome in primary, post-primary and special schools for each board.

School sector of all pupils with Down Syndrome by Education and Library Board area, 2013/14

		Primary	Post primary	Special	Total (with Down Syndrome)
Belfast	N	9	*	#	47
	%	19.1%	*	#	
Western	N	35	21	58	114
	%	30.7%	18.4%	50.9%	
North Eastern	N	27	*	#	110
	%	24.5%	*	#	
South Eastern	N	12	*	#	101
	%	11.9%	*	#	
Southern	N	39	16	82	137
	%	28.5%	11.7%	59.9%	

Source: NI school census

Notes:

1. Figures include pupils in primary (including nursery, reception and year 1-7 classes), post primary and special schools.
 2. Figures for primary and post-primary includes pupils in learning support centres
 3. Figures include pupils at stages 1 – 5 on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
 4. Down Syndrome data refers to any special educational need rather than primary need
- * denotes fewer than 5 pupils
- # denotes figure >=5 suppressed due to potential identification of individual pupils

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of composite classes in (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools, broken down by Education and Library Board, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35701/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Information on class sizes is available for primary schools only.

Number and percentage of composite classes in primary schools by ELB, 2011/12 - 2013/14

	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Belfast	57	5.6%	65	6.3%	48	4.6%
Western	348	27.2%	366	29.1%	343	26.9%
North Eastern	352	22.4%	362	23.1%	356	22.6%
South Eastern	177	12.2%	171	11.9%	161	11.0%
Southern	405	24.4%	427	25.8%	421	24.8%
Total	1339	19.2%	1391	20.0%	1329	18.8%

Source: NI school census

Notes:

1. Data excludes learning support centres, nursery classes and reception. It includes year 1-7 classes only.
2. Composite classes are those classes where children from at least two curriculum year groups are taught together.

Department for Employment and Learning

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the proposed steps his Department will take to meet any reduction in its budget.

(AQW 35232/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): My Department is urgently examining the implications of decisions taken by the Executive to reduce the Department's budget and what this will mean for all our spending programmes, including the Department's Arm's Length Bodies. Cuts of this magnitude will inevitably impact on the Department's ability to deliver its skills and employment agenda, supporting individuals, employers and the economy generally. Once decisions have been taken, I will be advising stakeholders.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department informs further and higher education students of the Student Hardship Fund, Further Education Awards, and other available student welfare provisions.

(AQW 35357/11-15)

Dr Farry: In Further Education, financial assistance to students is provided through Further Education Awards and college Hardship Funds. These are advertised extensively through a variety of media. Further Education Awards are promoted through a television advertising campaign during May and June each year. In addition each college promotes both funds through the following channels: prospectuses, websites, prominently displayed posters and a variety of funding guidance literature including flyers, mail drops and information in college diaries. Funding advice is also provided at each induction session. An application form and further information regarding Further Education Awards can be found at <http://www.education-support.org.uk/>. Information regarding Hardship Funds can be obtained from college websites or by contacting student funding staff in each college.

Higher Education offers additional support to students in the form of the means tested Higher Education Support Funds, available through Northern Ireland Higher Education Universities and Colleges. The funds can be used to help students

who are experiencing financial hardship. The Department informs and promotes the funds through the Student Finance NI and NIDirect websites. Each year the Department drafts and distributes the Higher Education booklet; Support Funds – Conditions of funding for Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ireland to Queens University Belfast, the University of Ulster, St Marys College and Stranmillis College. Electronic versions of the publication can also be downloaded from the NIDirect website: www.nidirect.gov.uk and the DEL website: www.delni.gov.uk.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what efforts his Department, universities and colleges take to ensure that students are aware of the availability of hardship funds.

(AQW 35424/11-15)

Dr Farry:

Further Education

My Department provides funding through the Hardship Fund, to provide support to learners who are experiencing financial difficulty while enrolled on accredited professional and technical courses. My officials have confirmed with each of the Further Education Colleges that they offer hardship loans to students in line with my Department's guidance and that they actively promote accessibility to all student support funds. This includes information provided in the College Student Support Handbooks and websites, during the induction process for new students and internal promotion through posters and social media.

The Department has included good practice guidelines within the contents of Hardship Fund Circulars <http://www.delni.gov.uk/hardship-fund-discretionary-2014-15.pdf> which include guidelines for publicity on the availability of financial advice and support of all grants. Colleges are advised to direct publicity as far as possible towards students who may need assistance most.

Higher Education

The Universities and Colleges administer and promote the means tested Higher Education Support Funds to help students who are experiencing financial hardship. The Department provides information and promotes the funds through the Student Finance NI and NIDirect websites. Each year the Department drafts and distributes the Higher Education booklet: Support Funds – Conditions of funding for Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ireland to Queen's University Belfast, the University of Ulster, St Marys College and Stranmillis College. Electronic versions of the publication can also be downloaded from the NIDirect website: www.nidirect.gov.uk and the DEL website: www.delni.gov.uk.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much her Department has spent on Special Advisers since May 2007, broken down by (i) salary; (ii) pension contributions; (iii) expenses; (iv) office costs; and (v) other costs.

(AQW 1002/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):

- (i) The salary ranges of the Department's Special Advisers since May 2007 are published in the Note on Staff numbers and Related Costs in the Department's Annual Resource Accounts and are available on the Department's website.
- (ii) Employers pension contributions were paid at a rate of 17.5% (2007/08), 21.5% (2008/09 & 2009/10) and 23.5% (2010/11 & 2011/12)
- (iii) No expenses claimed
- (iv) Office costs - £6,335.33 (comprising of mobile phone costs, 3G Data card, newspapers, office equipment and stationery)
- (v) There are no 'other costs'.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Special Adviser is paid within Band A or Band B of the Department of Finance and Personnel's salary scale; and, if it is within Band B whether, in light of the DFP decision to increase the upper limit of the Band B scale to £90,000, there has been an increase in salary or an increase is planned.

(AQW 1978/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Special Adviser in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment is paid within Band B. There has not been an increase in salary and none is planned as a result of the increase in the upper limit of the Band B scale to £90,000.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, for each Assembly Questions AQW 1002/11-15; and AQW 1978/11-15, to detail (a) the date when officials provided a draft reply; (b) why an answer has not yet been provided; and (c) when an answer will be provided.

(AQW 6111/11-15)

Mrs Foster: AQW 1002/11-15

- (a) 27 June 2011
- (b) and (c): Not applicable

AQW 1978/11-15

- (a): 15 September 2011
 (b) and (c): Not applicable

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to explain the write-off of over £250,000 by the Consumer Council in respect of staff overpayments, including (i) how the situation arose; (ii) where culpability lies; (iii) whether any disciplinary proceedings resulted; and (iv) why recoupment has not occurred.

(AQW 6193/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) The incorrect interpretation and application of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) terms and conditions of service relating to pay led to irregular payments being made to 29 Consumer Council employees during the period from 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2010.
- (ii)&(iii) The misinterpretation and incorrect application of NICS terms and conditions of service arose in the determination of salary payments by the Consumer Council. Guidance has been provided to the Consumer Council on the correct interpretation and application of NICS terms and conditions, and the Council has improved processes and controls to ensure salary payments are correctly determined. No disciplinary action has been taken.
- (iv) The decision not to recoup payment was made in light of legal opinion based on all the facts of the case.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the occasions on which she or her Special Advisor have taken part in hospitality trips, engagements, dinners, meetings or events arranged by, or on behalf of, energy companies in the last four years, broken down by (i) location; (ii) attendees; (iii) the companies present or represented; (iv) the matters that were discussed; and (v) who covered the cost of each event.

(AQW 11415/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The information sought in this question was subsequently provided in my answer to AQW 17522 11-15.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why she has yet to provide an answer to AQW 1002/11-15, which was asked in June 2011; and when she will answer the question.

(AQW 12836/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I have provided the information sought in AQW 1002 11-15.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many tickets for the Jubilee Garden Party on 27 June 2012 were allocated to (i) the Minister; (ii) her Department; and (iii) its arm's-length bodies.

(AQW 13292/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The number of tickets allocated for The Queen's Jubilee Garden Party at Stormont on 27 June 2012, were as follows:

DETI Minister : Nil
 DETI (including its Arm's-length Bodies) : 150

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for a breakdown of her Department's total anticipated spend in respect of the celebration of the centenary of the Ulster Covenant.

(AQW 14781/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I will be bringing forward a programme to the Executive to mark the Decade of Centenaries.

£200,000 has been allocated to the initial stage of establishing an Executive programme for the Decade as a whole which will signpost visitors and residents to the many events and initiatives telling the stories and different interpretations behind anniversaries across the Decade.

It is not possible at this stage to anticipate the spend in respect of the centenary of the Ulster Covenant as the programme is still being finalised.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the findings of the Ombudsman's draft report issued around December 2012, in respect of an investigation into the actions of her Department in its oversight and governance of the Presbyterian Mutual Society.

(AQW 18423/11-15)

Mrs Foster: In line with normal practice and procedure, the DETI Permanent Secretary received a copy of the Assembly Ombudsman's final report of his investigation into the complaint about the actions of the Department in relation to the Presbyterian Mutual Society. The Report was provided in accordance with the statutory requirements under the Ombudsman

(Northern Ireland) Order 1996 and remains confidential. The Ombudsman intends to publish a summary of the case and the findings in his annual report in June 2013.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much her Department has spent date, including the cost of any legal advice sought, on responding to the Ombudsman's draft report on the actions of her Department in its oversight and governance of the Presbyterian Mutual Society.

(AQW 18424/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department did not incur any external costs in responding to the Assembly Ombudsman's draft report of his investigation into the complaint about the actions in relation to the Presbyterian Mutual Society. The cost of the input of officials' time, including that of the Departmental Solicitor's Office, is not routinely recorded for the purposes of responding to Ombudsman enquiries.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in view of the finding by the Ombudsman that her Department failed to apply an adequate level of scrutiny to the Presbyterian Mutual Society, will the disqualification proceedings against former directors cease.

(AQW 18623/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The report of the Assembly Ombudsman provides no grounds for discontinuing the ongoing disqualification proceedings.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 16548/11-15, for an update on the number of people who have availed of the service in Foyle since August 2012, broken down by (i) month; and (ii) venue.

(AQW 19863/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Since 1 August 2012 to 31 January 2013, 203 clients from the Foyle constituency have availed of the Debt Action NI service.

	Aug 2012	Sep 2012	Oct 2012	Nov 2012	Dec 2012	Jan 2013	Total
Caw & Nelson Drive Action Group/ Hillcrest House Family Centre	0	1	13	11	8	8	41
Dove House	4	15	18	14	7	17	75
Limavady Community Development Initiative	8	6	5	3	1	2	25
Neighbourhood Assist, Strabane	25	2	2	5	1	2	37
Magherafelt District Advice Service	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Helpline	9	1	6	4	3	1	24
Total	47	25	44	37	20	30	203

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how the decision not to allow the use of the Irish language on Northern Ireland Tourist Board funded signage meets the requirement that all public bodies must take positive steps in promoting the Irish language and promoting the traditional form of place names, and that under the European Convention on Human Rights, public bodies are not allowed to discriminate on the basis of language.

(AQW 19983/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board abides by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and recognises its obligations under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages; and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Northern Ireland Tourist Board's approach to bilingual signage is premised upon the precedent set by the Department for Regional Development's Tourist Signing in Northern Ireland Policy. This policy provides that signs should be in English only except where the facility in question is known in another language such as Irish, an example of this is An Cultúrlann. The Tourist Board adopts this approach.

NITB is keen to ensure that all tourist interpretation and signage is clear, not confusing, based on evidence of visitor need and assists the visitor in understanding the importance of the destination

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 19629/11-15, (i) whether this figure includes the hospitality spend by arm's-length bodies in 2011/12; and (ii) to detail any hospitality spend by arm's-length bodies in 2011/12.

(AQW 20598/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) The answer to AQW 19629/11-15 did not include the hospitality spend by arms-length bodies in 2011/12; and
- (ii) The hospitality spend by arms-length bodies in 2011/12 is as follows:

NDPB	Spend 2011/12 £
General Consumer Council Northern Ireland	1,313.00
Northern Ireland Tourist Board	17,915.00
Health & Safety Executive Northern Ireland	1,972.67
Total	21,200.67

You have also asked this question of Invest NI (AQW 20502/11-15). This will be answered separately.

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 21746/11-15, to outline the rationale for not providing information on West Tyrone and Fermanagh/South Tyrone.

(AQW 22510/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Information was not withheld from the original response. The table used dashes in place of zeros to indicate that there were no visits.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the total expenditure on departmental Ministerial travel in the periods (i) January to June 2013; and (ii) July to December 2013.

(AQW 30357/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The totals for the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment's travel expenditure for the periods specified are shown below.

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------|
| (i) January to June 2013 | £39,805.09 |
| (ii) July to December 2013 | £44,148.95 |

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether letting fees are considered legal under the Commission on Disposals of Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1986; and to detail the investigations that have been carried out by Trading Standards on tackling unfair and misleading terms in private tenancy agreements.

(AQW 33121/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Commission on Disposals of Land (NI) Order 1986 makes void a requirement that the tenant be liable for any commissions which are charged by letting agents for rent reviews or extensions/renewals of lettings. The Order does not make void the requirement for such fees to be paid by a landlord to a letting agent, i.e. the landlord can be charged to renew a rental agreement but this charge (or commission) cannot be passed on to the tenant.

The Trading Standards Service has investigated contractual terms in 15 private tenancy agreements to determine if they are unfair or misleading under the Unfair Terms in Consumer Contract Regulations 1999.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the implementation of the Social Economy Enterprise Strategy published in March 2010.

(AQW 35240/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I launched the Executive's cross-departmental Social Economy Enterprise (SEE) Strategy 2010/2011 in March 2010.

DETI led on the development and implementation of the SEE Strategy, working closely with key stakeholders and government departments. The strategy included actions for departments and agencies with a role in developing the sector, including DSD, DARD, DHSSPS, DEL, CPD, Invest NI and DETI, as well as the Social Economy Network as the representative body at that time. An annual report on the key achievements of the SEE Strategy was published in June 2011.

The SEE Strategy 2010/11 was subject to an independent evaluation to determine its impact on the social economy sector and to inform future strategic direction. As a result of the recommendations in the evaluation report, DETI subsequently appointed Social Enterprise NI to design and deliver a three year Social Economy Work Programme which commenced in October 2012.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the recommendations from John Hunter's review of the Tourist Board and the wider tourism structures.

(AQW 35320/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The review report is currently out for public consultation until the end of September to allow the many stakeholders involved in the tourism sector the opportunity to respond to the report's recommendations.

An assessment of the review and its outcomes will be provided in due course following a full analysis of the consultation responses received.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what financial provision is available to small and medium-sized enterprises in East Londonderry to expand following initial set-up.

(AQW 35356/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI works with businesses across Northern Ireland providing a comprehensive range of support to existing businesses and entrepreneurs who are already or have the potential to trade outside of Northern Ireland.

Invest NI targets its financial support to businesses operating within the manufacturing and services sectors which have export potential, as these are the sectors capable of generating net income for the Northern Ireland economy.

When assessing a business case for support, Invest NI looks for an increase in turnover, export sales and employment levels as a result of any financial assistance that may be offered. When financial support is offered, it is tailored to meet the individual needs of the business.

Financial support may be available to businesses to help with employment, exporting, research & development and other specific areas of business improvement.

Invest NI has a dedicated support team in place to deal with business enquiries. The telephone number is 0800 181 4422. Alternatively I would encourage your constituents to contact Invest NI's regional office in Londonderry (telephone 028 7126 7257) to discuss the range of support currently available.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 32719/11-15, to detail the (i) businesses that promoted the 510 jobs in the Foyle constituency; and (ii) number of jobs promoted in each.

(AQW 35360/11-15)

Mrs Foster: In the Foyle constituency area during 2013-14 there were 333 jobs promoted by the Convergys Corporation and 177 promoted by Fujitsu Services Limited.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 32720/11-15, to detail the (i) businesses that promoted the 333 jobs in the Foyle constituency; and (ii) number of jobs promoted in each.

(AQW 35361/11-15)

Mrs Foster: In the Foyle constituency area during 2013-14 the 333 jobs promoted by first time international investors were all through the Convergys Corporation.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail her Department's efforts to ensure the availability of land in, or near to, Omagh for the purposes of attracting inward investment.

(AQW 35363/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI holds a total of c47 acres of land within the Omagh District Council area. The last remaining available site at its Doogary Industrial Estate has recently been allocated to a business following a competitive process and Invest NI is currently engaging with this business over the sale of this area of land.

Invest NI is aware of the lack of serviced industrial land within the Omagh District Council area. Previous attempts by the agency to acquire land at two locations within the Omagh District Council area were unsuccessful. In the first, agreement on price was not reached, and in the second, the owner was unwilling to sell.

Invest NI will continue to engage with stakeholders, including Omagh District Council and the Department of the Environment, to identify suitable land for industrial development. It does not consider vesting to be a suitable option at this time.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many jobs have been created in the (i) Craigavon; and (ii) Banbridge council areas in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35376/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The table below shows the number of jobs created as a direct result of Invest NI support in the (i) Craigavon; and (ii) Banbridge council areas in each of the last three financial years.

DCA	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Banbridge	61	32	61
Craigavon	441	156	439

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the number of people completing Post Graduate Diplomas in Education in the last three years, compared with the number of newly created jobs in this field. (AQW 35420/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has not made any assessment of these issues as it does not have a remit for them. Matters relating to Further and Higher Education are the responsibility of the Minister for Employment and Learning.

Department of the Environment

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 32997/11-15, whether the Environmental Impact Assessment, Habitats and Birds Directives are being breached by the unregulated minerals extraction being permitted from Lough Neagh Special Protection Area. (AQW 35119/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Mineral extraction is an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development and therefore subject to the EIA regulations. These regulations apply to every application for planning permission for EIA development received by the Department.

The Habitats Directive requires member states to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) when considering the authorisation of plans or projects likely to affect a NATURA 2000 site which would include Special Protected Areas (SPAs). NIEA would carry out a HRA to determine if a proposed plan or project would have a significant effect on NATURA 2000 site selection features.

The extraction of minerals from Lough Neagh pre-dates the designation of the SPA and, therefore, no HRA was undertaken at the time of designation as the extraction was classified as an existing practice.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment to list the grades of each of the staff used to staff the Coastal Zone Centre in Portrush from 22 August 2014 to 26 August 2014. (AQW 35231/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The grades used to cover the rota in the Portrush Coastal Zone from 22 August 2014 to 26 August 2014 are listed in the table below.

Date	Grade
22 Aug 2014	Professional and Technical Officer Recruitment Agency Staff Recruitment Agency Staff
23 Aug 2014	Professional and Technical Officer Curatorial Grade D Higher Scientific Officer
24 Aug 2014	Professional and Technical Officer Senior Scientific Officer
25 Aug 2014	Higher Scientific Officer Principal Scientific Officer
26 Aug 2014	Professional and Technical Officer Curatorial Grade D

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration he has given to issuing a Small Business Research Initiative competition to identify innovative ways of processing waste, to prevent waste going to landfill or incineration. (AQW 35277/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Responsibility for the preparation of waste management plans (the plans), setting out the arrangements for recovery, treatment or disposal of municipal waste in Northern Ireland, lies with district councils through their three regional district council waste management groups (WMGs). The plans, which take account of the Waste Management Strategy prepared by the Department, include the type, scale and location of the waste facilities that will be required during the period of the plan. It would therefore be for the councils through WMGs in the first instance to consider the Small Business Research Initiative approach.

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of the Environment whether he is satisfied that the current municipal waste disposal contract Lot 1 and 2 is being tendered appropriately. (AQW 35281/11-15)

Mr Durkan: It is the responsibility of arc21 and its constituent councils, rather than the Department, to ensure that waste management tendering processes are administered appropriately. arc21 is currently established as a waste management joint committee with body corporate status. As such, powers and duties for local government financial administration, including the power to enter into contracts for the provision of assets or services, apply to arc21 as they apply to a council. Therefore, arc21 has the necessary powers to tender for this contract for the disposal of residual municipal waste in landfill.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of agency workers in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency who had their employment terminated prematurely; and the sites affected, since July 2014.

(AQW 35284/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Over 80 temporary workers (79.2 full time equivalent) were released early from their contracts.

A significant number of the affected agency workers were engaged for the summer months at a number of the NIEA visitor attractions. Service levels are being maintained by redeploying permanent staff as far as is practicable.

Full details of numbers and sites affected are listed in the Table below.

Location	FTE	Role
Resource Efficiency Division, - Water Management Unit, Lisburn. Resource Efficiency Division - Land Resource Management, Klondyke Building, Belfast. Historic Environment Division - Historic Monuments Unit, Waterman House, Hill Street, Belfast. Natural Environment Division - Klondyke Building, Belfast. Resource Efficiency Division - Environmental Crime Unit, Klondyke Building, Belfast.	11	Administrative Grades and Investigation Officers
Historic Environment Division - Historic Buildings Unit, Waterman House, Hill Street, Belfast. Historic Environment Division - Historic Monuments Unit, Waterman House, Hill Street, Belfast Natural Environment Division - Country & Coast, Conservation Science, Conservation Designations, Klondyke Building, Belfast Resource Efficiency Division - Land Resource Management, Klondyke Building, Belfast. Resource Efficiency Division - Drinking Water Inspector, Lisburn. Innovation Strategies Division, Castlearchdale Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division – Regional Operations Headquarters, Klondyke Building, Belfast.	19	Other Professional and Technical Grades
Innovation Strategies Division - Carrickfergus Castle. Innovation Strategies Division – Dunluce. Innovation Strategies Division - Castlearchdale Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division -Crawfordsburn Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division - Greypoint Fort. Innovation Strategies Division - Peatlands Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division - Bellaghy Bawn. Innovation Strategies Division - Hillsborough Fort. Innovation Strategies Division - Roe Valley Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division - Ness Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division - Scrabo Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division – Greencastle. Innovation Strategies Division - Greencastle/Narrow Water. Innovation Strategies Division - Narrow Water. Innovation Strategies Division - Ballycopeland. Innovation Strategies Division - Kilclief Castle. Innovation Strategies Division - Quoile Countryside Centre.	49.2	Rangers
Total	FTE 79.2	

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of the Environment why the cost of providing a provisional licence is more expensive in Northern Ireland compared to the rest of the UK.

(AQW 35291/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The administration of driver licensing in Northern Ireland is expected, as far as possible, to be a self-financing service, with costs recovered through fee income.

Therefore fees for driving licences are set to achieve, as far as is practicable, full recovery of the costs associated with the administration of the driver licensing system. These costs include staff salaries, maintenance and development of the IT system, production of the licence, postage and the payment of fees for certain medical assessments. The licence fees are varied according to the complexity of individual transactions.

Following a public consultation, driving licence fees were increased on 18 October 2012 by commencement of The Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012. This resulted in the fee for Northern Ireland provisional driving licences of £62.50 compared to £50 in Great Britain. The increase in fees was necessary to assist with the full recovery of the costs associated with the administration of driver licensing and to minimise the extent of the deficit in the fee account.

The cost of producing licences here is higher due to the lack of economies of scale available in Great Britain. The Driver & Vehicle Agency is, however, in the process of developing a new IT system for driver licensing with a view to improving the customer experience and the efficiency of service delivery. I hope that this may provide an opportunity to reduce processing costs in the future.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what legislative changes he will make to ensure that all proposals for high volume hydraulic fracturing will be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), given that the current regulations only require deep drilling development to be screened for an EIA if the size of the development is 1 hectare or more, or the quantity of gas extracted is 500,000 cubic metres or more per day.

(AQW 35293/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 (Schedules 1 and 2) make provision respectively for mandatory EIA in respect of high volume hydraulic fracturing where the quantity of gas extracted is 500,000 cubic metres or more per day and for the screening for EIA of all proposals for deep drilling where the size of the development is one hectare or more.

It is also EIA development if the proposal is located in a sensitive area such as an ASSI, AONB, or a European designated site.

In addition to these provisions, the Department has the power under regulation 3(a) of the EIA regulations to direct that development described in Schedule 2 which is not in a sensitive area, or does not meet the applicable thresholds, is still EIA development.

I consider that the current legislative provisions are sufficient to ensure that the likely environmental impacts of any proposal for high volume hydraulic fracturing are considered before planning permission is granted and I do not propose to make any legislative changes.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment whether he would consider exploring the possibility of banning drivers from wearing non-prescription sunglasses when in control of a vehicle as part of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill.

(AQW 35328/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Visual standards for applicants for, or holders of, Northern Ireland driving licences are set out in domestic legislation, within a framework of European law and are designed to ensure medical fitness to drive.

The Highway Code contains a section on vision (Rules 92 – 94 refer). Rule 92 states that drivers must be able to read a vehicle number plate, in good daylight, from a distance of 20 metres and, that anyone who needs to wear glasses (or contact lenses) to do this, must wear them at all times while driving. To comply with this requirement they would also have to wear prescription sunglasses if they chose to wear sunglasses whilst driving.

I believe that existing rules and standards applied in Northern Ireland in relation to vision (and other medical requirements) ensure that only those who are fit to drive do so. I have no plans, therefore, to explore the possibility of banning drivers from wearing non-prescription sunglasses when in control of a vehicle, as part of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill. To do so could, I believe, have an adverse affect on road safety.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the names of all organisations and consortiums which submitted a bid to undertake the joint Northern Ireland Environment Agency/Environmental Protection Agency research into unconventional oil and gas; (ii) who has been selected to undertake this research; (iii) the budget available for this research; and (iv) the individuals and organisations they represent who made the final decision as to who would be awarded this research.

(AQW 35491/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I have responded to your questions using the same numeric order as set out in your question:

- (i) It is not normal practice under government procurement procedures for the names of unsuccessful bidders in open procurement competitions to be released. However I can inform that in total six bids were received.

- (ii) CDM Smith Ireland Ltd with partners:
- Queens University Belfast;
 - British Geological Survey;
 - University college Dublin;
 - University of Ulster;
 - AMEC;
 - Philip Lee Solicitors.
- (iii) The cost of the initial contract is approximately €700,000 excluding VAT. A supplementary tender may be required for subsequent aspects of the research which are dependent upon the outcome of the initial contract. The cost of the supplementary tender or tenders is not yet known and it may therefore be detrimental to the outcome of any future procurement process to publish the total funds available for the research programme as a whole.
- (iv) The following organisations were involved in the evaluation of the received bids and all contributed to the final decision on the successful bidder:
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency;
 - DOE Environmental Policy Division;
 - Environmental Protection Agency (Ireland);
 - Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources;
 - Geological Survey Ireland;
 - An Bord Pleanála;
 - Health Services Executive (Ireland);
 - Department of Communications, Environment and Local Government;
 - Commission for Energy Regulation.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail, since May 2007, all the occasions he has met with Trevor Turkington of Turkington Holdings Limited.

(AQW 28359/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): I took up office on 29 July 2013 and have had no meetings with Trevor Turkington of Turkington Holdings Limited during my time as Finance Minister.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he intends to lobby HM Revenue and Customs regarding the jobs under threat following the announcement on 20 November 2013 of redundancies in Personal Tax Operations, currently based at Duncreggan Road, Derry.

(AQW 28532/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: While I sympathise with the staff concerned my Department has no authority to lobby HMRC.

On a number of occasions the NI Executive discussed both the HMRC and DVA loss of jobs. Even though there is no direct control the situation is kept under review.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail all amateur sports clubs that currently pay rates broken down by their respective sports.

(AQW 28623/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: It is not possible to provide this information for all amateur sports broken down by their respective sports and by constituency. Land & Property Services does not hold this information as the Valuation List and the internal databases that lie behind it do not specifically identify amateur sports clubs as a categorisation.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail all amateur sports clubs that currently pay rates broken down by constituency.

(AQW 28624/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: It is not possible to provide this information for all amateur sports broken down by their respective sports and by constituency. Land & Property Services does not hold this information as the Valuation List and the internal databases that lie behind it do not specifically identify amateur sports clubs as a categorisation.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many entries his Special Adviser has made in the Department's Register of Gifts and Hospitality since they were appointed; and what is the total value of such entries.

(AQW 29159/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Special Adviser to the Minister of Finance and Personnel has made no entries in the Department's Register of Gifts and Hospitality since appointment.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 27998/11-15, which Department has a female Permanent Secretary; and for how long she has been in post.

(AQW 29424/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: OFMDFM has a female member of staff at Permanent Secretary level who has been in post for 1 year and 8 months.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel on what date he received the briefing papers for the Committee for Finance and Personnel relating to the renewable energy in public sector buildings; and on what date he approved these papers.

(AQW 33708/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: I reviewed and approved the final briefing paper on 27 May 2014.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why departmental papers are not being sent to the Committee for Finance and Personnel within the agreed timescales.

(AQW 33709/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department and I value good working relationships with the Committee for Finance and Personnel and will always endeavour to provide information requested on a timely basis. However, as Minister it is my responsibility to ensure that I am content with all the output of my Department, including briefing for the Committee. It is inevitable that there will be occasions where briefing material is not ready in time for Committee deadlines.

I am very aware that this is a practice exercised by other Ministers in the Executive including members of your own Party.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what involvement his Department had in the withdrawal of funding from the RUC George Cross Widows' Association.

(AQW 34058/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department had no involvement in the withdrawal of funding from the RUC George Cross Widows' Association. Decisions regarding the funding and governance arrangements of the Association rest with DOJ.

My Department was simply responsible for determining the correct sector classification for the body.

The decision on which sector or sub-sector actual or proposed bodies are in rests with the independent Office of National Statistics (ONS). More straightforward cases may be settled by HM Treasury or, for Northern Ireland bodies, by DFP. Decisions are made in accordance with international guidelines set out for European Community member states in the European System of Accounts (ESA95).

My officials applied these guidelines to the information provided by the DOJ as part of a review of Arm's Length Bodies. This resulted in a private sector classification for the RUC George Cross Widows' Association.

It should be noted that while a change in sector classification may require a review of funding and governance arrangements, it should not adversely impact on the provision of funding to the body.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has given approval to the Business Case for the relocation of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's headquarters to Ballykelly.

(AQW 35033/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development's decision to direct her Accounting Officer to relocate the headquarters was agreed, on behalf of the Executive, by the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much has been collected in rates on derelict buildings in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35223/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Derelict buildings are not hereditaments and are not therefore included in the Valuation List. As rates are levied on properties which are in the Valuation List, no rates have been collected on derelict properties in any of the last three years.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many derelict buildings are not currently subject to rates payments.

(AQW 35224/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Department does not hold records of the number of derelict buildings. These are not hereditaments and none are subject to the payment of rates.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he can provide assurances on the future of the Special European Union Programmes Body Offices in (a) Belfast; (b) Omagh; and (c) Monaghan.

(AQW 35312/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Special EU Programmes Body like any public sector organisation is subject to review of efficiency, effectiveness and value for money in light of prevailing operational and financial conditions. It is, therefore, not appropriate to provide long term assurances for SEUPB office locations or indeed for any public sector body.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, given the continuing problem of empty commercial properties in town and city centres, what steps are being considered to help reverse this trend.

(AQW 35318/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Addressing this trend requires joined up, creative thinking and action across a number of Executive Departments, working alongside the business community.

For its part, my Department is managing a series of measures to help address this problem through the non domestic rating system.

The empty shops rates concession support provides new occupiers of long term empty premises a 50% rates discount in the first difficult year of trading. To date this support has helped 314 new business ventures.

Furthermore, unlike the rest of the UK, Northern Ireland has kept the level of empty property rates at 50% of the occupied rate, in recognition of the particular difficulties faced by properties owner.

In addition to these schemes the regional rate has been frozen in real terms throughout the budget period and small business rate relief currently provides £18m of support to around 24,000 business ratepayers. Both of these measures help sustain and support existing businesses in town centres.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of staff employed in his Department broken down by grade; and (ii) the total salary for each grade, for each financial year since 1 April 2010.

(AQW 35391/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The answer is provided in the attached table.

	31-Mar-2011	31-Mar-2012	31-Mar-2013	31-Mar-2014
Grade incl Analogous				
Administrative Assistant				
Number of Employees	207	224	211	199
Number of Employees FTE	196.14	210.35	193.82	181.12
Sum of FTE Salary	£3,185,912.23	£3,489,141.43	£3,259,406.85	£3,103,155.04
Administrative Officer				
Number of Employees	886	903	896	900
Number of Employees FTE	817.44	829.79	820.76	821.88
Sum of FTE Salary	£15,679,264.96	£16,392,916.95	£16,652,400.37	£17,171,793.90
Executive Officer 2				
Number of Employees	460	459	452	463
Number of Employees FTE	439.82	437.88	429.19	437.27
Sum of FTE Salary	£9,446,585.49	£9,591,930.37	£10,151,793.77	£10,589,493.94
Executive Officer 1				
Number of Employees	528	529	482	525
Number of Employees FTE	508.55	509.04	458.18	498.60
Sum of FTE Salary	£12,355,605.67	£12,568,956.23	£11,956,439.42	£13,258,544.65
Staff Officer				
Number of Employees	555	539	551	581
Number of Employees FTE	537.24	517.71	529.82	562.24

	31-Mar-2011	31-Mar-2012	31-Mar-2013	31-Mar-2014
Sum of FTE Salary	£15,235,729.34	£14,927,578.86	£15,579,496.04	£16,805,347.57
Deputy Principal				
Number of Employees	486	488	499	518
Number of Employees FTE	465.88	467.47	478.30	492.47
Sum of FTE Salary	£16,867,579.29	£17,156,199.32	£17,871,714.45	£18,513,737.53
Grade 7				
Number of Employees	225	223	233	249
Number of Employees FTE	214.66	209.77	218.97	236.32
Sum of FTE Salary	£9,853,496.88	£9,800,226.70	£10,483,051.69	£11,569,588.52
Grade 6				
Number of Employees	96	93	93	87
Number of Employees FTE	90.37	86.14	85.87	80.78
Sum of FTE Salary	£5,285,629.20	£5,113,213.01	£5,178,442.13	£4,918,673.06
Senior Civil Servant				
Number of Employees	63	62	55	59
Number of Employees FTE	60.34	59.34	52.34	55.82
Sum of FTE Salary	£3,650,357.94	£3,592,346.94	£3,168,181.57	£3,672,931.31

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, since the inception of the Small Business Rates Relief Scheme, to detail (i) the number of small businesses that have benefited from the Scheme in (a) North Down and (b) Ards Borough Council areas; and (ii) how much the scheme has saved businesses.

(AQW 35550/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: A total of 1,182 non-domestic properties in the North Down Borough Council area and 1,357 non-domestic properties in the Ards Borough Council area have benefited from the Small Business Rates Relief Scheme since the scheme began in April 2010.

Since April 2010, the amount of SBRR awarded to those properties that benefited totalled £2,123,565 in North Down and £2,412,753 in Ards.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 35039/11-15, to detail the changes in staffing arrangements and new equipment purchased, including (i) the dates of either procurement or contract; and (ii) the costs incurred.

(AQW 35255/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Additional staff and new equipment introduced at the renal clinic in the Belfast City Hospital has included the following –

- January 2013 – increase in health care support workers by 60 hours per week at a cost of £36,746;
- September 2013 – opening of a phlebotomy (blood) room at a cost of £33,000;
- September 2013 – increase in 20 hours of a phlebotomist at a cost of £12,172; and
- June 2014 – use of one urinalysis machine at cost of £500.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he has had with the Minister for Health in the Republic of Ireland regarding the joint acquisition and provision of an Air Ambulance Service; and to detail the estimated capital cost, resource costs and the level of any European grants that may be available for such a cross-border initiative.

(AQW 35272/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have had several discussions with the former Minister of Health in the Republic of Ireland (ROI), Dr James Reilly TD, concerning the potential for the joint acquisition and provision of an Air Ambulance Service for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This matter is currently the subject of a study led by the Department of Health (ROI) in which my Department has participated. I am not yet in a position to provide the information about estimated costs and the potential for European grants requested by the Member.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people diagnosed as HIV positive in (i) 2002; and (ii) 2013.

(AQW 35288/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of new HIV diagnoses in Northern Ireland is detailed in the table below for 2002 and 2012 (latest information available).

Year	Number of new HIV diagnoses
2002	27
2012	95

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the progress of the proposed new Health and Wellbeing Care Centre in Bangor.

(AQW 35290/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am currently considering the Health and Social Care Board's high level Strategic Implementation Plan for future investment in primary care infrastructure, which includes a proposal for Bangor.

This Plan will be considered alongside other capital investment priorities and will be dependent on the outcome of future budget exercises and confirmation of value for money and affordability. It is therefore not possible to give an indication of the timescale for any future health & care centres, and unfortunately this includes the Bangor scheme.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether an investigation been held into the acid leakage incident at the Causeway Hospital from 22 to 24 August 2014.

(AQW 35316/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern HSC Trust is currently investigating this incident in accordance with the Health and Social Care Serious Adverse Incident procedures and protocols. The Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre is monitoring the investigation and shall disseminate appropriate learning if identified.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the current regulation concerning the quality of care for vulnerable and older people in care homes.

(AQW 35359/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) has responsibility to regulate a wide range of specified services delivered by both HSC bodies and the independent sector, including nursing homes and residential care homes. My Department published minimum care standards for both nursing and residential care homes in 2008. RQIA uses these standards and the corresponding regulations as the basis for regulation of the sectors. These standards set the benchmark for the quality of care that residents can expect to receive.

In 2013, my Department began a review of the minimum standards for nursing homes and the revised standards are currently undergoing public consultation.

My Department is also taking forward the development of the Adult Safeguarding Policy in partnership with the Department of Justice, to: 'introduce a package of measures aimed at improving safeguarding outcomes for children and vulnerable adults across Northern Ireland'. The objectives supporting this policy will range from the prevention of adult abuse through implementation of good safeguarding arrangements, to effective protective responses from lead protection agencies when adult abuse occurs or is suspected. The intention is to publish the finalised policy in 2015.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given that he announced on 14 November 2011 and 28 February 2012 that a public consultation on legislation banning smoking in cars was to be launched during 2012, when the consultation will be published.

(AQW 35375/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has been engaged in a substantial programme of legislative change with regards to tobacco control, including measures around the introduction of standardised packaging, as well as the progression of the Tobacco Retailers Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 through the Assembly. These issues are still current, with work ongoing to commence provisions of the Tobacco Retailers Act, and a recently launched consultation document seeking views on restricting the age of sale for electronic cigarettes to persons under the age of 18

Given the extent of the current legislative programme, my intention is to focus on these issues at present. In the meantime, I will continue to monitor developments on smoking restrictions in private vehicles in other parts of the UK, as they may have an impact on my plans for similar legislation in Northern Ireland in the future.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people living in the Outer North Neighbourhood Renewal Area that are registered with a dental practice.

(AQW 35406/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of patients living in the Outer North Derry Neighbourhood Renewal Area registered with a dental practice at April 2014 is shown below.

Please note that these figures are for patients with a postcode within this Neighbourhood Renewal Area, and the dental practice they are registered with could be anywhere in Northern Ireland.

Patients from the Outer North Derry NRA registered with a dental practice at April 2014

Neighbourhood Renewal Area	All Dental Registered Patients ¹
Outer North Derry	11,114

1 All patients registered with a General Dental Practitioner at April 2014.

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when payments from the Independent Living Fund will cease.

(AQW 35408/11-15)

Mr Poots: The UK Government decided to close the Independent Living Fund (ILF) with effect from 30 June 2015. As I have made very clear, my Department will do all it can to ensure that those in Northern Ireland who are affected by the decision of the Department for Work and Pensions are not disadvantaged.

My Department is currently undertaking a full and comprehensive public consultation on how best to support Independent Living Fund (ILF) users in Northern Ireland following the closure of the fund. The consultation closes on 30 November 2014 and I would encourage everyone to share their views on this crucial issue. Following consultation, I will carefully consider the results before deciding on the way forward.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration has been given to the installation of a solar farm in the grounds of the Ulster Hospital.

(AQW 35430/11-15)

Mr Poots: The South Eastern Trust has recently completed the installation of Photovoltaic Solar Panels on the rooftops of a number of buildings on the Ulster Hospital site. The current installation consists of 828 panels with a peak capacity of 207kW and the Trust has incorporated the appropriate infrastructure into the design of the new hospital facilities to allow the installation of further panels. The installation is not in the form of a single mass grouping of ground mounted Photovoltaic Solar Panels which is sometimes referred to as a solar farm.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether concerns were raised before April 2013 by a departmental official that the finances provided by the 2011/15 budget were not sufficient to enable the safe and sustainable running of any aspect of the Health Service.

(AQW 35473/11-15)

Mr Poots: In each of the financial years since my appointment as Health Minister, Departmental officials have regularly provided advice to me on a range of matters relating to the 2011-15 budget settlement, including updates on the latest financial position facing the Department, Trusts' proposed savings plans and the Department's proposed participation in the In Year Monitoring Rounds.

In considering that advice, I have been committed to ensuring that all available resources are focused on the provision of safe, sustainable and effective services whilst ensuring that patients and clients have remained at the centre of any expenditure decisions.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to his comments to the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety on 3 September 2014 regarding the delivery of capital developments being "less of an issue", when new GP practices for Waringstown and Donaghcloney and Lurgan will be delivered.

(AQW 35524/11-15)

Mr Poots: My comments that the funding position for capital developments was "less of an issue" related to the fact that the Executive's capital expenditure has not been subjected to the same level of cuts resulting from the government's action to

reduce the UK deficit as has been the case for revenue expenditure in this spending period.. This does not mean that capital resources are immediately available for all of the projects we would like to take forward.

A range of both capital and revenue funding options are currently being considered for the delivery of the primary care infrastructure programme and the evaluation outcomes of current pathfinder projects financed through third party development arrangements in Lisburn and Newry will inform future decisions. These evaluations will not be available until the new-year.

I will not be in a position to confirm when decisions will be made about the provision of a 'hub' in Lurgan and associated 'spoke' arrangements which would include Warringstown and Donaghcloney until after that time.

Department of Justice

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether Michaela McCollum will be entitled to 50 per cent remission if she is transferred to a local prison.

(AQW 35229/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): It would be inappropriate to disclose at this stage how long Michaela McCollum may have to serve in custody were she to be repatriated to Northern Ireland given that the Northern Ireland Prison Service has yet to have those discussions with either her or her legal representatives. However, before repatriation takes place the Peruvian authorities, as the sentencing state, will have to agree to the terms of the transfer which will include an indication of the length of time to be served in prison in Northern Ireland.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail the cost to the taxpayer of the transfer of Michaela McCollum from prison in Peru to Northern Ireland; and the ongoing costs of retaining her in a local prison.

(AQW 35258/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am unable to detail the cost to the taxpayer of the transfer of Michaela McCollum from Peru to Northern Ireland given that no agreement has yet been reached with the sentencing state on repatriation and as a result no transport arrangements have been made. However, under the Repatriation of Prisoners Act 1984 the Northern Ireland Prison Service requires transferring prisoners to sign an undertaking to repay expenses incurred in connection with their conveyance to the United Kingdom. The Act does not require the prisoner to make payment towards the cost of providing an escort.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service does not calculate figures that detail the annual cost of keeping each additional prisoner in custody. Rather a 'cost per prisoner place' figure is published annually which is worked out by dividing the Prison Service's annual Operating Expenditure (excluding non-standard costs) by the average total number of prisoner places defined as Certified Normal Accommodation. It cannot be used to indicate the cost of keeping one additional prisoner as this must be met from within the existing budget.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice how many prison transfer applications from Great Britain to Northern Ireland have been (i) received; (ii) approved; and (iii) rejected since the devolution of policing and justice.

(AQW 35259/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) has received 73 applications from prisoners from Great Britain seeking transfer to Northern Ireland since the devolution of policing and justice. Forty one have been approved while 19 were rejected. Another six were withdrawn before the administrative process was completed and a further seven are ongoing. Reasons for rejecting applications include the National Offender Management Service not approving the application, issues with the applicant's behaviour in custody, NIPS not being able to confirm nationality, previous residency status or close family ties with Northern Ireland or the applicant having insufficient time left to serve in custody (a minimum of 6 months is required before an application is allowed to proceed).

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice how many prison transfer applications from outside the UK to Northern Ireland have been (i) received; (ii) approved; and (iii) rejected since the devolution of policing and justice.

(AQW 35260/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) has received 24 applications from prisoners from outside the United Kingdom seeking repatriation to Northern Ireland since the devolution of policing and justice. Nine have been approved while six were rejected. Five were withdrawn before the administrative process was completed and a further four are ongoing. Another prisoner made an application before devolution but this was not approved until after 12 April 2010. Reasons for rejecting applications for repatriation include NIPS not being able to confirm nationality, previous residency status or close family ties with Northern Ireland, the applicant having insufficient time left to serve in custody (a minimum of 6 months is required before an application is allowed to proceed) or the applicant having a sentence that is unenforceable in this jurisdiction.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what arrangements have been reached with the Peruvian authorities regarding the transfer of Michaela McCollum to a local prison.

(AQW 35262/11-15)

Mr Ford: No arrangements have yet been reached with the Peruvian authorities for the repatriation of Michaela McCollum to a prison in Northern Ireland.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what is the projected annual cost of keeping Michaela McCollum in a local jail; and which jurisdiction is responsible for these costs.

(AQW 35263/11-15)

Mr Ford: The cost of keeping every prisoner in a prison in Northern Ireland is met by the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS). NIPS does not calculate figures that detail the annual cost of keeping each additional prisoner in custody. Rather a 'cost per prisoner place' figure is published annually which is worked out by dividing the Prison Service's annual Operating Expenditure (excluding non-standard costs) by the average number of prisoner places defined as Certified Normal Accommodation. It cannot be used to indicate the cost of keeping one additional prisoner as this must be met from within the existing budget.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice whether he has had any discussions with the Irish Government regarding the return of Michaela McCollum and the associated costs.

(AQW 35268/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have not had any discussions with the Irish Government regarding the return of Michaela McCollum and the associated costs.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice whether any assurances have been given to the Peruvian authorities over the length of time that Michaela McCollum will serve in prison in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 35270/11-15)

Mr Ford: No assurances have yet been given to the Peruvian authorities over the length of time that Michaela McCollum will serve in prison in Northern Ireland. However, before any repatriation takes place the sentencing state has to indicate its agreement to all the terms of the transfer including length of time to be served in prison in the receiving state.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how long Michaela McCollum is due to serve in prison following her transfer.

(AQW 35271/11-15)

Mr Ford: It would be inappropriate to disclose at this stage how long Michaela McCollum may have to serve in custody were she to be repatriated to Northern Ireland given that the Northern Ireland Prison Service has yet to have those discussions with either her or her legal representatives. However, before repatriation takes place the Peruvian authorities, as the sentencing state, will have to agree to the terms of the transfer which will include an indication of the length of time to be served in prison in Northern Ireland.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice what has been the maximum sentence imposed for drugs offences during the last twelve months.

(AQW 35300/11-15)

Mr Ford: Drugs offences may be prosecuted under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, the Medicines Act 1968, the Criminal Attempts and Conspiracy (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 and the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.

The most recent convictions data available relate to 2012. In that year, the most severe penalty imposed for a drugs related offence was a determinate custodial sentence for a period of 3 years.

Note: Data are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) on how many occasions since 2013 the Northern Ireland Prison Service has conducted drugs searches and recovered legal highs; (ii) how many were found not to be within a banned category; and (iii) whether adjudication took place in these instances, or if due to legislation no crime was committed and no action could be taken.

(AQW 35310/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service regards all New Psychoactive Substances as banned substances. All finds are treated as unauthorised articles, and any prisoner found in possession of such a substance will be liable to adjudication.

It has been made clear to prisoners that so called 'legal highs' are not permitted in prison.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 32848/11-15, whether he will review this answer given that the contract was due for re-tender and no tender has been published in the subsequent five months.

(AQW 35311/11-15)

Mr Ford: The current contract used by NIPS has been extended by the Scottish Prison Service until February 2015 while a tender is prepared.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice why staff leaving the Northern Ireland Prison Service under the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme were paid a rate for unused annual leave different to that paid to staff who remained in service.
(AQW 35321/11-15)

Mr Ford: Staff who have left the Northern Ireland Prison Service have been paid in line with the terms of the Annual Leave Chapter of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) HR Handbook relating to cash compensation for leaving the NICS.

There is no policy relating to the payment of annual leave for staff remaining in post and therefore a separate agreement was reached with the trade unions in respect of this.

Staff remaining in post were unable to use their annual leave. Staff leaving under the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme were expected to make every effort to take their leave in advance of leaving the service.

The total paid for unused annual leave to staff leaving the Northern Ireland Prison Service under the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme was £650,000.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how much was paid in total for unused annual leave to staff leaving the Northern Ireland Prison Service under the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme.
(AQW 35322/11-15)

Mr Ford: Staff who have left the Northern Ireland Prison Service have been paid in line with the terms of the Annual Leave Chapter of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) HR Handbook relating to cash compensation for leaving the NICS.

There is no policy relating to the payment of annual leave for staff remaining in post and therefore a separate agreement was reached with the trade unions in respect of this.

Staff remaining in post were unable to use their annual leave. Staff leaving under the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme were expected to make every effort to take their leave in advance of leaving the service.

The total paid for unused annual leave to staff leaving the Northern Ireland Prison Service under the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme was £650,000.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice why annual leave compensation for staff leaving the Northern Ireland Prison Service under the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme was calculated at a rate of 5.4 hours per day.
(AQW 35323/11-15)

Mr Ford: Staff who have left the Northern Ireland Prison Service have been paid in line with the terms of the Annual Leave Chapter of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) HR Handbook relating to cash compensation for leaving the NICS.

There is no policy relating to the payment of annual leave for staff remaining in post and therefore a separate agreement was reached with the trade unions in respect of this.

Staff remaining in post were unable to use their annual leave. Staff leaving under the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme were expected to make every effort to take their leave in advance of leaving the service.

The total paid for unused annual leave to staff leaving the Northern Ireland Prison Service under the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme was £650,000.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice when the decision was taken to allow Northern Ireland Prison Service staff to withdraw from the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme.
(AQW 35324/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Early Retirement Scheme launched on 8 November 2011 was entirely voluntary and there was no compulsion on any member of staff to apply to leave the service under the available redundancy terms.

The decision to allow staff to withdraw from the scheme was taken on 29 March 2012. A circular was issued on 30 March 2012, and staff in receipt of Letter 2 and Letter 3 subsequently received an individual letter informing them of the process for withdrawing from the Scheme.

When staff formally applied to the Scheme they had to sign a form which committed them to leave the Service upon selection. Those who received a Letter 1 were selected to leave by the VER panel and informed of their last day of service. As Letter 2 and Letter 3 staff were not selected, and did not have a leaving date, they were able to withdraw.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice why Northern Ireland Prison Service staff in receipt of Letter 2 and Letter 3 of the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme were allowed to withdraw from the scheme whilst staff in receipt of Letter 1 were not allowed this opportunity.
(AQW 35329/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Early Retirement Scheme launched on 8 November 2011 was entirely voluntary and there was no compulsion on any member of staff to apply to leave the service under the available redundancy terms.

The decision to allow staff to withdraw from the scheme was taken on 29 March 2012. A circular was issued on 30 March 2012, and staff in receipt of Letter 2 and Letter 3 subsequently received an individual letter informing them of the process for withdrawing from the Scheme.

When staff formally applied to the Scheme they had to sign a form which committed them to leave the Service upon selection. Those who received a Letter 1 were selected to leave by the VER panel and informed of their last day of service. As Letter 2 and Letter 3 staff were not selected, and did not have a leaving date, they were able to withdraw.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the number of reported incidences of domestic violence abuse in each of the last five years; and (ii) the percentage of these complaints that resulted in prosecution.

(AQW 35418/11-15)

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

You may therefore wish to direct your question to the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many times since May 2011 has he transferred an Assembly Question to a Freedom of Information request; and of these, to detail (i) the number that resulted in the supply of the requested information; (ii) who provided the advice regarding the transfer and whether the departmental solicitor was involved; (iii) when this procedure became departmental practice; and (iv) whether the relevant Member was advised of this procedure in advance of the transfer.

(AQW 35439/11-15)

Mr Ford: Since May 2011 I am not aware of my Department ever having transferred an Assembly Question to a Freedom of Information request.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice when a report on the complaint lodged by the Chief Executive Officer of the Disabled Police Officers Association Northern Ireland against the Police Fund in March 2014 will be completed.

(AQW 35509/11-15)

Mr Ford: It would be inappropriate for my Department to take any action regarding this complaint while the Charity Commission's inquiry concerning the Disabled Police Officers Association of Northern Ireland is ongoing. I intend to await the outcome of this inquiry and then consider whether or not there is a need for any action by my Department.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice why a former Chair of the Disabled Police Officers Association Northern Ireland was considered to be covered by the Northern Ireland Police Fund whistle blowing policy when he does not fall into the qualifying criteria of the policy.

(AQW 35511/11-15)

Mr Ford: Following a number of Public Accounts Committee reports on the investigation of whistle-blower complaints, there is clear guidance noting that where concerns about the proper conduct of public business are raised, the general principles in handling whistle-blower cases should be applied regardless of who has raised the concerns. I am satisfied that the action taken by the Police Fund in this matter is appropriate and in line with this guidance.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice what plans he has to explain in detail the consequences of the failure to fully implement the National Crime Agency in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 35634/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have regularly made clear my concerns at the consequences of the NCA not being able to operate in the devolved sphere in Northern Ireland.

On 8 September I issued a paper to the main political parties and others setting out proposals on the operation and accountability of the NCA. I hope this will provide a basis to resolve the current situation. I have offered to meet the parties to discuss the proposals and the consequences of not reaching agreement. The Chief Constable of the PSNI and Director General of the National Crime Agency have also offered meetings.

Department for Regional Development

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development what cuts will be made to his budget as a result of the lack of agreement on Welfare Reform.

(AQW 35245/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): Following the outcome of June Monitoring my Department is required to manage Resource budget reductions of 2.1% in order to provide funding for a range of Executive pressures with a further 2.3% proposed for October Monitoring. The full 4.4% of Resource baseline reductions required equates to a £15 million reduction in the running costs budget for my Department.

As a first phase of measures I have had no option other than to stop issuing new work instructions to our contractors, who currently undertake around one quarter of our work, in the following areas:

- footway and carriageway patching including potholes;
- grass cutting/environmental maintenance;
- gully emptying;
- road marking maintenance/renewal; and
- traffic sign maintenance/replacement.

In addition, it has been necessary to suspend the use of external contractors for the repair of street lights that fail, unless they pose an electrical hazard to the public. It is not the case that no street lighting repairs will be carried out; the Department will continue to prioritise all reported faults. Until further notice, our in-house contractor will endeavour to deal with as many street lighting defects as possible. However, they will not be able to provide the service the public would expect in normal circumstances. Priority will be given to electrical and structural safety defects, followed by large groups of lights out.

However, I need to make it clear that Translink and Northern Ireland Water are also being impacted by the cuts.

While Translink is required to breakeven over a three year period, the Company is already expected to be running at a deficit of around £9 million this financial year and this may have to increase as a consequence of the Department's baseline reductions. In order that the Company remains a going concern it is vital that the Executive honours its commitment to the current concessionary fares scheme and fully funds the scheme both this year and in future years.

Northern Ireland Water will also be taking forward savings measures to mitigate the £4.2 million shortfall in its agreed funding, as set out in the NI Authority for Utility Regulation's Price Control 2013 Final Determination, in addition to other emerging pressures of some £10 million. This will put significant pressures on the delivery of water and wastewater services.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development how many public liability claims have been made in each Road Service Division in each of the last five years, broken down by the reason for the claim.

(AQW 35248/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the number of public liability claims made in each Transport NI Division in each of the last five years, and the reason for the claim i.e. whether claim is in relation to personal injury, vehicle or property damage, are set out in the following tables:

Northern Division

	Personal Injury	Property Damage	Vehicle Damage	Total
2009/2010	167	28	390	585
2010/2011	173	36	416	625
2011/2012	212	29	289	530
2012/2013	177	32	198	407
2013/2014	180	65	213	458
Total	909	190	1,506	2,605

Southern Division

	Personal Injury	Property Damage	Vehicle Damage	Total
2009/2010	213	51	763	1,027
2010/2011	225	38	869	1,132
2011/2012	219	48	500	767
2012/2013	193	41	493	727
2013/2014	208	64	534	806
Total	1,058	242	3,159	4,459

Eastern Division

	Personal Injury	Property Damage	Vehicle Damage	Total
2009/2010	455	82	547	1,084
2010/2011	487	54	522	1,063
2011/2012	494	62	380	936
2012/2013	473	45	445	963
2013/2014	479	76	368	923
Total	2,388	319	2,262	4,969

Western Division

	Personal Injury	Property Damage	Vehicle Damage	Total
2009/2010	90	22	799	911
2010/2011	97	28	756	881
2011/2012	122	29	485	636
2012/2013	110	23	318	451
2013/2014	105	47	265	417
Total	524	149	2,623	3,296

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the costs his Department have incurred reinstating roads after utility works, in each of the last three years
(AQW 35278/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not reinstate roads after utility works and therefore has incurred no cost in any of the last three years on this activity.

Utility companies are responsible for permanent reinstatement of roads to an agreed specification upon completion of their works. Where reinstatements are found not to comply with the specification, utility companies are advised of the non-compliance and required to carry out remedial works at their own expense. My officials carry out follow-up inspections to ensure remedial works have been completed, and the cost of undertaking those inspections is recovered from the utility companies.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister for Regional Development how much money was spent on roads maintenance in each constituency in 2013 compared to 2007.
(AQW 35301/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not analyse expenditure on a Parliamentary constituency basis or by calendar year.

However, financial information could be provided on a financial year basis by Council area for 2007/08 and 2012/13 if that would be useful. Information for 2013/14 should be available in the near future.

If you wish to receive this information, please let me know and I will ask officials to make the necessary arrangements to provide this for you.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much NI Water will save from the disposal of surplus reservoirs.
(AQW 35373/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water estimates that disposal of surplus reservoirs would result in maintenance costs savings in excess of £250,000 per year.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the process for developers to obtain a sewerage and storm water connection, including the average length of time taken.
(AQW 35378/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The process for obtaining new foul sewer and storm water sewer connections to service individual properties wishing to communicate to the existing public sewer network is set out at Article 163 of the Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006.

From the date of application, NI Water aims to provide a written quotation within 21 working days. The onus is then with the Developer to (i) accept the fixed charge quotation and pay the connection fee, and (ii) contact NI Water to arrange a suitable appointment when he would be ready for the sewer connection. From the date the sewer connection fee is paid, NI Water has

21 days to organise the sewer connection. In some instances there may be Transport NI restrictions, such as road opening embargos, but these are few in number.

NI Water also works with Developers in their construction programme, and may agree a connection date at a later date to facilitate the needs of the house-builder. NI Water is generally in compliance with the length of time stipulated for dealing with new sewer connection requests. NI Water's Developers Services Manager will be happy to discuss any particular queries Developers may have.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development when a new bus and rail station will be built in Ballymena.
(AQW 35379/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that there is no change in position since the matter was raised previously in AQW 34407/11-15 (July 2014).

The scoping and feasibility stages of the project to refurbish Ballymena Bus and Rail Integrated Station have commenced. The project is included in Translink's Corporate Plan and is scheduled for execution during 2016/17 and 2017/18, subject to available funding.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development when the second cut of grass on major roadways and within residential areas of North Down will be completed.
(AQW 35394/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has completed two urban, which includes major roadways and residential areas, and one rural grass cut in the North Down area.

A third cut within the urban area is currently underway with the Ring Road (East Circular Road, South Circular Road and West Circular Road), A21 Newtownards Road and A2 from Springhill Flyover to Knocknagoney already completed.

Mr Cree asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total cost of refurbishing Portavoe Reservoir.
(AQW 35484/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The total cost of refurbishing Portavoe Reservoir was £218,000. This consists of £181,000 construction costs plus additional professional costs (including project management, site supervision, environmental surveys and public communication) amounting to £37,000.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he plans to extend the cycling network to include rural areas.
(AQO 6556/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I published the draft Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland on 27th August for a 12 week period of public consultation. A series of public consultation events are planned for October and November 2014 which will include events in rural areas.

My strategy recognises that there are differences between using the bicycle in an urban area and a rural area, and clearly states that we will continue to make provision for the bicycle in rural areas where opportunities arise, especially where there is cycling demand.

The National Cycle Network (NCN) is a comprehensive network of safe and attractive cycling routes, developed by the charity Sustrans. In Northern Ireland, the Network extends to more than 800 miles, mostly on quiet country roads and includes 106 miles of traffic free paths.

In addition to the existing National Cycle Network my Department will develop specific interventions, including Greenways, and pilot them in rural areas. Greenway development will include looking at ways to make use of disused canals and railway tracks, for example, along the Lagan Navigation to Portadown and the old GNR from Portadown to Londonderry.

There are a number of specific road schemes currently being taken forward by my Department which will incorporate some provision for the bicycle including, the A26 Frosses dualling scheme, the proposed A8 Larne Dualling Scheme and the A20 Comber to Newtownards Dual Carriageway.

Once the Bicycle Strategy has been finalised, a Delivery Plan will be prepared. This plan will be subject to a 'rural proofing' exercise to ensure that the needs of rural communities and areas are considered as part of the policy development process.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development why staff from NI Water entered the grounds of Clandeboye Primary School, Bangor in advance of works on a new sewage pumping station without informing the school or local residents.
(AQW 35623/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Northern Ireland Water has held a number of meetings with the school and local residents to discuss the planned work. Initial discussions were held with the South East Education and Library Board (SEELB) and Clandeboye Primary School in December 2013, and a further meeting was held with the Clandeboye Residents Association including representatives of the school and local Church affected by the works in February 2014. A full public meeting to address local concerns was held on the evening of 15 May 2014. As agreed at this public meeting, upon appointment of a contractor

a further public meeting will be held prior to commencement of work onsite. The Senior Project Manager responsible for delivery of the project will provide an update to the Clondeboy Inter Agency Group Meeting, which includes representatives of the local residents' group, on 16 September 2014.

Northern Ireland Water's Project Team met with the Clondeboy Primary School Principal and school caretaker on 28 August 2014 to discuss the erection of a temporary fence within the school grounds to facilitate ongoing ground investigations. The temporary fence is required to comply with child protection and Health and Safety procedures and was agreed with the school management and representatives of the SEELB. Contractors were working on site to erect the temporary fence from 2 to 3 September.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the Programme for Government 2011-15 target to invest in and promote more sustainable modes of travel and create the conditions to facilitate at least 36 per cent of primary school pupils and 22 per cent of secondary school pupils to walk or cycle to school as their main mode of transport by 2015. **(AQO 6553/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: The Department remains on target to meet its PfG commitment of investing over £500m to promote sustainable modes of travel in the budget period up to the end of this financial year.

The savings the Department is expected to make following the finalisation of the June monitoring round has had an impact this year but the Department still expects to achieve this target over the budget period.

It is, however, not possible to speculate at this time on the impact that the imposition of any further savings may have on this target following the outcome of the October monitoring.

In relation to the PfG commitment for active school travel, the Department, along with the Public Health Agency, continues to fund Sustrans to promote cycling and walking within schools as part of the Active Schools Travel Initiative. The Initiative will deliver a programme of cycling and walking skills to 180 schools across Northern Ireland over the next three years at a cost of £1.2million. The programme will work with parents and teachers to support schools to develop a culture of active travel. It is important any child cycling or walking to school has the necessary skills to enable them to walk or cycle safely. My Department needs to invest in delivering the necessary vital skills required to enable pupils to travel actively and safely.

The Active School Travel Initiative will go some way to creating the conditions to facilitate children actively travelling to school. At present my Department is not in a position to report on the trend on children walking and cycling to school as the baseline data for year one has just been compiled. A report on the active travel participation of those schools that took part in the Initiative is expected later in the autumn. My Department will also seek to draw on information within the Travel Survey of Northern Ireland to assess active travel to school over all of Northern Ireland.

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister for Regional Development when he envisages progress on the dualling of the A6. **(AQO 6554/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: As stated in response to Question 1, there are currently proposals to dual two sections of the A6 these being, Randalstown to Castledawson and Londonderry to Dungiven.

Funding has been provided to advance the A6 Randalstown to Castledawson dual carriageway project to be "shovel ready" in 2015 and, when funding becomes available in the future, allow construction to commence at short notice. The contractor procurement process has now commenced with the recent publication of a notice in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU), seeking expressions of interest from contractors. Actual construction of the scheme will not commence until further funding is confirmed by the Executive.

The A6 Londonderry to Dungiven dualling scheme, which includes a bypass of Dungiven, is well advanced in terms of development. It has been through Public Inquiry and the Inspector has produced a report embracing various recommendations.

I am currently considering a response to these recommendations and will issue the Departmental Statement in due course, when I am satisfied all issues, many of which are complex, have been appropriately reviewed.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the road traffic survey for Twaddell Avenue. **(AQO 6555/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: As the member may recall, in my letter to you, dated 6 January 2014, I suggested the local Residents' Association would be best placed to assess the views of the whole community regarding potentially contentious traffic issues, such as replacing the existing traffic islands on Twaddell Avenue with road humps.

The Residents' Association could act as a central contact point, representing the interests of the wider community, for my officials.

In my letter, I also confirmed that I had requested officials to progress with a preliminary design of an alternative traffic calming scheme along Twaddell Avenue, in response to what appeared to be local demand for change.

My officials are currently finalising the preliminary design and will contact you within the next few weeks to discuss the proposal further. They will also provide you with their assessment of the associated benefits and disadvantages of providing a series of road humps on this heavily trafficked 'A' class road.

If it is confirmed there is overwhelming support for the alternative traffic calming scheme, officials will then progress with the necessary legislative process, which incorporates local consultation with the residents of Twaddell Avenue.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has carried out a risk assessment on the health and safety implications of proposals to reduce maintenance and repair of street lighting services.

(AQO 6557/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Following the outcome of the June monitoring, my Department is facing a significant budget shortfall. Consequently, I have had to take a number of difficult decisions, including the suspension of works orders to external contractors who were responsible for the repair of approximately three quarters of the street lights that go out.

I am fully aware of the risks associated with this decision and to deal with the health and safety implications I have set priorities for dealing with street lighting faults.

Priority will be given to those faults that present an electrical hazard to members of the public.

My Department's Operations and Maintenance staff have limited resources. They will endeavour to deal with large group outages and single outages on a priority basis.

Regrettably, the impact of the cuts will mean that, in all likelihood, many street lights will be out over the winter months.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development how his Department will meet its statutory duty under Article 8 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 to maintain roads and footpaths, if repair contracts are not being renewed.

(AQO 6558/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Article 8 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 places a duty on my Department to maintain all public roads in reasonable condition. In recognition of its duty of care, my Department has established a set of Maintenance Standards for Safety, which is designed to ensure a consistent service level and a safe highway, while offering value for money. They are based on best practice, research and consultation with both the public and other professional bodies and industry. These have been extensively tested in the courts, where it is generally accepted if the Department follows its policies, which the courts consider to be reasonable, it will have complied with its statutory duty.

As the Member will be aware, following the recent announcement on June monitoring, the proportion of my Department's resource budget used for the day to day maintenance of the road network has been cut. As a result, I had no alternative other than to make some tough decisions, including the cessation of new work instructions to external contractors, who currently undertake around one quarter of our routine maintenance work and three quarters of the work required to repair street lighting faults.

Despite the financial constraints roads will still be inspected as normal and repairs will be prioritised in so far as resources permit.

My Department's Operations and Maintenance staff will endeavour to keep the road network in as safe a condition as possible. However, they only have resources to complete around three quarters of the total routine maintenance workload and a much smaller percentage of the routine street lighting maintenance workload.

I consider this a very serious issue and I have asked my officials to seek formal legal advice on this.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the public usage on the Coleraine to Belfast rail corridor.

(AQO 6559/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am pleased to report that passenger growth on the Coleraine to Belfast rail corridor is very positive, with increases in passenger numbers of about a third between 2011/12 and 2013/14. This equates to an increase of over 400,000 passengers journeys in 3 years, taking passenger numbers from over 1.2 million in 2011/12 to over 1.6 million in 2013/14.

There has also been passenger growth on the Londonderry to Coleraine stretch of the railway network, and the completion of Phase 1 of the track relay on this stretch has played a key role in this.

Across Northern Ireland rail passenger journeys have increased by approximately 2.5 million over the period from 2011/12 to 2013/14.

The introduction of a new rail timetable targeted at the Coleraine to Belfast service, introduction of new trains and continued investment in infrastructure has clearly helped to generate this growth. It is important that we continue to invest in our rail infrastructure and ensure rail fares are competitive.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the A8 project, including the expected date for completion.

(AQO 6560/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The £130 million, 14 kilometres long, A8 dualling scheme is 25 months through its 34 month programme. Construction is progressing very well and is approximately 70% complete.

The contract completion date for the opening of the new dual carriageway is the end of May 2015

To date approximately two million cubic metres of earthworks material has been excavated, including over 500,000 cubic metres of rock. The road paving operation is continuing with around 150,000 tonnes of material laid to date. Seven of the eight bridges along the scheme are substantially complete, with the last bridge approaching deck construction stage.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the current pressures on his departmental budget. (AQO 6561/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In recent years the approach adopted by the Executive has meant that I have been heavily reliant on in-year funding through monitoring rounds to provide essential services, including concessionary fares, roads maintenance and street lighting for which £16 million of additional funding was provided in the 2013-14 financial year.

This approach applies not only to Resource, but also to Capital activities and in particular structural maintenance for which I received additional funding of £58 million in 2013-14. This year there is currently a shortfall of some £65 million when assessed against the independently recommended annual requirement of £133 million to maintain the road network in its current condition. Failure to address the shortfall means that maintenance priorities will focus on responsive patching activities and only the highest priority remedial sites would receive resurfacing treatment. In addition, the current limitations on funding in this area will undoubtedly have a detrimental impact on the construction industry in Northern Ireland.

Having identified significant Resource pressures this year and in the light of the significant pressures facing the Block I took action to reduce services to the value of £11.9 million.

I put forward resource bids of £48.4 million Resource and £130.3 million Capital in the June Monitoring Round to meet existing pressures within my Department. However, with only £5 million Resource being allocated for concessionary fares and £26.3 million for a range of Capital projects, considerable pressures still remain. Whilst I welcome these allocations the Capital allocation will not allow me to reinstate roads and street lighting maintenance activities to required levels or address the further running cost pressures which my Department faces.

In addition to the steps I have already taken to address existing pressures across my Department, I now have to find additional Resource baseline reductions of 4.4%, amounting to around £15 million for my Department.

To meet the 4.4% baseline reduction I have considered a number of measures and continue to assess the position.

As a first phase of measures I have had no option other than to stop issuing new work instructions to our contractors, who currently undertake around one quarter of our work, in the following areas:-

- footway and carriageway patching including potholes;
- grass cutting/environmental maintenance;
- gully emptying;
- road marking maintenance/renewal; and
- traffic sign maintenance/replacement.

In addition, it has been necessary to suspend the use of external contractors for the repair of street lights that fail, unless they pose an electrical hazard to the public. It is not the case that no street lighting repairs will be carried out; the Department will continue to prioritise all reported faults. Until further notice, our in-house contractor will endeavour to deal with as many street lighting defects as possible. However, they will not be able to provide the service the public would expect in normal circumstances. Priority will be given to electrical and structural safety defects, followed by large groups of lights out. Smaller groups or individual street lights that fail will be lower priority and, unfortunately, many tens of thousands of street lighting defects may not be repaired over the winter months.

However, I need to make it clear that Translink and Northern Ireland Water are also being impacted by the cuts.

While Translink is required to breakeven over a three year period, the Company is already expected to be running at a deficit of around £9 million this financial year and this may have to increase as a consequence of the Department's baseline reductions. In order that the Company remains a going concern it is vital that the Executive honours its commitment to the current concessionary fares scheme and fully funds the scheme both this year and in future years.

Northern Ireland Water will also be taking forward savings measures to mitigate the £4.2m shortfall in its agreed funding, as set out in the NI Authority for Utility Regulation's Price Control 2013 Final Determination, in addition to other emerging pressures of some £10m. This will put significant pressures on the delivery of water and wastewater services with an increased risk of sewer flooding and collapses and water bursts.

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the residents-only parking scheme for Sandy Row, Donegal Pass and Stranmillis Village. (AQO 6562/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Officials plan to publicly advertise the first Residents' Parking schemes, including the Lower Malone and Rugby Road/College Park Avenue areas of Belfast, in the autumn.

In relation to Donegal Pass, Sandy Row and Stranmillis, three separate local consultation exercises have been carried out with the involvement of local representatives. Despite a series of revisions being made to the proposal at each stage, the required level of local support from the local community has yet to be achieved. Officials have been working with local

residents and businesses, although these parties have fundamentally differing views on the acceptability of the proposal. I am therefore reluctant to proceed with a scheme that does not have the support of both parties.

I have asked to meet with the Stranmillis Business Association to discuss and hopefully address their concerns and await a response.

It remains my belief, once a scheme has been implemented and is seen to be working satisfactorily, that some residents' uncertainty and concerns may be overcome and real progress might then be possible. At that stage, officials will revisit the Donegall Pass, Sandy Row and Stranmillis Village areas.

Department for Social Development

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 34026/11-15, whether any of the cases overseen by the Investigation Strategy Group involved findings of fraud or other forms of criminality; and if so, how many cases have been referred to the PSNI.

(AQW 35261/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): Of the original Investigation Strategy Group listing, 5 cases involving staff culpability were referred to police for criminal investigation.

One case resulted in "No further Police Action".

In a second case the Housing Executive was advised by the Public Prosecution that it was not in the public interest to proceed with a prosecution.

The remaining three are still under investigation.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 34026/11-15, in how many of the cases which the Investigation Strategy Group has overseen have there been findings of culpability on the part of those complained against; and of these, how many have resulted in disciplinary action.

(AQW 35294/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In the cases overseen by the Investigation Strategy Group there has been:

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1. Findings of culpability | 21 |
| 2. How many resulted in disciplinary action | 21 |

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Social Development to detail his Department's definition of poverty, including children living in poverty; and how many families and children are living in poverty in West Tyrone.

(AQW 35313/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Child Poverty Act 2010 sets out four measures of poverty for the United Kingdom. The four measures are Relative Poverty, Absolute Poverty, Combined Low Income and Material Deprivation Poverty and Persistent Poverty.

My Department reports on three of these measures of poverty, Relative Poverty, Absolute Poverty and Combined Low Income and Material Deprivation Poverty for Northern Ireland using data collected in the Family Resources Survey (FRS). These three measures of poverty can be defined as follows:

Relative Poverty:

An individual is considered to be in relative poverty if they are living in a household with a net equivalised income below 60% of United Kingdom median income in the year in question.

Absolute Poverty:

An individual is considered to be in absolute poverty if they are living in a household with a net equivalised income below 60% of the (inflation adjusted) median income in 2010/11. This is a measure of whether those in the lowest income households are seeing their incomes rise in line with inflation.

Combined Low Income and Material Deprivation Poverty:

An individual is considered to be in poverty if they are living in a household with a net equivalised income below 70% of United Kingdom median income and has a material deprivation score of 25 or more reflected by enforced lack of goods and services.

The most up-to-date statistics available for West Tyrone, for the period 2009-12, are as follows:

- 21% of individuals were living in relative poverty before housing costs
- 27% of children were living in relative poverty before housing costs
- 20% of individuals were living in absolute poverty before housing costs
- 26% of children were living in absolute poverty before housing costs

The figures quoted above are based on a 3 year average for the period 2009-10 to 2011-12 due to small sample size in West Tyrone.

On the combined Low Income and Material Deprivation measure the size of the sample is too small to provide analysis for West Tyrone. Due to a methodological change to combined Low Income and Material Deprivation measure in 2010-11 a 3 year average cannot be used to compensate for the small sample in West Tyrone, as the data for each individual year is not directly comparable.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development how many properties in the Portrush area have been designated for the installation of double glazing by the Housing Executive in the next twelve months; and to detail the locations.

(AQW 35317/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that 26 properties at Glenmanus Park, Skerrymore Place and Windsor Place, Portrush are included in the Coleraine Phase two Window Replacement Scheme. This scheme is currently on site and once completed will mean that all Housing Executive properties in Portrush will be double glazed.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Social Development what cuts will be made to his budget as a result of the lack of agreement on Welfare Reform.

(AQW 35354/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As a result of the intransigence of some around the Executive table, Northern Ireland Departments will be hit with a Welfare Reform penalty of £87m this year, rising to £114m next year.

The scale of cuts to be applied to individual Departments will be for the Finance Minister to agree in conjunction with Executive colleagues. This will be dependent on the level of reduced requirements and/or pressures identified in the upcoming October monitoring round, in tandem with other Executive commitments.

As a result of June monitoring, my Department's budget was cut by some £13.5m (2.1%). Current indications are that a further 2.3% (£16m) will need to be taken

from budgets in October to meet the Welfare Reform penalties. This cut will be confirmed as part of the October Monitoring process. In total therefore I am facing a reduction of at least £29m in my budget

There is no doubt that the failure to implement Welfare Reform is impacting on the most vulnerable in society, who will bear the burden of any reduction in my Department's services that will result. I am still considering the options available to me and I will clearly want to do everything I can to avoid reductions in frontline services.

In the absence of agreement on Welfare Reform, these constraints are expected to not only continue, but to worsen as we move into 2015/16. The consequence will undoubtedly be further cuts to vital services and could mean potentially severe cuts to the Housing Executive direct grant provision, the potential for significant increases in Housing Executive Rents, longer waiting times for Housing maintenance repairs because the maintenance budget has had to be slashed, potential job losses across the Department, cuts in Neighbourhood Renewal funding and cuts to voluntary and community work. DSD provides a range of services to vulnerable groups across Northern Ireland and it will be some of the most vulnerable in our society who bear the brunt of these cuts.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the front line services that will be affected by the budget cuts as a result of the non-implementation of Welfare Reform.

(AQO 6511/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As the member will be aware I have made repeated representations to this Assembly raising my concerns on the financial consequences for all Northern Ireland Departments as a result of the non-implementation of Welfare Reform.

I would take this opportunity to once again point out to the Assembly that the financial consequences for the 2014 – 15 financial year in the order of some £87m will not just affect my Department but ALL NI Departments.

Given the focus of my Department's activities, it will sadly be the most vulnerable in our society, who will bear the burden of the reduction in my Department's services that will inevitably result.

While officials are currently assessing the impacts of the cuts, I can see no way to avoid significant reductions in direct grant provision available to NIHE, inevitably meaning a £ for £ reduction in maintenance expenditure, longer waiting times for repairs and a further build up of backlog maintenance. The only way to offset this would be an increase in rents above inflation.

I will have to consider the current levels of investment in neighbourhood renewal. I could not guarantee the current levels of investment in voluntary sector and community support programmes.

As a result of non-implementation, there is a risk to 1500 jobs that we may lose if work we carry out on behalf of DWP is repatriated because we will no longer have staff with the necessary experience and skills in the security system used in GB.

Colleagues need to understand that not implementing Welfare Reform will significantly add to the financial burden that the Executive will have to deal with not only this year but in future years.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department has made an assessment of the impact of the proposed Welfare Reform measures on a constituency basis and across all recipient groups.

(AQO 6512/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Protecting the vulnerable is a key priority and at the very core of reforming the welfare system. I have developed a package of measures which will not only help simplify the social security system but more importantly it will involve measures which protect the most vulnerable in our society.

Part of developing this package of measures and ensuring it protects the most vulnerable, involved making an assessment of the impact of the proposed Welfare Reform measures across all benefit recipient groups. There was no previous assessments made into the effect changes to the welfare system would have on all recipient groups in Northern Ireland and, given my objective to protect the vulnerable I commissioned detailed analysis by Departmental statisticians. Assessments were not carried out on a constituency basis but they were measured across all recipient groups in Northern Ireland.

The research included examining the Personal Independence Payment, Employment and Support Allowance, Universal Credit, Benefit Cap and changes to Housing Support.

This research then allowed me to develop a package of measures including a series of flexibilities and transitional protections to ameliorate the more negative aspects of the reform of the welfare system and ensure the vulnerable are protected. The research meant the flexibilities were designed to meet the needs of the people in Northern Ireland and these flexibilities include making payments to both parties in the household instead of a single payment, making payments twice a month instead of a monthly payment, and the direct payment of housing costs to landlords.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on any social housing plans in Mid Ulster.

(AQO 6513/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are nine social housing schemes totalling 131 units planned in the Social Housing Development Programme for 2014/15-2016/17 in the Mid Ulster area.

These are broken down as follows:-

- three schemes in Coalisland totalling 28 units with an estimated grant allocation of £1,246,199.
- one scheme in Cookstown totalling 58 units with an estimated grant of £2,493,435.
- one scheme in Ballinderry totalling 5 units with an estimated grant of £230,592
- one scheme in Stewartstown totalling 6 units with an estimated grant of £287,975.
- three schemes in Magherafelt 34 units with an estimated grant of £1,799,034.

The figures I have quoted are estimates of the total Housing Association Grant for each scheme, the remainder of the costs for each scheme will be met through the housing association's private finance.

The total Housing Association Grant figure of £6,057,235 for the 131 units equated to £46,238 grant per unit.

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Social Development whether he will now retract his statement and accusation regarding named contractors in relation to the delivery of Northern Ireland Housing Executive maintenance contracts.

(AQO 6514/11-15)

Mr McCausland: No I will not. As I said at the time and continue to say the information that I brought to this House last year was provided to me by the Housing Executive. If I had not made that statement I have no doubt I would have been pilloried for not alerting this Assembly at an early stage about the overpayments situation. I advised who the contractors were as I understood this was well known.

However, in relation to one of the companies, Dixons, I have no difficulty in saying that they have behaved absolutely properly and I very much regret that the information I was given by the Housing Executive was misleading regarding that firm. I have personally spoken to the Managing Director of the company about this matter and he is clear in relation to my position. This was a private discussion and I rightly agreed it would remain so.

I am delighted that the Housing Executive and the contractors have been able to come to a conclusion on this issue and now we can move forward.

Ms McGahan asked the Minister for Social Development, in light of his decision to ignore the recent NI Audit Office investigation and his efforts to rebrand this initiative, whether he will reject his departmental review into the transfer of public housing stock.

(AQO 6515/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I strongly refute the suggestion that I ignored the recommendations made by the NI Audit Office (NIAO) in relation to the Stock Transfer programme.

Having fully considered the recommendations contained within the NIAO report and the lessons learned from the two pilot stock transfer schemes at Rinmore and Bloomfield, I commissioned a review to determine whether the programme in its proposed format was the best way to effectively deliver the desired outcomes for tenants and tax payers.

The review has now concluded and I am currently considering the recommendations.

There is no intention to re-brand the Stock Transfer Programme but if observations are made in the course of pilot schemes and NIAO make recommendations, surely it would be remiss of my Department not to take account of these and revise the process accordingly.

The scheme to transfer NIHE stock at Rinmore was initiated following approaches by SDLP and Sinn Fein councillors to Minister Ritchie in 2009. It is also worth pointing out that the two pilot schemes (at Rinmore and more recently Bloomfield) have had the overwhelming support of tenants, following a thorough consultation process and tenants in Rinmore are now enjoying the much needed improvements which the tenants in Bloomfield can soon look forward to enjoying.

As public funds become more limited, stock transfer offers a positive way of levering in additional funding to the housing sector to ensure social housing is maintained to a good standard.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the work of the Housing Repossessions Taskforce in addressing the impact of negative equity.

(AQO 6516/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The work of the Housing Repossession Taskforce will be time bound and completed in two phases. The findings from the first phase were published in July, which are now informing the second phase of developing evidence-based recommendations for potential mitigating actions. I am pleased to advise that the Taskforce is making strong progress in the completion of this options phase. While a final report will be published by the end of this year, where possible, the Taskforce will endeavour to expedite the implementation of any recommendations.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister for Social Development how many pilot schemes his Department has undertaken since May 2011.

(AQO 6517/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department has introduced the following pilot schemes since May 2011:-

- Boiler Replacement Scheme
- Affordable Warmth Phases 1 and 2
- Pay as You Go Oil Pilot
- Empty Homes
- FirstBuy Northern Ireland Scheme
- Affordable Home Loans Fund
- Stock transfer Scheme – Rinmore
- Stock Transfer Scheme - Bloomfield
- Six Building Successful Communities pilots
- Design & Build Scheme
- Resurgam – Social Enterprise Pilot Project
- Tyrone Donegal Partnership – Virtual Incubation and
- Software Training Academy (VISTA)
- Development Trusts Northern Ireland, Community
- Asset Transfer
- Two signature projects through the OFMdfM
Delivering Social Change Programme namely –
 - Nuture Units
 - Social Enterprise Incubation Units

There have also been six pilot schemes in the Social Security Agency undertaken since 2011. These are as follows:- Pilot Innovation Fund for Improving the Uptake of Benefits.

- Pilot to examine medical evidence used in one social security benefit to inform decisions in another social security benefit.
- Financial Support Service Trial
- Remote Appointments Pilot, which is currently promoting telephony in Omagh/Newry
- E-Referral System pilot which ran in 2012 for the South Region (Banbridge and Dungannon)
- E-Referral System pilot which ran in 2012 for the Belfast Region (Andersontown)

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive accessing private finance.

(AQO 6518/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department has previously considered the options available to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) for borrowing funds. Under Article 16(1) of the Housing (NI) Order 1981 the Housing Executive may borrow money with the consent of my Department and the approval of the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). In practice this borrowing facility has, in the past, been restricted to the National Loans Fund because the interest rates were the lowest available.

Section 5.7 of Managing Public Money Northern Ireland (MPMNI) states that public sector organisations may borrow from private sector sources only if they can achieve better value for money for the public sector as a whole by doing so.

In public expenditure terms, both the capital and interest elements of any borrowing which the NIHE would undertake would score in terms of the Departmental Expenditure Limit (DEL). These are both HM Treasury imposed controls on the Northern Ireland Block of expenditure. In practical terms this means that interest and principal repayments associated with any Housing Executive borrowing would have to be funded from the overall Northern Ireland Block with a consequential cut to other services which would have to be reduced in order to free up this expenditure.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to Welfare Reform, why he has not adopted the same position as the DUP in Westminster.

(AQO 6519/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Unlike Sinn Fein, my DUP colleagues fought in the House of Commons to ensure that Welfare Reform did not negatively impact the people of Northern Ireland.

Since the Bill was passed in Westminster, I have worked hard with the support of my DUP colleagues to secure flexibilities for Northern Ireland to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Wells asked the Assembly Commission why letters to MLAs regarding their pension entitlements are sent recorded delivery.
(AQW 35242/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission takes a number of steps to ensure that the information that it holds is handled, stored and transmitted appropriately. These include an Information Assurance Policy and a Data Protection Policy.

Like most other public sector organisations, the Commission's Information Assurance Policy utilises a "protective marking" system to ensure that appropriate protective measures are applied to information being held or transmitted. Under this policy a 'Restricted' marking is warranted if compromise of the information is likely to cause substantial distress to individuals. As the pension letters highlighted in your question contained both personal and financial information about Members, they fell into this 'Restricted' category. A decision was taken to post these letters rather than leave them in Members' pigeon holes during recess. According to the Policy, items marked as "Restricted" should only be sent by recorded delivery or by courier.

The Commission aims to use the most cost effective way to transmit data in keeping with the Information Assurance Policy and will use the appropriate method of transmission in each case.

Mr Agnew asked the Assembly Commission whether a solar panel will be installed as part of the roof maintenance scheme for Parliament Buildings; and if so, to provide details of the plans.

(AQW 35276/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The primary objective of the roof project is to provide a long lasting solution to ongoing problems of water ingress thereby protecting the heritage of the listed building.

However, the Assembly Commission has taken the opportunity to refurbish and/ or replace all of the existing roof-mounted mechanical and electrical services and, where appropriate, to incorporate renewable technologies.

In order to comply with planning requirements and strict loading capacities for the existing roof, thin film photovoltaic (PV) panels were chosen for the high level roofs. Electricity generated by these panels will supplement the building's energy supply.

A small number of solar thermal tubes will also be installed on the roof at the rear of the building and these will provide around 50% of the domestic hot water supply for the building.

In addition, a rainwater harvesting system will be installed which will provide 'grey' water to be used to flush some of the toilets in the building.

It is anticipated that the combined measures included in the roof project will reduce the building's energy consumption by a minimum of 25%.

If you require any further information on the roof project, please feel free to contact the Project Manager, David Lynn, on ext. 21346.

Mr Flanagan asked the Assembly Commission to detail the number of staff employed directly by the Commission who currently earn below the living wage.

(AQW 35422/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The “living wage”, as calculated by the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP), is currently £7.65 per hour for the United Kingdom. The Commission is committed to ensuring it meets its social responsibility to employees. This includes a range of fair and equitable reward and recognition policies. In particular, the Commission recognises the importance of sustainable wages for its entire staff. In this regard, all members of staff employed directly by the Commission are paid remuneration that exceeds the living wage.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 19 September 2014

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of the advertising of political tours of the Maze Prison by the republican prisoners' group, Coiste, (i) how many such tours have taken place; (ii) why these tours are permitted; and (iii) given that Coiste imposes a charge, what financial arrangement exists.
(AQW 22188/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): External organisations do not deliver visits at the Maze/Long Kesh site.

Mr McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the (i) number; and (ii) cost of (a) all flights; and (b) business class flights paid for by their Department in each year since 2008.
(AQW 24767/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The table below details the number and cost of (a) all flights and (b) business class flights paid for by the Department for the financial years 2008-09 to 2013-14 inclusive. Please note for the financial years 2008-09 to 2010-11 inclusive information on numbers of flights is not held in a readily accessible format and information on type of flight was not held separately for financial years 2008-09 and 2009-10.

Name	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Total number of flights (1)	Not available	Not available	Not available	759	928	701
Total cost of all flights	£304,176	£195,477	£170,549	£186,946	£407,026	£424,125
Number of business class flights ⁽¹⁾	Not available	Not available	88	69	188	203
Cost of business class flights ⁽²⁾	Not available	Not available	£58,005	£70,205	£287,455	£247,137

- (1) The number of flights in the table above denotes single flights.
(2) The costs of business flights includes some economy flights which were booked as part of a package and it has not been possible to disaggregate the costs

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) whether a Special Adviser to the First Minister holds a post as a director of QUBRIC Limited; (ii) whether this was declared as an interest; and (iii) if not, why it was not declared.
(AQW 24885/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:

- (i) Yes
(ii) No
(iii) No conflict arises.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the progress of the delivery of Together Building A United Community.
(AQO 4771/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Work is progressing across all seven headline actions that were announced alongside the publication of Together: Building a United Community.

The Department of Education received 16 expressions of interest in relation to the establishment of 10 Shared Campuses and announced the first three successful projects on 2 July.

In respect of the United Youth Programme, a very successful Design Day was held on 23 January to mark the culmination of an extensive period of stakeholder engagement and the event attracted an attendance of more than 250 people. A design team has now been established to take forward development of the next stage of the Programme and all of the feedback received from the Design Day will be used to build the final design of the programme.

With regard to summer schools, a year round intervention pilot to be run in the Belfast City Council area, which included summer schools and camps, began in summer 2014, well ahead of the strategy's 2015 target.

Detailed project plans complete with anticipated budgets have also been developed in respect of the urban villages, shared neighbourhoods, interface removal and cross-community sports programme headline actions.

Work is also progressing with the establishment of the Equality and Good Relations Commission and the associated underpinning legislative changes required.

The Review of Funding and Practice is a central commitment given within the strategy and was carried out in two stages. Phase one was completed at the end of March with phase two coming to an end on 25 June. Work is continuing to finalise a report containing recommendations on a future funding delivery model that will support the strategic direction of Together: Building a United Community.

Work is continuing with departments to take forward work in relation to the other actions and commitments arising from the strategy and meetings with all departments have taken place.

A strategy of this depth and scale requires collective commitment and leadership across all departments and sections of our society. The Ministerial Panel and thematic subgroups will be central to achieving this. Work on establishing the range of subgroups is at an advanced stage.

The reporting mechanisms necessary to monitor progress on implementation of a strategy of this importance have been developed. The progress updates will inform a more substantive progress report on all aspects of the strategy's delivery for each Ministerial Panel meeting.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what representations have been made on behalf of the Executive in respect of the Tobacco Products Directive (TPD2), given the potentially negative impact on the local tobacco manufacturing industry.

(AQW 28092/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Executive has not made representations in respect of the Revised Tobacco Products Directive. The UK negotiating position on this directive takes into account the local health aspects and potential economic impact on the local tobacco manufacturing industry obviating the need to make separate Executive representation.

Mr Irwin asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Signature Programmes under Delivering Social Change.

(AQO 5007/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Work on the implementation of the six Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes, which we announced on 10 October 2012, continues to progress well.

The signature programme to improve literacy and numeracy levels in both primary and post-primary schools will see the equivalent of 233.3 recently graduated teachers, who are not currently in work, providing tuition to children to achieve higher grades. As at 30 June 225.4 full time equivalent teachers have been appointed. Of these, 143.5 are in post primary schools and 81.9 in primary schools.

Recruitment of outstanding teachers is on-going. The Programme will run over two academic years and three financial years to August 2015.

In relation to the Nurture Unit Signature Programme, all of the 20 additional Units are now fully operational, and latest figures indicate that a total of 135 children (86 males and 49 females) are currently attending the units. It is anticipated that 480 children and their families will benefit from the units.

Regarding the Family Support Hubs, 8 of the 10 new Hubs were fully established by end June 2014, with the remaining two due to be established by end of the summer 2014.

The Support for Parents Signature Programme has developed a suite of programmes to provide guidance, training and information for up to 1,200 families.

The Delivery Agents have been appointed and contracts awarded in respect of the eleven Social Enterprise Hubs.

Finally, work commenced in November 2013 to upscale and roll out a pilot intervention to support young people Not in Education, Employment or Training and their families. This will reach up to 720 disadvantaged families. The programme delivery has three cycles each of 26 weeks supporting 240 families in each cycle. The first of these finished on 2 May and

a total of 904 family members will have received help and support on the programme. The second cycle commenced on 31 March 2014, and the third is due to commence in September 2014.

The good progress being made in the development and implementation of these programmes is a positive contribution to the Executive's policy, under the Delivering Social Change framework, to tackle poverty and deprivation; and towards equipping everyone with the skills and support to strengthen our economic growth. We are particularly heartened that some departments have provided enhanced funding for the programmes they are leading on.

Mr Ross asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) all third sector organisations funded by his Department who provide services to the public; and (ii) the value of each contract.

(AQW 29539/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Funding from our Department for third sector organisations which provide services to the public is on the basis of grants rather than contracts. The table below lists the third sector organisations funded directly by our Department which provide services to the public. Most of our funding of organisations is through our ALBs.

Third sector organisations funded by OFMDFM which provide services to the public

- | | |
|---|--|
| ■ Active Respectful Communities | ■ Intercomm |
| ■ Afro-Community Support Organisation NI | ■ John Paul II Youth Group |
| ■ An Munia Tober | ■ Ligoniel |
| ■ Ardoyne Youth Providers | ■ Mountvernon Community Development Forum |
| ■ Armagh Traveller Support Group | ■ NICEM (Tier 2) |
| ■ ArtsEkta Ltd - Tier 2 | ■ NICEM North West (Tier 2) |
| ■ Ashton Community Trust | ■ NICRAS (Tier 1) |
| ■ Aspire Primary School | ■ NICRAS (Tier 2) |
| ■ Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum | ■ North Belfast Active Learning |
| ■ Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum Tier One | ■ North Down YMCA |
| ■ Ballymoney Community Resource Centre | ■ North West Migrants Forum |
| ■ Ballysillan Community Forum | ■ Omagh Ethnic Communities |
| ■ Barnardo's | ■ Omagh Ethnic Communities Support Group |
| ■ Belfast Islamic Centre | ■ Playboard |
| ■ Bryson Intercultural | ■ Rathcoole Community Churches Group |
| ■ Chinese Welfare Association | ■ Sandy Row Residents Association |
| ■ Cinemagic | ■ Shankill Womens Centre |
| ■ Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum | ■ Somme Association |
| ■ Community Relations in Schools | ■ South Armagh Community Interface Partnership |
| ■ Cookstown & Western Shores Area Network | ■ South Belfast Round Table (Tier 1) |
| ■ Co-operation Ireland | ■ South Belfast Round Table (Tier 2) |
| ■ Craigavon Intercultural Programme | ■ South Tyrone Empowerment Programme |
| ■ Craigavon Travellers Support Committee | ■ Sport Changes Life |
| ■ CURBS | ■ Springboard |
| ■ Dialogue for Diversity | ■ St James Forum |
| ■ EMBRACE | ■ Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group |
| ■ Faces and Spaces | ■ The Vine Centre |
| ■ Foyle Contested Spaces | ■ The Welcome Project |
| ■ GEMS NI | ■ Upper Ardoyne Community Partnership |
| ■ Greater Whitewell Community Surgery | ■ Wah Hep Chinese Community Association |
| ■ Homeplus Ltd | ■ Waterside Partnership |

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their definition of a shared education campus; and what is the target date for the delivery of the Together: Building a United Community objective of ten shared education campuses.

(AQW 30620/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department of Education has the lead on delivering the Programme for Government commitments in relation to advancing shared education. We understand that you tabled a similar question to the Minister of Education and he provided a substantive response. AQW 31237/11-15 refers.

Mr Dallat asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) for an update on the allocation of the Social Investment Fund (SIF); (ii) for a timetable outlining the future allocation of monies under SIF; (iii) whether a decision has been made to deny funding to projects which are part of technical assistance groups; and if so, (iv) the reasons for such a decision.

(AQW 31009/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The fund has been allocated on a zonal basis across nine Social Investment Zones as follows:-

- Belfast North £9million
- Belfast South £8million
- Belfast East £8million
- Belfast West £12million
- Londonderry/Derry £9.5million
- Northern £9million
- Western £8million
- Southern £8.5million
- South Eastern £8million

Letters of offer have been issued totalling £10,012,049 Capital and £22,613,448 Revenue. It is anticipated that the rest of the fund will be committed by the end of this financial year.

Details of the projects within the funding allocations is available at: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/delivering-social-change/social-investment-fund/sif-projects.htm>

Funding has been allocated on the basis of priorities determined by local steering groups. In line with most such programmes, the value of applications greatly exceeds the resources available. In these circumstances, funding is allocated according to the prioritisation determined by the local Steering Group. No decision has been made to deny funding, although not all applications will be affordable at this time.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the cost of (i) flights; (ii) other transport; and (iii) all other costs, including accommodation for the contracted photographer, on the trips to (a) Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Mumbai and Delhi in April 2012; (b) Shanghai and Hong Kong in November 2012; (c) Brazil and the USA in March 2013; (d) Beijing in May 2013; and (e) Boston and Chicago in October 2013.

(AQW 31290/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Executive is committed to growing the economy and generating foreign direct investment. On every international visit we meet with existing investors and those considering Northern Ireland as a base to grow their businesses.

In order to attract foreign direct investment it is essential that we promote Northern Ireland as an attractive investment opportunity. This includes highlighting and promoting the significant investment announcements that are made during and following each international visit. Engaging the services of a Northern Ireland based photographer has proven to be the most effective method of ensuring we meet this objective.

The total costs of flights for the five visits were £30,478.49; further transport costs of £92.00, and all other costs associated with the visits amounted to £20,734.24.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for a breakdown of the annual costs of the Executive's office in Brussels.

(AQW 32412/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The table below lists the breakdown of the cost for the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels for the last complete financial year (2013-2014).

Annual cost of the Executive Office in Brussels	2013-14 £'000
Running costs	482
Salary costs	372.5
Depreciation/Impairment charges on Capital	111

Mr McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the number of staff in their Department, broken down by grade, travelling daily to their place of work from each of the eleven new council areas to the Greater Belfast area.

(AQW 32458/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The information requested is provided in the table below.

New Council Areas	Analogous Grade									Total
	G5+	G6	G7	DP	SO	EOI	EOII	AO	AA	
Antrim and Newtownabbey	2	0	3	6	4	3	1	1	0	20
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	0	0	2	1	4	0	2	0	0	9
Belfast	8	1	12	24	28	5	13	9	3	103
Causeway Coast and Glens	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	0	7
Derry and Strabane	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fermanagh and Omagh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lisburn and Castlereagh	0	0	2	5	7	4	6	8	3	35
Mid and East Antrim	0	0	4	7	0	2	1	2	0	16
Mid Ulster	0	0	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	6
Newry, Mourne and Down	0	1	5	2	3	3	5	5	1	25
North Down and Ards	4	1	11	20	15	6	17	19	4	97
Total *	19	3	41	77	72	25	49	51	11	348

Notes:

* Total includes 30 (8.6%) staff whose home postcode was either missing or invalid and could not be allocated to a new council area.

Data is taken at 01 January 2014 from HRConnect database.

Number of staff does not include those seconded outside of the NICS or staff on a career break

As there is no definition for Greater Belfast, the above analysis calculates travel for NICS staff from the new council areas to The Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area (BMUA). The BMUA is defined in the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements (February 2005) and is available from NISRA at: www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/publications/urban_rural/ur_gaz.pdf

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how they ensure the political neutrality of the Community Relations Council.

(AQW 32713/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Community Relations Council (CRC) is an independent Arms Length Body of OFMDFM and as such is classified as a Non-Departmental Public Body.

In accordance with the guidance contained in the Department of Finance and Personnel's (DFP) publication Public Bodies: a Guide for NI Departments, the CRC's Board has corporate responsibility for ensuring that the organisation fulfils the aims and objectives and governance requirements as set out by OFMDFM.

These aims and objectives and governance requirements are detailed in the CRC's Management Statement and Financial Memorandum and sets out the framework within which the CRC operates. As such, it sets out an appropriate basis for the relationship between OFMDFM and CRC.

The Management Statement and Financial Memorandum is approved by DFP and agreed between OFMDFM and CRC's Chief Executive. Copies are available via the CRC's website at

<http://www.community-relations.org.uk/community-relations-council-management-statement/nicrc-management-statement/>

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail their vision of the relationship with the new Equality and Good Relations Commission.

(AQW 32717/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Our vision of the relationship with the new Equality and Good Relations Commission is detailed in the Together: Building a United Community strategy published in May 2013.

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, following the publication of the recent Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report where key point 6 is entitled 'Failure lies in wait for young working class Protestant males', what steps are being implemented to address this issue.

(AQW 32952/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Executive's Delivering Social Change framework has developed and funded a range of key actions across Government Departments on priority social policy areas to tackle poverty and social exclusion. Early years and early intervention are critical and educational underachievement has been identified as one of the key contributors to bad life outcomes. Signature Programmes developed to address this include:

- 20 new nurture units
- Additional family support through a parenting project
- 10 new family support hubs, providing holistic early intervention and support to families in need
- 720 families to benefit from the Community Family Support Programme, focusing on supporting parents and helping young people who are not in education, employment or training
- Over 200 new teachers employed in over 260 schools to tackle numeracy and literacy underachievement.

The Department of Education also has a number of policies and initiatives to tackle educational underachievement and is working to implement these policies and provide funding for a range of additional interventions, with a focus on improving standards and tackling educational underachievement across all sectors.

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is working in partnership with key stakeholders, particularly the Department of Education, to address underachievement through an extensive range of initiatives. It funds and delivers a range of programmes that target young people at school but also young adults who continue to require support in securing access to the labour market.

DEL has also taken on lead responsibility for co-ordinating the Together: Building a United Community strategy's United Youth Programme, which will offer 10,000 young people not in employment, education or training the opportunity for employment experience and structured volunteer opportunities. The Programme is committed to increasing the employability of socially disadvantaged young people alongside a dedicated programme designed to foster good relations.

We launched the first United Youth pilot scheme on 6 February 2014. This 'HeadStart' scheme is operated by Springboard Opportunities and involves 50 young people. The pilot will help inform the design and structure of the new United Youth Programme to ensure that it will be effective in targeting and improving life opportunities for our young people with the greatest need.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they will introduce a Troubles related serious injury pension.

(AQW 33358/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A Troubles related serious injury pension is one of a number of recommendations that has been presented to Ministers by the Commissioner for Victims and Survivors in her advice paper on "Dealing with the Past".

We have considered the advice and further discussions on the proposals are ongoing.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when each previous Commissioner of Victims and Survivors was consulted with regard to the proposed construction of a peace building and reconciliation centre at the Maze/Long Kesh site; and to outline their response.

(AQW 33507/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Discussions on the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre at the Maze Long Kesh site were held with previous Commissioners for Victims and Survivors (CVSNI) on 4 occasions between 25 June 2009 and 13 December 2010.

The Previous Commissioners could not agree an approach to engagement with the Maze/Long Kesh Programme Delivery Unit, but enabled CVS staff to attend future stakeholder discussions from September 2011 through to June 2013.

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what communication they have had with the Westminster Government on the necessity of additional resources to be made available for victims and survivors across the United Kingdom; and what consideration has been given to the appropriate delivery vehicle for this service support.

(AQW 34242/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Junior Ministers met with the Secretary of State on Thursday, 4 September 2014, to discuss this issue.

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what action is being taken to secure the future of the Buddy Up programme between Holycross Nursery, Boys Primary and Girls Primary Schools, Edenderry Nursery School, Glenwood Nursery School, Wheatfield Primary School and Community Relations in Schools; and how can they involve the participations in the future roll-out of the Buddy Scheme as part of the Together: Building a United Community Strategy.

(AQW 34694/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department of Education is taking forward the commitment set out in Together: Building a United Community to roll out a buddy scheme in all publicly funded nursery and primary schools.

Department of Education officials met with Community Relations in Schools (CRIS) representatives in late 2013 to discuss the CRIS programme. They have also engaged with Education and Library Boards colleagues to discuss how a buddying scheme might be delivered. Officials are developing a business case and no model to deliver the programme has been agreed.

CRIS is a partner, along with a number of primary and nursery schools in North Belfast, in the 'Active Respectful Communities: Ardoyne and Shankill Together' (ARC) initiative, which received funding from OFMDFM and Atlantic Philanthropies under the Contested Space/Interface Programme from 2011-2014.

The Contested Space/Interface Programme was designed to test out a variety of approaches to support communities to work together in contested space/ interface areas, and to use the learning from these pilots to inform future developments in this area of work.

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the omission from the Historical Abuse Inquiry of both clerical abuse victims and women aged 18 and over in Magdalene Laundries and equivalent institutions, what action they have taken in response to the recommendations in July 2013 of the UN Committee for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.

(AQW 34871/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In light of the publication of the McAleese report into Magdalene Laundries in the Republic of Ireland last year and the representations made to us, we appointed a senior civil servant to prepare a scoping paper on the Magdalene Laundry type institutions that operated locally to inform us of the potential actions we might be able to take. We have received the report and are currently giving serious consideration to the options that have been laid out before deciding the way forward.

Under the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse (HIA), any woman who entered a Laundry before she was 18 could have contributed to the Inquiry, including recounting their childhood experiences to the Inquiry's Acknowledgement Forum and having those experiences acknowledged.

The HIA Inquiry was initiated in the 2009 Assembly debate about historical institutional abuse of children. The definition of an institution for the purposes of the Inquiry formed an important aspect of consultation with victims and other key stakeholders.

Setting the parameters in this way does not in any way undermine the trauma that has undoubtedly been inflicted on many other individuals as a result of abuse in domestic and other settings. The categories covered by the HIA Inquiry were selected because of the very particular vulnerable nature of this type of residential care. The issue of clerical abuse is therefore no less important or emotive than institutional abuse and we are mindful of the equally destructive impact it has had on many individuals.

Anyone whose experiences fall outside the scope of the Inquiry is encouraged to report this to the PSNI and Social Services for investigation. Where appropriate, the alleged perpetrators can then be brought before the courts. This is the primary means by which victims and survivors can seek justice for what happened to them. The Inquiry is intended to investigate systemic failings regarding the provision of care for children living in institutions, as defined in its terms of reference. It is not intended to replace the PSNI or the courts in investigating criminal activity.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they will announce the allocation of the Good Relations Funding, given the need for urgency to adequately resource vital scheduled summer interventions.

(AQW 34933/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: There has been significant demand for 2014/15 Central Good Relations Funding. Funding will be released in phases and to date some £1m of funding has been approved and allocated to priority projects.

Our commitment to the delivery of Together: Building a United Community is clearly demonstrated through the decision to increase the allocation to the Central Good Relations Fund by £300,000 from the June monitoring round. Successful applicants in this tranche will be contacted as soon as possible.

It should be noted that the Central Good Relations fund is a small central scheme designed to distribute funding in year. We primarily fund good relations work through the Community Relations Council and all District Councils. The fund does not and will not replace mainstream core or project funding.

Belfast City Council and the Education and Library Boards undertook 125 scheduled summer interventions throughout July and August which were funded by OFMDFM.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the Victims and Survivors Service has the use of an electronic Management Information System; and, if not, to detail the reasons for this.

(AQW 35426/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Victims and Survivors Service has the use of electronic management information systems.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether victims of anti-social behaviour are eligible for assistance from the Victims and Survivors Service; and if so, how such sits with the expectation that those eligible for help will have suffered in a 'Troubles-related' incident.

(AQW 35428/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Any individual may apply for assistance to the Victims and Survivors Service provided they meet the definition of a "Victim/Survivor" set out in the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006

The Victims and Survivors Service engages with anyone who identifies with this definition, and seeks to provide support to them, whether directly under the Individual Needs Programme or by referring or signposting the individual to the regional network of organisations and service providers funded under the Victims Support Programme.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 20037/11-15, whether any of the procurement credit cards are held and used by Special Advisers; and if so, how much of the reported expenditure they incurred.

(AQW 35543/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: No

Mrs Cameron asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, following their Department's attendance at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones, what lessons can be applied to devising a similar strategy to combat local domestic and sexual violence.

(AQO 6538/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Junior Ministers attended the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which took place in London between 10 and 13 of June.

The aim of the summit was to create a sense of irreversible movement towards ending the use of rape and sexual violence in conflict. At the summit we met with a delegation of women from community organisations here and heard about some of the sexual violence experienced by women here.

Our current Gender Equality Strategy strives to eliminate gender based violence in our society and to ensure the equal participation of women in conflict resolution. We are looking at how good practice shared at the conference can be applied in the development of the new OFMDFM Gender Equality Strategy.

The Department of Justice and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety are currently at an advanced stage of developing a new joint Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy and Junior Ministers are members of the Inter Ministerial group on this issue.

Junior Ministers also met with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women earlier in the year and facilitated her visit to Belfast. The Department of Justice and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety are lead departments in tackling domestic and sexual violence, though responsibility to address the issues straddles a number of government departments.

Sexual violence cannot be tolerated in any society and we will ensure that the Gender Equality Strategy fully addresses issues of sexual violence against women and girls.

Mr Maskey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Delivering Social Change Signature Project to provide greater support and advocacy for people with disabilities, their families and carers.

(AQO 6539/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Our Department is working hard to deliver on our commitment in the Executive's Disability Strategy to lead on Disability Awareness and Advocacy and to deliver on the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Through the Delivering Social Change Framework we are continuing to work with other departments and key stakeholders to identify and create awareness of the range of advocacy services available to ensure that people with disabilities are given the appropriate help and support to exercise the maximum choice, control and freedom in their daily lives.

We will form a Disability Awareness and Advocacy Focus Group which will bring together government officials, key stakeholders from the statutory, voluntary and community sectors and individuals with disabilities to discuss how we can work together to provide a greater awareness of advocacy support for people with disabilities, their families and carers.

We intend to sponsor a major international conference on the rights of deaf people to equality in mental health care and have also sponsored a Symposium on capacity building, advocacy and the rights of people with disabilities to make decisions in all aspects of their lives.

Junior Ministers hosted a major conference for service providers and representatives from the disability sector to discuss how current arrangements meet the needs of people with disabilities.

We are also working to roll out a school resource pack which has been developed to teach children and young people about the rights of people with disabilities.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why she has given a directive that all correspondence sent to her Permanent Secretary by MLAs must be directed to her private office for a response.

(AQW 35256/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): I have not issued a directive about correspondence from elected representatives. I consider that substantial correspondence from elected representatives deserves a response from me as Minister. I wish to be aware of the concerns raised by elected representatives.

On occasion, for instance if the correspondence relates to a routine constituency matter, I will consider if it is more appropriate to be dealt with directly by officials.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the number of staff employed in her Department broken down by grade; and (ii) the total salary for each grade, for each financial year since 1 April 2010.

(AQW 35345/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The information requested is provided below.

Analogous Grade	31-Mar-2011	31-Mar-2012	31-Mar-2013	31-Mar-2014
Industrial				
Headcount	435	423	419	426
Total FTE	424.16	412.30	408.27	414.51
Total Salary	£7,032,980.67	£7,020,439.29	£6,740,697.65	£7,002,867.08
Administrative Assistant				
Headcount	242	229	225	205
Total FTE*	227.89	214.84	211.88	191.30
Total Salary	£3,695,919.50	£3,559,636.28	£3,579,045.80	£3,290,613.36
Administrative Officer				
Headcount	408	418	432	417
Total FTE	373.74	382.21	392.25	376.91
Total Salary	£7,370,338.66	£7,726,774.22	£8,106,043.49	£7,991,401.56
Executive Officer 2				
Headcount	415	445	434	433
Total FTE	396.61	423.69	411.34	405.99
Total Salary	£8,532,093.18	£9,330,390.08	£9,701,675.30	£9,842,967.00
Executive Officer 1				
Headcount	481	464	488	488
Total FTE	462.94	439.56	461.12	459.07
Total Salary	£11,567,941.87	£11,130,880.46	£12,183,368.84	£12,427,493.33
Staff Officer				
Headcount	494	505	529	547
Total FTE	471.75	481.86	502.16	521.01
Total Salary	£14,065,124.01	£14,533,156.81	£15,439,222.11	£16,368,656.45
Deputy Principal				
Headcount	249	262	264	277
Total FTE	238.95	251.53	253.37	265.31
Total Salary	£8,924,704.62	£9,476,466.28	£9,682,571.47	£10,220,902.85
Grade 7				
Headcount	235	229	249	259
Total FTE	221.32	215.40	234.62	244.34
Total Salary	£10,476,898.80	£10,438,298.19	£11,119,410.69	£12,037,482.39
Grade 6				
Headcount	15	17	18	16
Total FTE	15.00	16.50	17.50	16.00
Total Salary	£878,255.00	£975,985.50	£1,047,122.50	£952,580.00

Analogous Grade	31-Mar-2011	31-Mar-2012	31-Mar-2013	31-Mar-2014
Senior Civil Servant				
Headcount	23	21	21	24
Total FTE	22.80	20.80	20.80	23.80
Total Salary	£1,620,579.00	1,448,629.00	£1,497,784.40	£1,706,450.80
Total Headcount	2997	3013	3079	3092
Total FTE	2855.16	2858.68	2913.30	2918.24
Total Salary	£74,164,835.31	£75,640,656.11	£79,096,942.25	£81,841,414.82

*Full-time Equivalent

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her Department's definition of a free flowing river.
(AQW 35383/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A free flowing watercourse is one that is effective for drainage purposes. The Drainage (NI) Order 1973 sets out in Schedule 2 the works which may be undertaken by my Department to achieve this. The legislation also places a duty on the occupiers of land to maintain undesignated watercourses, in Schedule 5. It also enables the enforcement of such matters which would render the watercourse less effective for drainage purposes, in Schedule 6.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when the Rural Development Programme will be open for funding applications for new farm diversification projects.
(AQW 35385/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: There will be no further calls for funding under the current Rural Development Programme 2007-13 as all funds are fully committed and the Department is moving towards closure.

Our proposals for the new Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 include a Rural Business Support Scheme, which will make funding available for applications from rural businesses including farm diversification, micro and small business development and small tourism projects.

My Department is currently working to finalise the new Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 with the aim of submitting it formally to the European Commission for consideration in October 2014. The Rural Business Support scheme will be delivered on the ground by new Local Action Groups and it is hoped that animation for applications can start in April/May 2015. The date for the opening of any calls will depend on the programme being signed off by the European Commission and on getting the necessary business case approval.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the recent works carried out by Rivers Agency to address flooding in Fintona, Trillick and Beragh.
(AQW 35387/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Following the flooding incident of 22 May in Fintona Rivers Agency removed a significant amount of material from the watercourse which had been transported by the high water flows. A CCTV survey of the culverted watercourse network in the areas at risk from flooding was also carried out. Information generated from this survey is currently being reviewed and will be shared with NI Water and Transport NI, who also maintain drainage systems in this area. Rivers Agency is currently inspecting designated open watercourses in the Trillick and Fintona areas. Maintenance works identified will be prioritised and considered for inclusion in the 2015/16 maintenance programme. Rivers Agency has also installed a sandbag store in the Ecclesville Equestrian Centre so that sandbags can be deployed quickly to protect property in the event of further flooding. The Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG), which is jointly chaired by Rivers Agency and Local Government, has met with residents in Fintona to help them understand the flood risk they face and to enable discussions to take place on how to become better prepared for flooding during emergency situations. Works on the Beragh Flood Alleviation Scheme commenced in April 2014 and are progressing in accordance with the construction programme, with completion scheduled for April 2015. All these efforts will hopefully reduce the likelihood and impact of flooding in the future to these communities.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the sluice gates at Portna.
(AQW 35447/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Rivers Agency successfully completed major refurbishment works to the Portna Sluice Gates in July 2013. This will ensure the operational integrity of the structure going forward, which will be to the benefit of all users of the Lower Bann.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what measures are taken to ensure that meat or meat products entering Northern Ireland do not contain transglutaminase.
(AQW 35520/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: DARD has no statutory role in relation to transglutaminase.

I understand that transglutaminase can be used in food as long as it complies with the relevant legislation such as General Food Law and the enzyme legislation EC Regulation No. 1332/2008. Therefore no measures have been taken by DARD to ensure that meat or meat products entering the north of Ireland do not contain transglutaminase.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department will work with the new National Food Crime Unit.

(AQW 35536/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I welcome Professor Elliott's final report on the Review into the Integrity and Assurance of Food Supply Networks and its recognition that we have one of the safest food supply systems in the world. While the Elliott report and its recommendations are primarily for FSA and Defra to address, it will inform important discussions with the relevant Government departments, agencies and FSA on tackling Food Crime.

Lead policy responsibility for food safety in the north of Ireland rests with the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety and the FSA. My Department will continue to play its specific role in implementing a programme of inspection, sampling, enforcement, licensing and guidance in relation to meat, milk and primary production hygiene on behalf of the FSA. The work of the VS Enforcement Branch (VSEB) in supporting the FSA during the multi-agency response to the investigation of an illegal slaughterhouse in South Armagh earlier this year, is one example of the work of my department. I welcome the fact that Professor Elliott has cited VSEB as an "Example of a Specialised Crime Unit" which is already involved in multi-agency working. We will be considering the report carefully and work with Defra and FSA as they seek to implement the reports recommendations.

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the current ban on specific breeds of dangerous dogs.

(AQW 35546/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The current legislation regarding the control of dogs here is the Dogs Order 1983 as amended, which provides for the licensing of dogs and other related enforcement matters.

The term 'dangerous dog' is not defined in the dog control legislation, however the Dangerous Dogs Order 1991 amended the Dogs Order 1983 to designate four types of dog that it is an offence to breed from, sell or exchange and (except in exceptional circumstances) to possess. It empowered Courts to order the destruction of these dogs. The four designated types are any dog of the type known as the:

- (1) pit bull terrier;
- (2) Japanese tosa;
- (3) Dogo Argentino; and
- (4) Fila Brasileiro.

Furthermore any dog of any type bred for fighting or to have the characteristics of a type bred for fighting is also banned.

The 1983 Order also allows for various conditions to be imposed on, or seizure of, a dog of any kind that presents a serious danger to the public.

The Dangerous Dogs Compensation and Exemption Schemes Order 1991 introduced an Exemption Scheme which allowed the owners of dogs of a banned type born before the ban came into force, and for which a destruction order had been issued, to apply to their Council for an exemption from destruction, which is granted if they meet certain conditions.

Following a comprehensive review of the dog control legislation here, that was commissioned in 2007 by my predecessor, Michelle Gildernew, the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 has updated the 1983 Order, which provides for the licensing of dogs by Councils and includes provisions on dog attacks, straying and livestock worrying, and designates certain types of dogs that it is an offence to possess, except under certain very strict conditions.

As part of the 2007 review the ban on specific breeds of dangerous dogs was discussed. The views of those who called for the removal of the prohibition on certain breeds/types of dogs, for example pitbull terrier-type dogs, and also those who supported the prohibition, were considered. Given the lack of consensus on this issue, and because such breeds, for example pit-bull terriers, have a high pain threshold and a jaw structure developed specifically for fighting, which means that the risk that they pose to public safety remains qualitatively greater, my predecessor concluded that the prohibition should remain. Arising from this review, and as set out in the final policy proposals that were agreed by the Executive in March 2010, the dog control legislation maintained the ban on the four types of dogs bred for fighting. The new provisions introduced by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 clarified the status of any dogs that were exempted from the ban on dogs bred for fighting

The Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 has been designed to tackle the problems of dog attacks, straying and unwanted dogs; protect the public; promote responsible dog ownership; and penalise irresponsible owners. From April 2012, the 2011 Act introduced a number of the measures, such as the compulsory microchipping of dogs and a system of control conditions for problem dogs. Council dog wardens are now empowered to impose control conditions on an owner's dog licence where there has been a breach of dog control laws. Wardens can also require that a dog is neutered, or that a dog or its owner undergo training. The 2011 Act also introduced an offence of allowing a dog to attack and injure other people's pets; increased the level of fixed penalties; and increased the dog licence fee (with concessions for certain owners).

Given that a comprehensive review of the dog legislation has been undertaken so recently here, and the consideration that was given to this legislation by the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee and the Assembly, I am content that the current ban on specific breeds of dangerous dogs is appropriate and that the legislation in place provides sufficient controls.

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much has been spent on implementing dangerous dogs legislation over each of the last ten years.
(AQW 35547/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The control of dogs here is legislated for by the Dogs Order 1983, as amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011. The Dogs Order is enforced by local Councils who are statutorily obliged to supply the Department with information regarding their enforcement activity.

Each Council provides the Department with statistics on a quarterly basis, including, the number of dogs licensed, the number of stray dogs and the number of incidents of livestock worrying investigated etc.

The Councils do not provide the Department with financial information in relation to the implementation of dangerous dogs legislation and I therefore do not have the information to answer your question.

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many dogs have been seized under dangerous dogs legislation over each of the last ten years; and to detail how many of these were (i) destroyed; (ii) returned to their owner; and (iii) remain in the possession of the authorities.
(AQW 35548/11-15)

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

Those statistics do not show the information requested but Table 1 below provides the information we do hold in relation to banned/prohibited dogs.

Table 1 Banned/Prohibited Dogs

YEAR	Incidents Investigated	Prosecutions Taken	Successful Prosecutions
2013	81	0	1
2012	80	5	5
2011	82	3	1
2010	143	11	6
2009	123	8	9
2008	306	15	9
2007	751	32	22
2006	198	16	5
2005	26	0	*
2004	13	1	*

* incomplete return from Councils

Following the changes made to the Dogs Order by the introduction of the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 Councils also provide the number of dogs of a banned type that are seized and voluntarily surrendered. This information is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Year	Incidents Investigated	Identified	Seized	Voluntarily Surrendered	Destroyed	Exempted & Returned
2013*	81	8	3	4	2	1
2012*	80	11	5	2	0	3

* includes the new statistical information collated for banned dogs from 2012, following the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011.

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the seizure of suspected dangerous dogs, to detail how much has been spent on (i) boarding; (ii) vet fees; and (iii) transportation of the animals, in each of the last two years.
(AQW 35549/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The control of dogs here is legislated for by the Dogs Order 1983, as amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011. The Dogs Order is enforced by local Councils who are statutorily obliged to supply the Department with information regarding their enforcement.

Each Council provides the Department with statistics on a quarterly basis, including the number of dogs licensed, the number of stray dogs and the number of incidents of livestock worrying investigated etc.

The Councils do not provide the Department with financial information in relation to costs associated with the seizure of suspected dangerous dogs and I am therefore not in a position to answer your question.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many times since May 2011 she has transferred an Assembly Question to a Freedom of Information request; and of these, to detail (i) the number that resulted in the supply of the requested information; (ii) who provided the advice regarding the transfer and whether the departmental solicitor was involved; (iii) when this procedure became departmental practice; and (iv) whether the relevant Member was advised of this procedure in advance of the transfer.

(AQW 35606/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I have not transferred any Assembly Questions to a Freedom of Information Request since May 2011.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the Strangford Lough restoration plan.
(AQW 35627/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department and the Department of the Environment introduced a Strangford Lough Modiolus Biogenic Reef Revised Restoration Plan in October 2012. The plan meets the approval of the Commission and the Complainant and focuses on Protection, Intervention, and Monitoring.

Departments have established Protection through a non disturbance zone consistent with the recommendations of Queens University's 2011 Modiolus Restoration Research Project. As outlined in the Plan, Departments have introduced a pot fishing permit scheme outside the non disturbance zone, and appointed a dedicated fisheries officer and Marine Ranger. As required in the intervention workstream in the plan, a post-doctorate researcher has been appointed and the Restoration team are currently evaluating translocation of Modiolus from outside the Lough following confirmation of genetic compatibility by Heriot Watt University. Monitoring of the remaining Strangford Modiolus continues to record temporal and spatial changes in the extent and condition of biogenic reefs, and a substantial drop camera survey is to take place imminently.

A restoration working group has been convened to oversee the work involving both Departments, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, Queen's University, Ulster Wildlife and Seafish, and the delivery of the Restoration Plan is monitored by an Interdepartmental Group.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps she has taken to assist farmers in protecting their farms and livestock from crime.

(AQW 35640/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Responsibility for tackling rural crime lies primarily with the PSNI. My Department, through its Veterinary Service Enforcement Branch (VSEB), works closely with the PSNI in relation to the prevention and tackling of agricultural-related rural crime.

I have met with the Chief Constable and the Minister of Justice on a number of occasions to highlight my concerns regarding rural crime including farm-related rural crime and the impact it has on the farming community. The work of the PSNI's Rural Crime Unit is discussed at these meetings. In addition, actions taken by DARD's VSEB to tackle livestock theft in co-operation with the PSNI are also considered.

DARD's VSEB use their range of powers to carry out unannounced inspections of farm animals and premises suspected of involvement in rural crime. More serious criminality is referred to the police with DARD officers providing assistance and expertise. VSEB works closely with the PSNI in tackling rural crime, sharing intelligence, exchanging training and conducting joint operations and investigations. VSEB also participates in multi-agency investigations with other regulators, including the Food Standards Agency, HMRC and cross border agencies.

DARD continues to work with the Department of Justice, the PSNI and representatives of the farming community on a number of joint initiatives. These are aimed at reducing rural crime and raising awareness of action that can be taken to help prevent rural crime, including Farm Watch, the Freeze-branding initiative and the Crimestoppers Campaign.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what joint initiatives she has discussed or agreed with her counterpart in the Republic of Ireland to tackle cattle smuggling and illegal slaughter.

(AQW 35648/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Responsibility for tackling illegal slaughter of cattle in the north of Ireland lies primarily with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Local Councils. My Department, through Veterinary Service Enforcement Branch (VSEB), works closely with the FSA to investigate allegations of smuggling and illegal slaughter.

VSEB works extremely closely with enforcement colleagues both north and south as illustrated during the investigation of an illegal slaughterhouse in South Armagh earlier this year.

VSEB is committed to multi agency investigations and engages on a regular basis with the PSNI, an Garda Síochána, FSA, Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), local authority Environmental Health Officers, HMRC and the south's Revenue Commissioners.

In particular VSEB cooperates closely with their enforcement colleagues in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) Special Investigation Unit (SIU). The enforcement teams from north and south meet regularly to discuss investigations and attend joint training events.

VSEB and SIU often conduct joint operations and they are members of a multi-agency rural crime group led by the PSNI that tackles rural crime in the border region.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many people have qualified and been licensed in respect of the use of sprayers under the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012.

(AQW 35650/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: 449 people have qualified and been licensed since July 2012 in respect of the use of sprayers under the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012. We currently plan to deliver training and assessment to a further 256 people by the end of January 2015.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for how long is a spraying licence, issued under the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012, valid.

(AQW 35652/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Once an individual has an appropriate certificate of competence it remains valid and does not need to be renewed. However, they should make sure to keep their skills, knowledge and training up to date.

Certificates can be withdrawn if the holder is convicted of an offence under the pesticides Regulations. The holder would need to undergo further training and assessment before obtaining a new certificate.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why a 2.5 day course is required to teach a farmer to use a sprayer and get a licence under the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012; and whether her Department will review its approach to this issue.

(AQW 35653/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: There are two options available to farmers to become suitably qualified to spray Plant Protection Products. These are provided through City & Guilds who specify the training and certification requirements.

City & Guilds use "Learning Time" as the indicator of the time needed for a farmer to achieve competence in the qualification. Learning time is a notional measure which takes into account prior learning. City & Guilds indicate 50 hours learning time is required by a farmer to competently use a sprayer. As part of these 50 hours, CAFRE offer 12 hours of formal learning, coaching and mentoring and practical work. The City & Guilds recommended assessment for a farmer to use a sprayer is 2.5 to 3.5 hours. This assessment is also available through CAFRE.

The existing option is the pesticides application (PA) training course and certification PA1 and PA2 and/or PA6. City & Guilds have also developed a new option specifically catering for 'Grandfather Rights' holders, as this exemption ends on 25 November 2015. 'Grandfather Rights' holders are those born before 31 December 1964 and are likely to have many years of experience in the use of Plant Protection Products. This new option has been developed in consultation with industry experts, government departments and farming unions including DARD and the Ulster Farmers Union.

CAFRE has recently run a pilot of the Grandfather Rights training course. As a result of this pilot and subject to further consultation and review by CAFRE, DARD and the Ulster Farmers Union it is anticipated that the 12 hours of training time will be reduced for the Grandfather Rights qualification offered by CAFRE. Under the Safe Use of Pesticides Replacing Grandfather Rights qualification, it is not mandatory for farmers to complete the training and they have the option to undertake the assessment only.

Training and certification supports best practice, which is essential when using Plant Protection Products (PPP's) to protect the operators applying PPP's, bystanders, wildlife, plants and the environment from adverse effects.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much has been applied in penalties, in respect of Single Farm Payments, for breaches under the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012.

(AQW 35654/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The total amount applied in penalties, in respect of Single Farm Payments, for breaches under the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012 is £2169.99.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the work carried out by her Department to upgrade the Slievenaslat walking trail in Castlewellan Forest Park; and whether there are any plans to upgrade additional walking trails throughout South Down.

(AQW 35664/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Forest Service estate already delivers significant recreational and tourism benefits and the potential exists for further development particularly through working with other recreational and tourism providers.

My officials in Forest Service have been working closely with Down District Council in the development of proposals for an enhanced walking trails product in Castlewellan Forest Park. This project is the result of Down DC seeing the potential to promote Castlewellan Forest Park as a key recreation and tourism product. A total of approximately 13,000 metres of refurbished and new trails will be provided as a result of this partnership approach including the popular Lakeside and Slievenaslat walks.

Within the South Down area, my officials in Forest Service are also working closely with respective Councils on similar proposals for improved walking trail products in Donard forest and Rostrevor forest. It is anticipated that these works will be completed within this financial year and I look forward to seeing the results of the effort and resources committed by both Councils and my Department.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department has responsibility for the Control of Greyhounds etc. Act (Northern Ireland) 1950.

(AQW 35672/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: You will be aware from the replies I sent in response to previous correspondence from you in relation to greyhounds, that whilst no specific Department has responsibility for the Control of Greyhounds Act 1950, my Department has policy and legislative responsibility for animal welfare, dog control, the identification and licensing of dogs and dog breeding.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on her plans to decentralise her Department's Fisheries Office to Downpatrick.

(AQW 35704/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I can confirm that my officials are continuing to progress the relocation of Fisheries Division to Downpatrick.

The draft lease was approved at a meeting of the Down District Council Policy and Resources Committee on 7th July 2014. This was then endorsed by the Finance and Resources Committee of the Shadow Council at the full council meeting held in August.

Discussions are continuing between DFP (Land and Properties Service) and Down District Council on an agreement regarding the leasing of space at the Downshire Civic Centre.

The target date for the Fisheries Division move is still June 2015.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the effort and expense involved when a new herd number is issued upon the death of a herdkeeper; and whether she plans to change the current procedures which cause further distress to farming families at a time of grief.

(AQW 35709/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: It was in April 2009 that my Department ceased the facility that enabled a new herd or flock keeper to adopt the registration number of a previously registered keeper. This change was made to enhance operational effectiveness and to ensure correct database linkages between the keeper and other relevant identifiers such as business, customer, land identifier and herd / flock numbers.

These linkages ensure that relevant payments and penalties can be accurately calculated and assigned to the correct individual via DARD databases.

Theoretically, if it were permissible to retain the original herd number, on one hand there could be less need for a visit to the premises. However, it is likely that considerably more effort would be required by both my staff and the family members, to ensure the correct database linkages between the new keeper, as distinct from the previous deceased keeper, and linkages to the other relevant identifiers such as business, customer, land identifier and of course herd number.

At present my staff are carrying out a review on the feasibility of retaining herd keeper registration numbers whilst assuring correct database linkages.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there are any plans to close the departmental laboratory in Omagh.

(AQW 35729/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The laboratory in Omagh is part of the estate leased by DARD to the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI). DARD and AFBI agree that the high cost of AFBI's estate needs to be addressed as a priority. Work is ongoing to establish

a clear roadmap for the future of the AFBI estate, informed by AFBI's strategic vision and scientific priorities. All options are being explored, but I have no set plans at this point to close the AFBI laboratory in Omagh.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what measures she has put in place to ensure that fracking does not take place in Woodburn forest.

(AQW 35750/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Both my Department and NI Water own land comprising Woodburn Forest. The specific area within the forest, the subject of the proposed drilling works, is not on land owned by my Department. Any permission to access this area of land is therefore the responsibility of NI Water.

I have previously stated that no hydraulic fracturing will take place on any land owned by my Department which includes a part of Woodburn Forest.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps her Department is taking to address rural crime, particularly farm theft, and to support the PSNI in their efforts in this area.

(AQW 35829/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Responsibility for tackling rural crime lies primarily with the PSNI, however my Department, through its Veterinary Service Enforcement Branch (VSEB) and CAFRE, works closely with the PSNI in tackling rural crime, including agriculture related crime.

DARD's VSEB works with the PSNI in tackling rural crime at an operational level through the sharing of intelligence, the exchange of training and the conducting of joint operations and investigations. In particular VSEB uses its enforcement powers to carry out unannounced inspections of farm animals and premises suspected of involvement in rural crime. More serious criminality is referred to the police and DARD officials assist the police through the provision of expertise. VSEB also participates in multi-agency investigations with other regulators, including the Food Standards Agency, HMRC and cross border agencies.

DARD continues to work with the Department of Justice, the PSNI and representatives of the farming community on a number of joint initiatives aimed at reducing rural crime and raising awareness of action that can be taken to help prevent rural crime, including Farm Watch, the Freeze-branding initiative and the Crimestoppers Campaign.

I have met with the Chief Constable and the Minister of Justice on a number of occasions to highlight my concerns regarding rural crime and the impact it has on the farming community. Reducing levels of rural crime is a key priority of mine and my Department will continue to work closely with the Department of Justice, the PSNI and other partners in seeking to raise awareness and to reduce levels of rural crime, including farm related crime.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 35295/11-15, what other tree felling programs are planned in this financial year.

(AQW 35845/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Timber production supports the development of the north of Ireland economy and is an important objective of forest policy.

The 2014-15 Forest Service business plan has a business priority to 'Manage forests sustainably to produce an income, to protect the environment and to promote the social use of forests'.

Within this priority there is a supporting target to 'Maintain the annual supply of wood for industrial processing at a minimum of 400,000 m³.'

Felling programmes are prepared to achieve this target and take place in forests throughout the Forest Service estate in line with sustainable forest management requirements.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the projects funded under the village renewal aspect of the Rural Development Programme in South Down, in the last three years.

(AQW 35864/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The following projects have been awarded funding under the village renewal aspect of the Rural Development Programme in South Down in the last three years.

Project Title

2012

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| ■ Ballyhornan Village Plan | ■ Clough Village Plan |
| ■ Annsborough Village Plan | ■ Ballykinlar and Tyrella Community Association |
| ■ Dundrum Village Plan | ■ Castlewellan Integrated Plan |
| ■ Kilcoo Village Plan | |
| ■ Clanvarghan Village Plan | |

2013

- Saul & Raholp Full Village Plan
- Strangford Village Plan
- Seaforde Village Plan
- Saintfield Environmental Improvement Scheme
- Castlewellan Village Revitalisation
- Clough Play Park Project
- Kilcoo Play Park Project
- Dundrum Play Park Project
- Ballykinlar Play Park

2014

- Drumaness Mill Pond Environmental Improvement Scheme
- Killough Ropewalk Extension
- Ardglass Village Plan
- Shrigley Playground
- Killough Village Plan 2014
- Ardglass Summer Season Tourist Office Project
- Festival on the Lough
- Saul Health & Well Being Centre
- Annsborough Community Hall
- Clough Derelict Buildings Project
- Kazoku Karate Youth Project-Castlewellan
- Ardglass Youth Project
- Dundrum Derelict Buildings Project
- Community Play Opportunities in Castlewellan
- Ardglass Development of Youth Computer Centre
- Addressing health, summer scheme and communication needs in Kilcoo
- Tanvally & Anaghline – Our Shop

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the amount of funding delivered under the village renewal aspect of the Rural Development Programme, broken down by constituency, in the last three years.

(AQW 35865/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I take your question to mean the total amount committed to village renewal projects through letters of offer. Village renewal projects include the preparation of village plans and the support of integrated village initiatives which promote cross-community development and regeneration. The details are as follows:

Funding committed to Axis 3 Village Renewal Projects in the past 3 years by constituency

	2012	2013	2014	Grand Total
Belfast South	5,000	121,616	399,348	525,965
East Antrim	51,266	400,725	212,350	664,341
East Londonderry	128,042	278,935	702,574	1,109,551
Fermanagh And South Tyrone	43,500	409,464	672,896	1,125,860
Foyle			553,009	553,009
Lagan Valley	15,000	96,488	221,909	333,397
Mid Ulster	93,738	365,320	247,614	706,672
Newry And Armagh	281,939	238,194	834,291	1,354,423
North Antrim	355,969	492,057	177,623	1,025,648
North Down		56,158	30,000	86,158
South Antrim	85,163	424,652	180,728	690,542
South Down	39,900	373,137	467,866	880,904
Strangford	9,950	243,660	212,397	466,007
Upper Bann	33,019	385,205	612,692	1,030,915
West Tyrone	44,860	374,138	684,873	1,103,871
Grand Total	1,187,345	4,259,749	6,210,169	11,657,262

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the number of ear tags requiring to be replaced on an annual basis in Northern Ireland; (ii) the cost thereof; and (iii) the resulting assessment of the durability of plastic tags as opposed to metal tags.

(AQW 35897/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below gives the number of matching replacement ear tags, to replace lost or illegible tags, used in cattle and sheep in each of the last 3 years.

	2011	2012	2013
Cattle replacement tags	217,904	218,868	212,742
Sheep replacement tags	2357	2741	3,230

For sheep the flock keeper can either replace the lost or unreadable tag with a matching replacement tag or the flock keeper can apply a new unused ear tag set from his stock of tags. In this instance, the flock keeper must cross-reference the old and the new tag number in the flock register to ensure traceability is maintained.

Tags are replaced for a number of reasons:

- They are lost from the animal's ears;
- They become illegible;
- They are removed for welfare reasons, for example, an infected ear; or
- In some cases, the ear tag numbers of older cattle moving to other Member States for breeding and production do not contain sufficient characters in their number to meet the requirements of the importing country, and, therefore the tags have to be updated and replaced.

My Department does not manufacture or supply ear tags to keepers. Hence the cost of replacement ear tags is a commercial matter between the herd and flock keeper and the ear tag supplier.

My Department is not aware of an assessment of the durability of plastic tags as opposed to metal tags; therefore, we have no evidence to suggest that the number of plastic tags lost is greater than the number of metal tags lost.

My Department has a system in place to gather concerns from keepers about ear tag performance via the DARD website and I would urge those with concerns to report these to us. We are also currently supporting an Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) project researching reasons for ear tag loss in cattle and sheep.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department has considered consolidating all Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute sites and resources to create one centre of excellence at the Hillsborough site.
(AQW 35925/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Work is ongoing to establish a clear roadmap for the future of the AFBI estate, informed by AFBI's strategic vision and scientific priorities. While the ultimate goal will be to deliver a cost-effective and fit-for purpose estate, options for consolidation must address a range of practical considerations, such as biosecurity, contingency capacity to deal with potential animal or plant health emergencies and possible planning restrictions. Within this context, various options are being explored but, to date, AFBI has not proposed consolidation onto a single site at Hillsborough.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what cuts will be made to her budget as a result of the lack of agreement on Welfare Reform.
(AQW 35246/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): No cuts have been made to the Department budget as a result of a lack of agreement on Welfare Cuts in 2014/15.

Cuts that I will have to make are a direct result of reductions to the block grant and the pressures from the Department of Health where the finance minister has identified another over-spend and mismanagement .

The cuts to benefits proposed by the British government and which have not been accepted by the Assembly would, if passed, have serious consequences in terms of adding pressures across public services. The reality is that in Britain people have died as a result of these cuts. Like many people in this state others have been forced into homelessness, poverty and increased poor mental health.

Cuts to welfare payments are not part of our Programme for Government. In fact these potential cuts would undermine all of the anti-poverty measures that we are committed to in our Programme for Government.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the number of staff employed in her Department broken down by grade; and (ii) the total salary for each grade, for each financial year since 1 April 2010.
(AQW 35347/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The table attached details the number of staff in post by headcount and full time equivalent at 31 March of each year from 2011 to 2014. The cost provided reflects the annual salary cost of those staff.

Staff are grouped by analogous grade that is, Administrative Assistant, Administrative Officer, Executive Officer 1, Executive Officer 2, Staff Officer, Deputy Principal, Grade 7 and Senior Civil Service.

Industrial staff, who are paid weekly, are shown separately.

DCAL Industrial Staff

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Staff By Headcount	23	23	22	21
Staff By Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	23.00	23.00	22.00	21.00
Annual Pay Cost	£357,076.55	£363,693.97	£377,363.33	£332,455.52

DCAL Non Industrial Staff

Grade	Date			
	31-Mar-11	31-Mar-12	31-Mar-13	31-Mar-14
Administrative Assistant				
Staff By Headcount	23	23	17	20
Staff By Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	20.81	21.14	14.81	18.38
Sum of FTE Salary	£322,761.16	£336,723.54	£240,677.14	£297,989.73
Administrative Officer				
Staff By Headcount	58	59	56	53
Staff By Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	53.32	54.13	51.15	47.61
Sum of FTE Salary	£1,000,844.07	£1,044,110.11	£1,026,844.10	£1,000,575.68
Executive Officer 2				
Staff By Headcount	32	27	30	31
Staff By Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	30.45	25.74	28.24	28.70
Sum of FTE Salary	£657,048.54	£565,323.28	£668,166.55	£693,665.03
Executive Officer 1				
Staff By Headcount	48	44	40	39
Staff By Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	45.85	41.46	38.01	37.35
Sum of FTE Salary	£1,089,293.83	£1,015,271.04	£991,284.19	£981,376.00
Staff Officer				
Staff By Headcount	54	60	66	62
Staff By Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	53.12	58.22	63.68	57.87
Sum of FTE Salary	£1,490,824.95	£1,669,353.91	£1,898,822.75	£1,749,069.50
Deputy Principal				
Staff By Headcount	40	38	45	47
Staff By Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	37.51	35.18	42.94	44.77
Sum of FTE Salary	£1,363,540.14	£1,261,899.29	£1,604,186.43	£1,687,833.99
Grade 7				
Staff By Headcount	23	23	25	25
Staff By Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	22.81	22.72	23.81	24.81
Sum of FTE Salary	£1,092,827.00	£1,064,488.49	£1,155,989.84	£1,220,336.97
Senior Civil Servant				
Staff By Headcount	6	8	7	7
Staff By Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	6.00	8.00	7.00	7.00
Sum of FTE Salary	£452,795.20	£603,125.20	£522,834.00	£536,971.00
Total Count of Employee number	284	282	286	284

Grade	Date			
	31-Mar-11	31-Mar-12	31-Mar-13	31-Mar-14
Total Sum of FTE	269.87	266.59	269.64	266.49
Total Sum of FTE Salary	£7,469,934.89	£7,560,294.86	£8,108,805.00	£8,167,817.90

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list the boxing clubs, located outside the Greater Belfast area, which have received grant assistance from the recent boxing specific funding.

(AQW 35410/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Under the £3.27 million Lottery funded Boxing Investment Programme, the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) received almost £170,000 for the supply of equipment to boxing clubs which are affiliated to the IABA. Annex A details the 94 boxing clubs, and their location, that received boxing equipment from this grant. Boxing Clubs deemed to be within the Greater Belfast area are marked within the table for information.

Under the capital element of the Boxing Investment Programme, Sport NI has allocated £2.5 million towards the refurbishment, or rebuild, of boxing clubs. To date Monkstown Amateur Boxing Club has received grant assistance for capital works.

A further 44 clubs have received indicative letters of offer for capital works. Design teams have been appointed by the IABA to take forward preparatory work in advance of grants being issued to clubs.

Club	Location	Club	Location
Abbey ABC	Bangor	Lisburn ABC	Lisburn
* Albert Foundry ABC	Belfast West	Lisnafin ABC	Strabane
All Saints ABC	Ballymena	Mark Heagney	Kildreas
Antrim ABC	Antrim	*Midland	Belfast East
*Ardoyne Holy Cross	Belfast North	Sean Doran ABC	Keady
Ards ABC	Newtownards	Craigavon ABC	Craigavon
Ballykelly	Ballykelly	Moneyglass ABC	Toomebridge
*Ballysillan ABC	Belfast North	Moneymore ABC	Moneymore
Belleck	Belleck	Moote ABC	Donaghadee
Bishop Kelly ABC	Omagh	Mourne Golden Gloves	Strabane
Braid ABC	Ballymena	Mourne All Blacks ABC	Annalong
*Cairn Lodge ABC	Belfast West	*Newington ABC	Belfast North
Camlough ABC	Camlough	North Down ABC	Bangor
Canal ABC	Lisburn	Oak Leaf ABC	Derry
Carrickfergus ABC	Carrickfergus	*Oliver Plunkett ABC	Belfast West
Carrickmore ABC	Carrickmore	Omagh Boys & Girls	Omagh
*Carryduff ABC	Carryduff	Phoenix ABC	Lurgan
Castle ABC	Carrickfergus	*Red Triangle ABC	Belfast South
*City of Belfast Boxing	Belfast Centre	Ring ABC	Derry
Churchlands	Coleraine	Rochesters ABC	Derry
*Clonard ABC	Belfast West	Sacred Heart ABC	Newry
Clonoe ABC	Coalisland	Sacred Heart Omagh	Omagh
Coleraine ABC	Coleraine	Saints ABC	Lisburn
Cookstown ABC	Cookstown	Scorpion ABC	Ballymoney
*Corpus Christi	Belfast West	Silverbridge ABC	Silverbridge
Derrylin ABC	Derrylin	*Spartans ABC	Newtownabbey
*Dockers ABC	Belfast Centre	Springtown ABC	Derry
Downpatrick ABC	Downpatrick	*St Agnes ABC	Belfast West

Club	Location	Club	Location
Dungannon ABC	Dungannon	St Brigids ABC	Newry
East Down ABC	Downpatrick	St Bronaghs ABC	Rostrevor
*Eastside ABC	Belfast East	St Canices ABC	Dungiven
Ederney ABC	Ederney	*St Georges ABC	Belfast Centre
Eglinton ABC	Eglinton	St Jarlaths ABC	Blackwatertown
*Emerald ABC	Belfast West	*St John Bosco ABC	Belfast West
Enniskillen ABC	Enniskillen	St John Bosco ABC	Newry
Errigal ABC	Garvagh	St Johns ABC	Maghera
Gilford ABC	Gilford	St Joseph ABC	Derry
*Gleann ABC	Belfast West	St Malachys ABC	Camlough
*Hillview ABC	Newtownabbey	St Marys ABC	Derry
*Holy Family Belfast	Belfast North	St Patricks ABC	Burren
Immaculata ABC	Strabane	*St Pauls ABC	Belfast West
*Immaculata ABC	Belfast West	*Star ABC	Belfast North
John McCoy ABC	Warrenpoint	The Loup ABC	Magherafelt
Kilmegan	Castlewellan	The Skerries	Portrush
*Kronk	Belfast North	Toome ABC	Toome
Larne ABC	Larne	Townland ABC	Glenavy
*Ligoniel ABC	Belfast North	Two Castles ABC	Newtownstewart

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how the City of Culture Legacy will be funded in light of the failed bids for £2.8 million resource and £2.8 million capital in the June 2014 Monitoring Round.

(AQW 35421/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Building on additional funding I secured earlier this year, I submitted a significant bid to the June Monitoring Round to maximise ongoing development of a social and economic legacy from City of Culture 2013.

I am disappointed that funding was not allocated to this bid but I remain fully committed to harnessing the momentum created by City of Culture and to realising the full potential of the culture, arts and leisure base to transform lives and help tackle disadvantage.

Achieving this is not solely dependent on the allocation of new and additional funds. The DCAL family of organisations, programmes, facilities and services are already actively targeting and delivering interventions across the North West.

This week, for example, the CultureTECH festival, supported by my Department through NI Screen, will enhance the national and international profile of the North West as a centre for innovation, digital technologies and the creative industries. Inspirational programming as part of the festival will also engage over sixteen thousand schoolchildren.

My Department is working to coordinate and lead a joined up approach to maximise the impact and reach of the culture, arts and leisure base across the North West. My officials are working closely with community and local and central government organisations to develop wide ranging strategic partnerships to stimulate meaningful and sustainable change in the lives of individuals and communities.

A key overarching legacy from City of Culture 2013 is widespread recognition of the value of culture and creative approaches in tackling social and economic challenges. It transforms lives, inspires communities and provides innovative and effective ways to engage the disengaged and help rebuild the economy.

I will continue to support that legacy. I will work within the Executive and with other stakeholders to maximise funding and collaborative opportunities to enhance that legacy and its role in delivering social change across the North West and in this part of Ireland.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what communication her Department has had with relevant stakeholders in East Londonderry regarding how they can use the creative arts industry on the North Coast to boost local business.

(AQW 35496/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: In March 2014 DCAL 'Roadshows' were held in Limavady and Coleraine to raise awareness of the value of cultural led approaches to tackling social and economic disadvantage. The events included a diverse range of representatives from the community and voluntary sector and local government departments. Discussions explored local economic and social issues and the contribution the wider DCAL family can make to developing innovative approaches and partnerships.

This reinforced the importance of coordination and taking forward joined-up approaches across the North West. My Department has a strategic focus on developing the North West, including Limavady, Coleraine, Derry and Strabane, as a hub for the creative industries and social innovation. Moving forward my officials will continue to work with relevant stakeholders to advance this aim.

The North Coast is also gaining further international acclaim as a location for film and television production. The recent filming of Game of Thrones in areas such as Downhill Beach brings a range of business activity into the area and generates considerable public and international interest which can provide a long term boost to tourism.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on a Northern Ireland Sports Museum.
(AQW 35638/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Mr Ronnie Spence, Chair of Ulster Sports Museum Association (USMA), has informed my officials that the Association is continuing in its efforts to create a sports museum and also to seek potential partners and funders for the project.

As you are aware the USMA has received significant financial support from Government Departments in recent years to undertake feasibility work and to develop an outline business case for an Ulster Sports Museum/Hall of Fame. To date its proposal did not demonstrate value for money nor long term sustainability without a requirement for on-going public sector support.

I wrote to Dame Mary Peters, President of USMA, in April 2014 setting out my position that it would be inappropriate to use Taxpayers' money to provide further funds for the organisation.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the items and artefacts, which are of historical importance and originate in County Down, that are currently held outside County Down by National Museums NI and by other public bodies in Britain and the rest of Ireland.
(AQW 35760/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department's investment and involvement in the museums sector is primarily directed to National Museums NI (NMNI) and the NI Museums Council (NIMC).

NMNI has informed me that of its collections that are catalogued it has 61,367 items and artefacts of historical importance associated with County Down (Archaeology 47,577; Art 69; History 13,721). This includes 1,863 items and artefacts in the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra. The remaining items held by NMNI are held at a variety of sites across the north. The NIMC does not hold any collections.

Neither NMNI nor NIMC hold details of items and artefacts that may be held outside of the north of Ireland.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in relation to the Titanic Showdown boxing event held on Saturday 6 September 2014, (i) what financial contribution in the way of sponsorship was made to the event by her Department; and (ii) what representations regarding the event were received by her Department from (a) public representatives; (b) Ministers; (c) Special Advisors; and (d) lobby interests.
(AQW 35789/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department committed £100,000 to the Titanic Showdown boxing event. This commitment was made after officials from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) met with Cyclone Promotions. DETI then approached my Department asking it to consider partnership funding, given DCAL's sporting remit.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the business case for the redevelopment of Belfast Central Library.
(AQW 35808/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Libraries NI (LNI), with support from my Department, is developing an Outline Business Case (OBC) for the redevelopment of Belfast Central Library.

In July 2014 LNI submitted a draft OBC to my Department for initial consideration. The estimated cost of delivering the preferred option set out in this draft is £43.16m over 3 years. This is significantly higher than the previous estimate of £30-£35m.

My officials have reviewed this draft OBC and provided detailed written comments to LNI in August for its consideration. LNI is reviewing its OBC in light of these comments and a revised version is expected to be resubmitted by early November 2014.

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what support is available to aspiring musicians.
(AQW 35875/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I appreciate the importance of offering opportunities for young and aspiring musicians on the local, national and international platform.

My Department, through its funding to the Arts Council, encourages and supports young musicians through a number of programmes. Within its Music Strategy 2013-2018, the Arts Council has identified a number of new initiatives to provide opportunities for young musicians to aspire to a professional level of performance and ultimately national and international excellence.

Programmes available include: support for the Individual Artists Programme; Young Artists programme; Beyond Borders; Musical Instruments Scheme; Milton Violin Award; New Musical Instrumental Scheme; and the Take it Away Scheme. Annex A provides details of the various programmes to which musicians may be eligible to apply.

In addition my Department, in conjunction with Invest NI, also supports the Generator NI project. Generator NI is a three year Music Business Support Programme and its remit is to support the development of a sustainable regional music industry in the north of Ireland. This support is delivered by way of a sector-specific skills development programme, a tailored talent development programme and a market development programme that is designed to develop regional, national and international networks, audiences and markets for those in the sector. The programme also delivers an overarching mentoring programme which supports artists and businesses at all levels.

Annex A

Arts Council Programmes to which aspiring musicians may be eligible to apply.

Support for the Individual Artists Programme (SIAP)

A programme that offers support for bespoke training and CPD opportunities for Young Musicians. This programme also offers travel and musical equipment awards.

Young Artists Programme

The Arts Council, in collaboration with BBC, offers awards for young, exceptionally talented North of Ireland solo musicians/singers who have already gained their first graduate-level qualification and are ready to enter the professional world as artists. The financial award associated with this scheme is to allow applicants to spend a sizeable amount of time learning from a master performer/teacher/composer etc. It is identified that this opportunity should be offered to traditional music and Jazz genres as well as classical.

Beyond Borders

A UK-Wide programme that improves the mechanism for commissioning and performing new music

Musical Instruments

This scheme offers support for organisations to purchase necessary musical instruments for their groups and has been particularly beneficial for bands to purchase new instruments for young musicians. This scheme has a wider social and cultural heritage agenda which is growing all the time.

ACNI Milton Violin Award

The Arts Council offers the Milton Violin award for a young, exceptionally talented North of Ireland musician who has already gained his/her first graduate-level qualification and is ready to enter the professional world as an artist. It will be judged by an expert panel on the basis of a live audition and an application showing evidence of considerable artistic achievement and potential to contribute to the cultural life of the region.

The Arts Council will lend its £100,000 violin to an outstanding young violinist from the North of Ireland who wishes to pursue or continue professional training. This beautiful instrument, made by Giuseppe Gagliano in Naples c. 1780, was donated to the Arts Council by Professor Alan Milton in 1980.

Youth Music Organisations (Ulster Youth Choir and Ulster Youth Orchestra)

Ulster Youth Choir and Ulster Youth Orchestra provide unique and excellent artistic opportunities for young musicians (age 14-24) from across the North of Ireland to learn and participate in music making at the very highest standards through workshops, residential training courses, concert performances, recordings and tours. The participants in these organisations often pursue further studies at 3rd level with a view to a professional career as a musician. Since the North has no conservatoire for Music, these young people often study in music colleges in Britain and Europe. The danger is that they don't return with their rich knowledge/experiences. There is an opportunity for the Youth Music organisations to develop relations with the Education Sector to facilitate work at grassroots KS1-KS2 levels in primary schools throughout the north – perhaps this is an avenue of job creation for graduates of both these youth music organisations

NI Opera

The NI Opera Young Artists' Programme is designed to nurture aspiring talent and showcase up-and-coming performers from across Ireland. The programme will give four young singers, directors or conductors the opportunity to hone their skills, whilst being supported at a transitional stage in their careers. Participants receive support in a number of ways including training, mentoring, performance opportunities, and the chance to be involved with NI Opera productions.

Ulster Orchestra

The UO's Education programme reaches 30,000 young people across the North of Ireland. This programme consists of workshops, pre-concert talks, special projects, family concerts, community events and a masterclass series for young aspiring musicians.

New Musical Instrument Scheme

A scheme is in development involving a public call for instruments to be donated/dropped-off to Arts Council. The Council will then distribute the instruments to the most needy schools/community groups through channels such as the Education and Library Board's and client organisations working with schools and community groups

Take it Away Scheme

This musical loan scheme allows anyone over the age of 18 in the North of Ireland to purchase a new Musical Instrument up to the value of £2k with an interest free payment plan over 10 months. This programme aims to make buying instruments more affordable to all. There is a steady uptake of this scheme with typically c.£500 interest payments a month by the Music Department. The scheme is available through selected music retailers in Belfast, Derry and Portadown

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the contact her Department has had with the Braid and All Saints Boxing Clubs in Ballymena, since May 2011.

(AQO 6564/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI has allocated Lottery funding of three million, two hundred and seventy thousand pounds to invest in the sport of boxing across the north of Ireland. This investment is helping to address some, but not all of, the equipment and facility needs identified. An element of the programme, was to provide the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) with funding to employ a Development Manager, who would help clubs apply to the programme.

Both the Braid and All Saints Boxing Clubs in Ballymena applied to Sport NI's Boxing Investment Programme under the equipment and capital strands.

Sport NI met with All Saints Amateur Boxing Club (ABC) on two separate occasions to discuss the Boxing Investment Programme. Firstly, in 2012 in advance of the programme being launched; and, again in March 2014 to provide feedback on their application for capital works. In addition, All Saints ABC attended a workshop, hosted by the IABA, in Ballymena in 2013 to receive information about applying to Sport NI's programme.

I understand that All Saints ABC received boxing equipment under the Boxing Investment Programme; but was not ranked high enough to receive funding for capital works at this stage.

Braid ABC did not attend the IABA workshop in 2013 on the Boxing Investment Programme; however, I understand that it did meet with the IABA's Club Development Manager at this time.

While Sport NI has not met with Braid ABC directly the club received boxing equipment under the Boxing Investment Programme and was also successful in receiving an indicative letter of offer from Sport NI for capital works totalling six hundred and sixty six pounds.

In addition to the Boxing Investment Programme, Sport NI is currently developing a new Lottery funded capital programme which will aim to deliver facilities from which both local communities and high performance athletes can benefit. Sport NI has indicated that further details on this funding opportunity will be released in November 2014, both on its website and directly with those clubs and communities which have already registered their interest with Sport NI.

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of the comment by the former Director of the Arts Council that she has 'no notion' about the local arts sector.

(AQO 6572/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I refute the comments and am content to be judged by what I have done to support the arts and increase access to and participation in them.

Since taking up office, I have worked determinedly to ensure arts are accessible to all. For example, the undoubted success of the City of Culture in 2013; the culture programme to complement the World Police and Fire Games, also in 2013; and the development of an arts strategy for East Belfast. These are only some of the interventions overseen and proactively taken forward by my Department.

Arts are not a luxury, they are a right and I make no apology for my strategic approach which is to ensure that arts are accessible to all who wish to avail of their benefits.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure which capital projects her Department and arm's-length bodies plan to commence before the end of the current financial year.

(AQO 6571/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department has £48m of capital budget remaining to be spent in 14/15.

It has been allocated to the following projects:

Stadiums programme: £44.5m. Individual stadium allocations are 1) Ravenhill - £1.2m, 2) Windsor £20m, and 3) Casement £23.3m. Ravenhill is nears completion and the pitch at Windsor has been relaid and work continues on the Stands. The Casement project has been halted by a Judicial Review, with hearing in progress. The outcome of this hearing will determine how much of the budget can be spent in the remainder of this financial year. My Department is liaising closely with DFP on the budgetary impacts of any further delays in this year and next.

Libraries: £1.6m. This is to finish Lisnaskea library, to begin the replacement of Moira library and to carry out an essential maintenance programme.

Grants to Sports Governing Bodies: £0.5m. This will be used to carry out refurbishment/ extension work to the Frank Gillen Centre and to the Grosvenor Leisure Centre. It will also be used to provide minibuses to Immaculata FC and to a number of Community Groups.

Disability access to sports venues under the TBUC agenda: £0.2m. The purpose is to improve access to a number of facilities.

National Museums: £0.4m has been allocated to essential maintenance and repairs to the Museum estate. Arts Council: £0.4m has been allocated to purchase a mobile arts delivery vehicle "Artscart" (a TBUC initiative) and for various minor capital grants and general maintenance

Inland Waterways: £0.2m. This is to help to maintain waterways throughout the North of Ireland.

In addition, the Executive has recommended that my Department should have first call on £2.8 million capital in October monitoring for the City of Culture legacy capital projects should sufficient capital funding become available. If successful I intend to take forward a number of projects in the North West to instil the City of Culture legacy including for example; boxing capital programme to refurbish boxing clubs and provide essential equipment, construct a Visit Derry DCAL stand, refurbish and equip Cultural Hubs and fit out a Shirt Factory at Patrick Street.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding her Department has awarded to cross border bodies in the last three years.

(AQO 6574/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Department has two cross border bodies – the Language Body (which comprises Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster Scots Agency) and Waterways Ireland. Funding is awarded to cross border bodies on the basis of agreed business plans. These plans are for calendar years and not financial years.

On this basis, my Department awarded £6.28m to the Language Body in 2011 and £6.09m in 2012. I was unable to agree a proposed allocation of £5.52m in 2013 because I believed that the cut to budgets reached too deeply into the core activities of both agencies. My Department awarded £4m to Waterways Ireland in 2011, £3.52m in 2012 and £3.29m in 2013.

Background

- We provided funding details to Approved Business Plans.
- Our supplementary Questions are around the illegality issue and efficiency cuts.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in light of the success of attracting major sporting events, how she ensures suitable facilities are considered for hosting future events.

(AQO 6575/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: This has been a tremendous couple of years for the north of Ireland to demonstrate that we can successfully host major sporting events here such as the World Police and Fire Games, the Giro d'Italia and the recent Carl Frampton world title fight. Ultimately, the decision on which facilities will be used for sporting events will be taken by the event organisers and promoters. However, my Department, through Sport NI, will continue to develop facilities subject to the availability of budgets.

Work is already progressing with the Regional Stadium Programme which will see investment of one hundred and ten million pounds for the stadiums at Ravenhill, Casement Park and Windsor Park. Ravenhill Stadium has been completed to a world class standard and I expect facilities at Casement Park and Windsor Park to be completed to a similar standard.

Sport NI has identified Lottery funds of seventeen and a half million pounds to invest in a capital programme to improve sports facilities over a five year period from 2014/15 to 2018/19. Sport NI is currently developing this programme and as a first step is procuring a specialist organisation to develop a Sports Facilities Strategy to inform the investment.

Furthermore, in line with NI Tourist Board's new Strategic Vision for Events, Sport NI is represented on DETI's Global Events Bidding Group and International Events Developmental Group which will consider facilities available when bidding for events.

In addition, the Working Group bringing forward proposals for a bid for Ireland to Host the 2023 Rugby World Cup, inclusive of DCAL and DETI representation, has indicated that the bid would necessarily include key facilities in the north, to ensure that this major international event has a positive sporting and economic impact across the island.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action her Department is taking to increase physical activity levels, particularly amongst young people, to encourage a healthy lifestyle.

(AQO 6576/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department's strategy for sport, Sport Matters contains twenty six targets, eleven of which are specifically designed to increase participation in sport and physical activity levels right across the population, including amongst young people. An associated Sports Matters action plan provides specific actions for DCAL and Sport NI and also includes actions to be taken forward in partnership with other government departments and a range of public bodies, such as local councils and the Public Health Agency.

Since 2009, Sport NI has invested funding totalling almost forty eight million pounds to increase participation in sport and physical activity levels. Specific actions include guidance for schools that recommends a minimum of two hours PE per week; the delivery of Sport NI's 'Active Eight' programme; the promotion of voluntary extra-curricular sports opportunities; the Curriculum Sports Programme; the delivery of Sport NI's Active Communities Programme in partnership with district councils; the Boxing Investment Programme, and, individual actions by the governing bodies of Gaelic games, rugby and soccer to improve the participation by young people in their sports.

Other activities and investment aimed at increasing physical activity levels of young people through sport include programmes under my Department's priority to promote equality, and target poverty and social exclusion; and also legacy programmes resulting from events such as the World Police and Fire Games, the Giro Big Start and more recently, Carl Frampton's World Championship fight at the Titanic Slipways.

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how disabled anglers will have full access to departmental waterways.

(AQO 6577/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Angling is recognised as a great sport for all and I have been determined to open up opportunities for participation in encouraging a greater number of disabled people of all ages and abilities to enjoy angling.

Over the past three years I have provided funding for a wide range of initiatives to enhance facilities at my Department's waterways. This has improved general access across the Public Angling Estate through providing disabled car parking facilities and pathways to provide safe and easy access for disabled anglers. We have also provided sixteen purpose built disabled fishing stands during this period and we will continue to develop a minimum of two new stands each year, and look at other ways to improve access works in partnership with local councils and community organisations.

A wide range of quality, game and coarse fishing is available to disabled anglers across the Public Angling Estate. Almost half of our waters have dedicated disabled facilities with some large waters, such as Lough Erne, having these at multiple sites. My Department also produces a dedicated disabled angling guide which provides information on waters with disabled facilities and offers advice on distances and gradients to assist anglers to assess the suitability of particular waters based on their mobility.

In addition, since 2011 I have provided over five thousand concessionary licenses and permits to eligible anglers with disabilities. My officials are also working in partnership with organisations such as Extern, Action Mental Health, Disability Action NI and Erne Disabled Anglers to promote awareness of the value of the sport and in supporting initiatives to encourage greater participation, including organising special angling events and the donations of seized fishing equipment.

My Department also exhibited at the recent Disability Action Show in Belfast and we have regularly featured angling in a range of magazines to promote the value of the sport.

Department of Education

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Education what cuts will be made to his budget as a result of the lack of agreement on Welfare Reform.

(AQW 35247/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): I negotiated strongly to seek to protect education from budget cuts in line with the protection afforded to health. I welcome the decision by the Executive, as part of June Monitoring, in agreeing to the proposals.

The future success of our economy and of society in general depends on there being a high quality education service that can compete with the best internationally. Equally, all of our young people have the right to a quality education that enables them to reach their full potential, a right enshrined not only in our own legislation but in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Following the outcome of Budget 2011-15 it was clear that I would need to make over £300m of savings across the budget period, to simply balance my budget. Whilst I sought to protect frontline services, it was necessary to initiate a series of strategic cost reductions exercises, which have resulted in over 2,900 school and 450 non-school based redundancies.

Although considerable efforts have been made to reduce the pressures on the education budget, the financial outlook continues to be very challenging and I believe I can and have, demonstrated commitment to prudent budget management, while maximising the use of resources available to me.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education how his Department is supporting the development of post-primary education outside Belfast for the Irish-medium sector.

(AQW 35393/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I established the Irish Medium Post primary Advisory Group and commissioned a report which considers how best to meet the demands for Irish Medium Post Primary provision in the Derry / South Derry and in other areas outside of Belfast for parents with children currently attending IM Primary Schools.

The Group sought the views of parents in pre-school and primary schools through a questionnaire and also gathered evidence from key stakeholders and the neighbouring jurisdictions of Scotland, Wales and the South of Ireland.

I can confirm that the Irish Medium Post-Primary Group presented me with their Report. I am currently considering the findings and recommendations contained in the Report which I will be shortly publishing it together with my response on how to deliver viable and sustainable Irish-medium post-primary education throughout the North that is high quality, meets the needs of the pupils and commands the confidence of parents.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of mobile classrooms currently in use in schools in the Upper Bann constituency in each of the last three years, broken down by school.

(AQW 35396/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Southern Education and Library Board does not hold historic detail in relation to the number of mobile classrooms in use. However, in January 2013 the Department provided information in regard to mobile class rooms in use at that time and this information has been included in the table below together with current numbers of mobile classrooms in use.

Name of Primary School	Current No of Mobiles	No of Mobiles in Jan 13
Ballyoran Primary School	2	2
Drumgor Primary School	2	2
Edenderry Primary School (P'adown)	3	3
Edenderry Primary School (Banbridge)	1	1
King's Park Primary School	1	2
Lurgan Model Primary School	2	2
Millington Primary School	2	3
Portadown Integrated Primary School	2	13*
Scarva Primary School	2	0
Seagoe Primary School	2	2
St Brendan's Primary School	2	1
St Francis' Primary School , Aghderg	1	1
St Mary's Primary School (Dungannon)	1	1
St Mary's Primary School (Craigavon)	3	2
St Mary's Primary School (Banbridge)	8	9
St Patrick's Primary School (Lurgan)	2	2
St Patrick's Primary School (Craigavon)	1	1
St Patrick's Primary School (Craigavon)	3	3
St Teresa's Primary School	9	8
Tannaghmore Primary School	6	7
Name of Post Primary School		
Banbridge High School	6	6
Lismore Comprehensive School	4	4
Lurgan College	4	5

Name of Primary School	Current No of Mobiles	No of Mobiles in Jan 13
New-Bridge Integrated College	10	34*
Portadown College	2	2
St Michael's Grammar	3	3
St Patrick's College	3	4
St Paul's Junior High School	4	5
Name of Special School		
Donard Special School	1	N/A

*The number includes modular build classrooms which are now not included

I have announced a number of school building projects for Upper Bann constituency and this will diminish the need for mobile classrooms at these schools. The list below details the schools that are in process of receiving a major capital build or a school enhancement scheme:-

St Mary's Primary School, Banbridge	Major capital build
St Teresa's Primary School	Major capital build
Tannaghmore Primary School	Major capital build
Lismore Comprehensive School	Major capital build
St Michael's Grammar	Major capital build
St Paul's Junior High School	
New-Bridge Integrated College	School enhancement scheme
Donard Special School	School enhancement scheme

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what input his Department has had into the preparation of the Mental Capacity Bill. (AQW 35432/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: At key stages in the progressing of a draft mental capacity Bill, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety sought comments from all departments, including from the Department of Education. No specific matters were raised by my Department in connection with the development of the draft Bill.

I would also refer the questioner to the answer provided by Minister Poots in his response to AQW 35326/11-15 on the same matter.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education when funding will be made available to carry out the development proposals for Kilcooley Primary School. (AQW 35464/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The extent of capital works required at Kilcooley Primary School greatly exceeds the minor capital limit of £500k and for that reason the South Eastern Education and Library Board made an application to the Department for funding through the Schools Enhancement Programme in May 2013. However, this application was unsuccessful as a development proposal to reduce the school's admission and total enrolment numbers was still being considered at that time.

Now that the development proposal has been approved, the Board has advised that it intends, at the next opportunity, to submit a bid for funding for the refurbishment of Kilcooley Primary School under the Department of Education's Schools' Enhancement Programme.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education whether post-primary Irish-medium Education will form part of the Shared Education Campus at Lisanelly, Omagh. (AQW 35572/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Currently none of the schools re-locating to the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus provide post-primary Irish Medium (IM) education.

However, I am currently considering the Ministerial Advisory Group report on Irish Medium Post Primary Education. The report includes consideration of post-primary IM provision in South Tyrone including Omagh and the Lisanelly site.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 34788/11-15, whether the use of locally produced food is not already specified in tenders for the supply of food to schools; and to detail the plans to make this a stipulation in future tenders.

(AQW 35586/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards (Boards) are responsible for the procurement of food/food products for consumption in Board schools. The voluntary grammar and grant-maintained integrated schools have discretion to use the ELB contracts or to procure their own supplies.

The European Public Contracts Directive (2004/18/EC), which applies to public authorities including the Education and Library Boards, sets out detailed procedures for the award of contracts whose value equals or exceeds specific thresholds. The threshold for supplies, including the supply of food products, is currently set at £111,676.

Most of the tenders for food products used by the Boards' school meals service exceed the EU supplies threshold. Therefore, tenders must be invited in accordance with EU directives and NI Public Procurement Policy. As this includes a requirement that the contracting authority does not discriminate in relation to the country of origin of the goods tenders cannot stipulate that food must be locally produced.

However, the Boards have confirmed that some of the food products which they procure must be supplied "fresh," (for example, milk, dairy, some fresh meat and poultry products and fruit and vegetables) hence such products are generally locally produced.

The school meals service provides meals to specified nutritional standards and maximises the use of seasonal and fresh products in accordance with

Procurement Guidance Note 04/14 Integrating Sustainable Development into the Procurement of Food and Catering Services. The Boards have advised that their procurement officers encourage the participation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the competition for business and that a significant percentage of food contracts awarded are to local SMEs.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Education why the South Eastern Educational Library Board will not provide a bus to take children who live in the Kilcoo area to Drumadonnell Primary School.

(AQW 35588/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) inform me that eligible SEELB pupils residing in Kilcoo that attend Drumadonnell Primary School have historically been accommodated on a Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) bus. However, as this bus is operating at capacity with SELB pupils this year, the SELB were no longer able to accommodate SEELB pupils. The SEELB have now made alternative arrangements for the 6 eligible pupils referred to in this response to be transported to and from Drumadonnell Primary School in a contract vehicle.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the mobile classrooms in North Down that are available for community use.
(AQW 35661/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education does not routinely collect information with regard to the use of mobile classrooms by communities.

If approached, schools will consider any request for the use of mobile classrooms in line with the Community Use of School Premises guidance issued by the Department.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education whether any mobile classrooms are surplus to requirements in North Down.
(AQW 35662/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The South Eastern Education and Library Board has stated that, in North Down, there are no mobile classrooms that are surplus to requirements.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education for an update on the new build for Bangor Central Integrated Primary School.
(AQW 35663/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Bangor Central Integrated Primary School was considered for a new build under the protocol developed to select projects to proceed in planning. However it did not achieve sufficient priority to be included in the list of schools I announced on 24 June 2014. While the school will be disappointed that they were not included in that announcement, this in no way implies that they will not be considered for funding at a later stage.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education for an update on the new capital build scheme for schools in Holywood.
(AQW 35665/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I refer the Member to my response to AQW 34897/11-15. While Priory College, Holywood Primary School and Holywood Nursery School will be disappointed that they were not included in the capital investment announcement in June 2014, this in no way implies that they will not be considered for funding at a later stage.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education what support is available for visually impaired children attending mainstream primary school in the South Eastern Education and Library Board, particularly children starting school for the first time. (AQW 35667/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) has confirmed that there are two Qualified Teachers for the Visually Impaired (QTVI) in the SEELB who provide support to pupils with a visual impairment attending mainstream primary school. The nature of support is determined by the severity of the individual pupil's visual impairment and frequency of contact with the child is primarily dependent upon the nature and severity of the child's functional vision in accordance with agreed inter-board guidelines.

Support may include the following:

- Establishing links with key staff in the new setting;
- Sharing of information between school settings;
- An environmental audit to ensure that the new setting is accessible for the child and to identify any areas of the school which may require modification prior to the child's placement;
- Visits to the new placement to familiarise the child with the school environment;
- Staff training on the nature and implications of the pupil's visual impairment;
- Ongoing advice, support and training to include attendance and contribution to Annual Review meetings, as appropriate;
- Weekly support from the QTVI for children with a profound visual impairment;
- A functional visual assessment of the child's visual needs will be carried out in the new school setting and findings will be discussed with the class teacher, Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and parents. A report, detailing the outcome, will be forwarded to parents, school, medical professionals and appropriate others.
- Advice on the modification of learning materials in an appropriate format e.g. large print, braille, electronic, etc.
- Advice and training on appropriate assistive technology and resources.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Education what is the current pupil to teacher ratio within controlled sector primary schools. (AQW 35685/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The pupil to teacher ratio (PTR) for controlled sector primary schools for the 2013/14 school year is 21.3.

Please note this includes;

- Controlled primary schools;
- Controlled integrated primary schools;
- Controlled Irish-medium primary schools; and,
- Preparatory departments of controlled grammar schools.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of children leaving post-primary schools with no qualifications in (i) English; and (ii) mathematics. (AQW 35692/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In 2012/13 1,982 (9%) pupils left post-primary school without achieving a GCSE grade G or higher in GCSE English. The corresponding figure for mathematics was 1,763 (8%) pupils.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to ensure that all children, regardless of background, achieve a good standard of literacy by eleven. (AQW 35693/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My priorities for education are focused on raising standards and tackling the impact of disadvantage. My policies reflect these priorities. Count, Read: Succeed, the literacy and numeracy strategy, aims to raise attainment levels in both literacy and numeracy and narrow the gap in educational outcomes. The strategy sets out the central role of teachers, supported by parents and school leaders, in their work to raise standards.

We are moving in the right direction. In the PIRLS and TIMSS studies published in December 2012 we were the highest ranking English speaking region in the world in both reading and numeracy - 5th out of 45 countries surveyed in reading and 6th out of 50 countries surveyed in mathematics.

The Learning to Learn framework sets early years education and learning services within my overall approach, where the importance of delivering high quality education services for children before and in the first years of compulsory education is recognised. Evidence shows that early years education provision makes a distinctive contribution to helping achieve the wider aims of improving attainment and reducing underachievement, especially in literacy and numeracy.

However, we still have too many young people who are not at their expected level in literacy at the end of their primary schooling and schools require additional support to address this underachievement particularly amongst socially

disadvantaged pupils. I am therefore continuing to provide funding for a range of additional interventions which focus on those factors which international evidence and best practice tells us will improve outcomes.

These include the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Literacy Project run by Stranmillis and St Mary's University Colleges. This offers continuing professional development for teachers to develop their capacity to teach reading, spelling and independent writing skills to children of primary age with special educational needs.

The Delivering Social Change programme to improve literacy and numeracy is providing an additional teaching resource to 151 primary schools, a community education initiatives programme across all sectors which aims to foster links between schools and their local communities and a Literacy and Numeracy CPD for teachers of English and maths at Key Stages 2 and 3 focusing on high quality teaching and transition from primary to post primary.

The Education Works advertising campaign is aimed at informing and reminding parents of the importance and value of becoming more involved in their child's education for example by reading with their children.

Save the Children's recently published report 'Read on. Get on' sets a target of all children reading well at the age of 11 by 2025, and it is interesting to note that the key areas for action are already part of my strategic approach to raising literacy standards.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education to detail the timescale for the implementation of changes to the weighting of AS level and A level examinations.

(AQW 35695/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The change to the weighting of AS and A level examinations will take effect from September 2016 (first teaching). This is the deadline to which CCEA is working for the review and redesign of A level specifications.

The weighting issue will not apply to A levels offered by English based awarding organisations, as their AS and A level qualifications will be decoupled in line with qualifications policy in England.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education how many mobile classrooms are currently surplus to requirements; and to detail how a sporting club, charity or voluntary organisation can acquire the services of such resources.

(AQW 35747/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department does not hold details on the number of mobile classrooms that are surplus to requirements as the responsibility for mobile classrooms rests with the school authorities. My Department has not considered allowing surplus mobile classrooms for local community use such as sporting clubs, charities or voluntary organisations as the majority of mobile accommodation which is replaced is no longer fit for purpose. Any surplus modular accommodation considered suitable for re-use is subject to the necessary building/planning controls/Departmental policies such as area planning/ approved enrolment/admissions numbers and is normally re-located within the schools estate.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education for an update on proposals to increase pupil numbers at Towerview Primary School, Bangor.

(AQW 35793/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The South Eastern Education and Library Board published Development Proposal 257 on 2 September 2014 proposing an increase to the admission and enrolment number of Towerview Primary School.

Publication of the Development Proposal has initiated the statutory two-month period during which comments can be sent directly to my Department. This period will end on 2 November 2014 and following that I will make the final decision on the proposal taking account of all pertinent information.

Further detail of this proposal can be found on my Department's website: http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/area-planning/14-schools_estate_devprop_pg/current_development_proposals.htm.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what initiatives are planned to help pupils with low educational attainment.

(AQO 6578/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Teachers and school leaders are key to raising standards.

They are best placed to identify pupils requiring additional support and, through high quality teaching and learning, to identify the most appropriate action to meet individual pupil needs.

However, schools may require additional support to address low achievement particularly amongst socially disadvantaged pupils.

I have therefore continued to implement policies and provide funding for a range of additional interventions which focus on the factors which international evidence and best practice tells us will improve outcomes.

Providing access to a wide range of academic and vocational courses is particularly important.

Young people who see their time in education as relevant to their future, who have access to courses that interest and motivate them and who receive effective and timely careers advice are more likely to remain engaged with their education and achieve their full potential.

Full implementation of the Entitlement Framework is important for all our young people.

Within schools, funded programmes are being implemented to improve pupil outcomes.

These include the Delivering Social Change programme; a literacy and numeracy Professional Development (CPD) project; the Special Educational Needs CPD literacy project and the Strategic Development Fund to Area Learning Communities.

I am also providing funding to support programmes aimed at improving school-community links.

These include the Community Education Initiatives Programme and the Greater West Belfast Community Project.

I am making substantial resources available to addressing low achievement and I have no plans to introduce further programmes at this stage.

However the continued division of children through the outdated and educationally unsound practice of academic selection continues to be a major obstacle to the creation of a world class education system

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Education how he will ensure that the new Special Education Needs and Inclusion Bill statementing process will meet the needs of each individual child.

(AQO 6581/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I hope shortly to bring a draft special education Bill to the Executive for consideration. I am committed to working with colleagues in order to achieve the introduction of the Bill to the Assembly, where it can be progressed and debated. I firmly believe that the Bill, the associated regulations and a revised statutory code of practice, will bring forward a rounded and considered package of proposals to improve the management, by both schools and education and library boards, of children's special educational needs.

Specifically, the draft Bill would retain a statutory framework based on the special educational needs of the individual child. My proposals do not dilute or remove the current statutory basis for statements. Importantly, the Bill would reduce the statutory timeframe for education and library boards to complete a statement from 26 to 20 weeks, subject to the existing statutory exceptions, in order to provide earlier assessment and intervention. It is proposed that a statement would be set out in the form of a coordinated support plan, which would ensure a more focused approach on progress and outcomes for the child and input from both children and parents.

The draft Bill would also propose to strengthen the statutory duties on Boards of Governors of grant-aided schools to prepare and keep under review a personal learning plan for each SEN pupil, including those with statements. This would focus schools on the child's progress, the outcomes to be achieved and the regular review of their needs.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Education to detail the level of financial assistance his Department provides annually to Irish Medium education.

(AQO 6587/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department takes it statutory duty to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish Medium Education very seriously and will continue to do so.

In the last financial year my Department provided £19m financial assistance to Irish Medium education. This has increased steadily from £12m in the 2007-08 financial year.

This funding has helped support the Irish medium sector as the fastest growing education sector in the North.

Over the last 10 years, the number of children in funded Irish medium education settings at pre-school, primary and at post primary level has risen from 2,695 in 2002-03 to 4,627 in 2012-13. The figures for 2002-03 equated to 0.77 percent of all children in grant-aided schools and in funded pre-school education. The figure for 2012-13 equates to 1.39 percent of all children in grant-aided schools and in funded pre-school education.

There are now 29 stand alone Irish-medium schools (28 Primary and 1 post-primary) and 10 Irish-medium Units attached to Catholic Maintained schools (7 primary and 3 post-primary).

Going forward, my Department will ensure that it continues to have a rigorous approach to its duty to Irish Medium Education.

Mr McAleer asked the Minister of Education what level of social objectives will be incorporated into the Lisanelly project to maximise the benefit of this investment for the wider community.

(AQO 6588/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department has developed a range of social objectives for the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus. These include the provision of a broad and rich educational experience for pupils; the preservation of cultural diversity; the provision of full service facilities; the promotion of social cohesion through sharing, and the integration of the campus at the heart of the Omagh community.

To help ensure these objectives are delivered I am establishing a Community Stakeholder Group and an Inter-Departmental Working Group.

These groups will be tasked with:

- Exploring how the opportunities and benefits accruing from the investment at Lisanelly can be maximised across the Omagh area in terms of economic and social regeneration.
- Ensuring the facilities developed are aligned with community need and available for use by the public outside of school hours, thus embedding Lisanelly within the wider community.

Furthermore, in line with Executive policy, social clauses will be used in all contracts let under the Lisanelly Programme, creating a number of job opportunities, work placements and training opportunities.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Education for an update on the future of Ballysillan Primary School.
(AQO 6589/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards are responsible for planning education provision in their areas. They published plans for primary schools on their websites in June 2014.

The Belfast Board's area plan proposes the closure of Ballysillan Primary School as part of an area solution for North Belfast. There is currently no Development Proposal with the Department.

If it is proposed to close a school the statutory Development Proposal process must be followed. This requires the proposer, BELB in this instance, to consult with the school's Governors, Staff, Parents and other schools in the area which may be affected.

If it is decided to progress with the proposed closure, the Development Proposal must be published. This triggers a statutory two month period during which comments can be sent directly to the Department. I will then take a final decision on the proposal, taking account of all pertinent information.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education whether he has any plans to support and establish educational zones in areas of educational underachievement.
(AQO 6590/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am determined to tackle educational underachievement wherever it occurs but I currently have no plans to establish any educational zones.

The Greater Shankill Community Convention has designated the Greater Shankill area as a Children and Young People's Action Zone.

The important aspect of this designation is that it is a community-led initiative not something imposed or directed by government. That is one of its strengths.

I am encouraged by the commitment shown by the community leaders and the Greater Shankill Community Convention to improve the life chances of children and young people in the Greater Shankill area.

I am heartened by recognition that the community itself has a particular and significant role to play.

I am committed to supporting the framework and working with the Agreed Agenda Steering Group in their work in taking their proposals forward.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Education for an update on the progress of the new build for Edenderry Nursery School at Lanark Way, Belfast.
(AQO 6591/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Economic Appraisal for Edenderry Nursery School which was prepared by the BELB was sent to my Department on 04 September 2014 for approval. It was approved on the 10 September 2014 to allow the project to proceed to concept design i.e. RIBA stage 2.

Department for Employment and Learning

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the loans advanced by his Department through the Financial Transactions Capital Scheme in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) East Londonderry, since 1 April 2013.
(AQW 35266/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): My Department has not advanced any loans through the Financial Transactions Capital Scheme either in Northern Ireland or in East Londonderry, since 1 April 2013.

However the Executive agreed to provide £35.0m of Financial Transactions Capital loan funding to the University of Ulster to assist in financing their Greater Belfast Development scheme. The loan was processed through the Strategic Investment Board on behalf of OFMdFM. My Department was involved in the negotiations for this to take place.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what assurances he can give that funding for students with special needs or learning disabilities will be ring-fenced from current spending cuts.

(AQW 35307/11-15)

Dr Farry: At this stage, the full extent of any potential budgetary reduction facing my Department in 2015/16 remains uncertain. Cuts have already been imposed in-year. Unfortunately, I cannot give an assurance that any funding, even for those with special needs or learning disabilities, will be exempt from the resulting financial pressures. However, while my Department will continue to prioritise the need to ensure that these students are appropriately supported and resourced, the scale of the potential cuts means that even core services are likely to be affected.

Widening participation is a key priority for my Department and I remain wholly committed to the widening participation agenda.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what is the (i) hourly; and (ii) weekly rate of pay required to provide an acceptable standard of living.

(AQW 35339/11-15)

Dr Farry: The question of what rate of pay is required to provide an acceptable standard of living is not one which is within the remit of my Department or indeed the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The national minimum wage is set by the Chancellor of the Exchequer each year on the advice of the Low Pay Commission. It is enforced by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Since 1 October, 2013, the national minimum wage has been £6.31 an hour for adults aged 21 and over, and £5.03 for those aged 18 to 21. It is set to increase on 1 October 2014 to £6.50 and £5.13 respectively.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many local students (i) registered with; and (ii) applied through the Central Applications Office system in the last year.

(AQW 35342/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department contacted the Central Applications Office and it advised that (i) it does not collect information on the number of people registered; and (ii) there were 1,374 people from Northern Ireland who applied through Central Applications Office in 2013 (for the 2013/14 academic year) for both degree and diploma/certificate courses.

This included 1,257 people who applied for a degree course and 260 people who applied for a diploma/certificate course. Some individuals applied for both a degree and a diploma/certificate course and therefore the sum of these figures is slightly higher than the total applicants.

These are the most recent figures available.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what cuts will be made to his budget as a result of the lack of agreement on Welfare Reform.

(AQW 35353/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Executive is facing a number of strategic budget challenges in 2014-15 including addressing a Resource budget over-commitment, Executive commitments and managing the financial impact of key policy issues such as Welfare Reform.

At the Executive meeting on 31 July 2014, the Executive agreed to an immediate reduction to Departmental Resource budgets in 2014-15 to address the over-commitment, Executive commitments and in-year bids. For my Department this meant an immediate Resource budget reduction of £16.3m (2.1%). Failure to reach agreement on Welfare Reform this year (2014-15) will mean further cuts of 2.3% to the Department's budget, amounting to an £18.5m reduction in year, and my Department is planning ahead for this scenario. This amounts to an overall in-year cut of 4.4% to the Department's Resource budget. Cuts of this magnitude will inevitably impact on the Department's ability to deliver its skills and employment agenda, supporting individuals, employers and the economy generally. If the failure to reach agreement continues into next year the cuts will be even greater.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the rationale for the reduction in the Student Hardship Fund for 2014/15.

(AQW 35384/11-15)

Dr Farry: The initial allocation to the college Hardship Funds for 2014/15 has been set at the same level as the previous year. This allocation of £2.1 million is almost £100,000 more than the total spend of £2.005 million last year.

The amount of money allocated to Hardship Funds is determined by historical factors including previous spending levels and data regarding numbers of disadvantaged students. The requirement is demand-led and is therefore adjusted accordingly during the academic year, if necessary, to ensure that appropriate funding is available.

In the last five years, hardship fund requirements have been met in full and no application has been refused because of lack of funding.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what pathways his Department offers for apprentice electricians. (AQW 35411/11-15)

Dr Farry: To be eligible for ApprenticeshipsNI funding an apprentice must be employed "from day one" - so it is employers that create apprenticeship positions.

My Department supports the cost of the off-the-job training required for the achievement of qualifications set out in apprenticeship frameworks.

Off-the-job training is delivered by further education colleges and other contracted training suppliers.

Electrical apprentices may follow the Electrotechnical Level 3 framework or the Electrical Engineering pathway that is contained within the Engineering apprenticeship framework.

In relation to the future of apprenticeships, I have outlined my vision in *Securing our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships* (published in June 2014). The strategy sets out the way forward through a series of new policy commitments and an implementation plan. Many of the commitments amount to a step-change to the system of apprenticeships in Northern Ireland.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what is the value of the contract with the Electrical Training Trust. (AQW 35412/11-15)

Dr Farry: During the Financial Year 2013/14 the Electrical Training Trust claimed and received £1,287,270.00 ApprenticeshipsNI funding. This figure includes an employer incentive payment of £1,500 per apprentice that the training supplier passes on to the relevant employer.

The remit of my Department's contract with the Electrical Training Trust relates to the delivery of the off-the-job training required for achievement of qualifications set out in an apprenticeship framework. The Electrical Training Trust contract is to deliver training across all 26 contract areas in Northern Ireland.

ApprenticeshipsNI targets relate to the achievement of apprenticeship framework qualifications (rather than the number of apprentices).

The current target relevant to the Electrical Training Trust is outlined below.

"To ensure that, as a minimum, 65% of those participants who commence a Level 3 Apprenticeship during the training period 1st April 2014 - 31st March 2015 will achieve a NVQ Level 2 by 31st March 2017, thereby demonstrating that significant progress is being made towards the attainment of the Full Apprenticeship Training Framework. A minimum Full Framework achievement of 59% by 31st March 2019 is anticipated."

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what is the remit of the contract with the Electrical Training Trust. (AQW 35413/11-15)

Dr Farry: During the Financial Year 2013/14 the Electrical Training Trust claimed and received £1,287,270.00 ApprenticeshipsNI funding. This figure includes an employer incentive payment of £1,500 per apprentice that the training supplier passes on to the relevant employer.

The remit of my Department's contract with the Electrical Training Trust relates to the delivery of the off-the-job training required for achievement of qualifications set out in an apprenticeship framework. The Electrical Training Trust contract is to deliver training across all 26 contract areas in Northern Ireland.

ApprenticeshipsNI targets relate to the achievement of apprenticeship framework qualifications (rather than the number of apprentices).

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Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what training targets exist in relation to the number of apprenticeships in the contract with the Electrical Training Trust. (AQW 35414/11-15)

(AQW 35414/11-15)

Dr Farry: During the Financial Year 2013/14 the Electrical Training Trust claimed and received £1,287,270.00 ApprenticeshipsNI funding. This figure includes an employer incentive payment of £1,500 per apprentice that the training supplier passes on to the relevant employer.

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Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the monitoring and assessment his Department undertakes of apprenticeship contracts.

(AQW 35415/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department's Supplier Performance Branch and the Finance and Audit Support Team both carry out at least one monitoring visit each financial year to ensure that contracted training suppliers are fully compliant with all aspects of the ApprenticeshipsNI programme's Operational Guidelines and conditions of contract. Subsequent visits are undertaken based on risk assessment.

My Department also has a Quality Improvement Adviser who works closely with the Education and Training Inspectorate to evaluate quality of provision on a three yearly cycle and to report on the quality of leadership and management, standards and outcomes, and teaching and learning.

Information gathered during monitoring and inspection activity will be reviewed during an annual case conference. The review of all available information will inform decisions on further action required.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on his Department's commitment to maintaining the existing Executive policy of freezing tuition fees at their current level.

(AQW 35419/11-15)

Dr Farry: I remain committed to maintaining Executive policy of freezing tuition fees at their current levels subject only to inflationary increases for full time undergraduate Northern Ireland and European domiciled students studying in Northern Ireland.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how monies that were not spent in Hardship Education Fund allocations were reallocated, in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 35446/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department works closely with each college to ensure that they have appropriate funding to meet their requirements. Any surplus identified in a college budget is redistributed, as required, to other colleges with budgetary pressures. Further education colleges manage their Hardship Fund allocations based on an academic year which runs from August to July. By the following 30th September colleges must declare any surpluses of un-spent Hardship Fund monies to the Department. In the following academic year the Department then redistributes these funds to colleges depending on actual demand identified. The table below shows the total un-spent monies and revised budget allocations for the last three years:

FE Colleges Hardship Fund for the last 3 years.

Year	Opening Budget Allocation (£000)	Revised in Year Allocation Based on Demand (£000)	Add. Funding Requirement (£000)	Actual Expenditure (£000)	Year End Surplus/ Deficit (£000)	Comments
2013/14	2150	2326	-176	2005	321	Available to contribute to any funding pressures in 2014/15
2012/13	1900	2115	-215	1990	125	Reallocated to contribute to funding pressure in 2013/14
2011/12	1900	1970	-70	1778	192	Reallocated to contribute to funding pressure in 2012/13

I can confirm that no Hardship Fund monies were lost to the further education sector as a whole in the last 3 years. The Department has been able to roll this forward from one year to the next, to contribute towards any additional funding requirements.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many times since May 2011 has he transferred an Assembly Question to a Freedom of Information request; and of these, to detail (i) the number that resulted in the supply of the requested information; (ii) who provided the advice regarding the transfer and whether the departmental solicitor was involved; (iii) when this procedure became departmental practice; and (iv) whether the relevant Member was advised of this procedure in advance of the transfer.

(AQW 35456/11-15)

Dr Farry: On no occasion since May 2011 have I transferred an Assembly Question to a Freedom of Information request.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he has received a business case for the expansion of the Magee Campus at the University of Ulster; and if so, to outline the timeframe for processing the case.

(AQW 35476/11-15)

Dr Farry: The business case for the expansion of the Magee campus of the University of Ulster is being completed in two phases. Phase one is the assessment of need for the increase in university provision. Phase two is the completion of an options appraisal including a full economic impact analysis of the preferred option. A draft of phase one has recently been submitted and my officials will be meeting with representatives of the Steering Group and the consultants to discuss it in the near future. To date the department has not been advised when a draft of phase two will be submitted for review. However, as I have previously stated, the business case will be scrutinised on the same basis as any other business case submitted to my department.

At this early stage I am not in a position to outline a timeframe for the entire process as the business case must also be submitted to the Department of Finance and Personnel for its scrutiny.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he has received a business case for the new teaching block for the Magee Campus at the University of Ulster; and if so, to outline the timeframe for processing the case.

(AQW 35477/11-15)

Dr Farry: The process of agreeing a business case with an institution is an iterative one and several drafts may be submitted before approval is given. The first full draft of this business case was submitted by the university in June 2014. A second draft was received on 18 August and this was returned to the university for further work on 22 August. Once a draft is received which is deemed to satisfy the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation, then all the necessary approvals can be obtained from my department usually within five to ten days.

However, as this business case is seeking funding of over £5m, it has to be submitted to DFP for its approval. It is impossible to indicate the timeframe at this stage as DFP may or may not raise queries which both my department and the university will have to deal with.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether any Further Education Colleges offer a course involving a work based apprenticeship for trainee electricians.

(AQW 35486/11-15)

Dr Farry: All six further education colleges are contracted by my Department to deliver ApprenticeshipsNI funded training for apprentice electricians.

To be eligible for funding an apprentice must be employed "from day one" - so it is employers that create apprenticeship positions. Through the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, my Department funds the cost of the off-the job training required for the achievement of qualifications set out in apprenticeship frameworks.

Electrical apprentices may follow the Electrotechnical Level 3 apprenticeship framework or the Electrical Engineering pathway, contained within the Engineering framework

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he plans to establish links with agencies (i) outside of Belfast; and (ii) specifically in East Londonderry, who offer work experience placements through the Youth Employment Scheme (YES), recruit unemployed jobseekers and avail of the Steps to Work and YES employer subsidies.

(AQW 35498/11-15)

Dr Farry: In response to your question above, there are currently no plans to establish formal links with employment agencies throughout Northern Ireland in relation to the Youth Employment Scheme work experience placement / employer subsidies, or the Steps to Work employer subsidies.

However, I can confirm that as part of the Department for Employment and Learning's Employer Engagement Strategy, Employer Engagement Teams (EETs) have been established throughout Northern Ireland to actively engage with local employers, councils, support organisations and economic development organisations to secure both work experience and jobs.

As part of this service these teams deliver large scale employer events such as Job Fair and Advice Forums targeted at meeting local labour market needs and maximising placement / job opportunities for clients who maybe participating on the Department's provision. Specifically in relation to East Londonderry, events have previously been held in Coleraine and Ballymena, with one scheduled this month for Ballymoney.

In addition, the EETs engage directly with employers on a one-to-one basis, again with the aim of encouraging, ensuring that a range of training and employment opportunities are available in DEL's programmes including the Youth Employment Scheme (YES) and Steps to Work (StW).

Employment Service Advisers, based in local Jobs and Benefits offices and JobCentres across NI, engage with each client to determine employability, potential occupational areas to meet local labour needs and the relevant skills required. The Advisers, with appropriate support from the Employer Engagement Teams, may then source relevant work experience placements with employers and / or local organisations.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for a timeline for the building of a new further education college in Coleraine.

(AQW 35683/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Northern Regional College is currently preparing a business case for the provision of further education in the Ballymoney, Coleraine and Ballymena areas. Until the outcome of that business case is known and associated funding identified, it is not possible to provide a timeline for any of the College's proposed new buildings.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the capital investment announcement for Craigavon Southern and Regional College Campuses.

(AQO 6606/11-15)

Dr Farry: I was delighted to receive confirmation of the Department's successful capital bid to the 'Together Building a United Community' programme. This was confirmed in the joint Government and Northern Ireland Assembly paper entitled 'Building a Prosperous and United Community: One Year On', dated 2 July 2014.

The college is actively seeking to secure a suitable site and this project will result in the establishment of new build for the combined Lurgan and Portadown campuses in Craigavon, facilitating closer integration across the Further Education estate.

The business case for this project and for two new builds to replace current facilities at Armagh and Banbridge at the existing sites have been approved.

The total capital cost of the projects is estimated at £91m and my Department will be bidding for capital in the next spending period to fund the Armagh and Banbridge projects.

In the meantime the college has been given permission to complete some early design work, and the college is working with Central Procurement Directorate on the procurement of a Design Team. It is anticipated that an Integrated Consultancy Team will be appointed by January 2015.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether his decision to reduce the funding for hardship funds at Further Education Colleges took into consideration the growing use of food banks and payday loans among students.

(AQO 6599/11-15)

Dr Farry: I have not taken a decision to reduce funding for hardship funds at further education colleges. Rather this has been demand led. The amount of money allocated to hardship funds is determined by historical factors including previous spending levels and data regarding numbers of disadvantaged students.

This is adjusted accordingly during the academic year to ensure that appropriate funding is available.

Allocations to students take account of their own personal and family financial circumstances but do not specifically consider food banks and payday loans.

In the last five years, hardship fund requirements have been met in full and no application has been refused because of lack of funding.

My Department provides financial help to further education students through two support funds, namely Further Education Awards and college Hardship Funds.

Over recent years my Department has encouraged the take up of Further Education Awards bursaries rather than exacerbate a dependency on hardship funds which are meant to be targeted at those most in need. The funds are, however, inextricably linked and although there has been a reduction in hardship fund requirements over recent years, there has been a greater corresponding increase in the payment of Further Education Awards.

Over the last five years there has been a net increase of approximately £800,000 of the total amount available in the combined funds. In providing this additional funding, my Department recognises the importance of supporting students and alleviating financial barriers through meeting costs associated with learning.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the number of work placements in the North Down area that are available to students at the South Eastern Regional College.

(AQO 6595/11-15)

Dr Farry: According to the college, 1,141 students and trainees participated in work placements in the 2013/14 academic year as part of their programmes of learning.

In addition, the South Eastern Regional College has extremely good working relationships with employers in its area, and engages with over 5,000 employers to obtain relevant work placements as close to students' homes as possible. The process of obtaining, monitoring and evaluating work placements takes significant effort by the college, but is a key element of the student experience and an integral part of their study.

I can also advise that the college has developed bespoke software, called Business Engagement, Student Tracking, to monitor placements.

Research emphasises the importance of work placements. In particular, learners benefit from experience of the work environment to complement their main studies. This is also a very effective way for learners to acquire the all-important employability skills required by employers.

My Department's current reviews of further education and youth training are considering how work placements can be included in the most effective way in individual students' programmes of learning.

The Youth Employment Scheme is a voluntary scheme designed to help young people develop the skills needed to get a job. It recognises that employability skills are more readily obtained by active participation in a work setting with an employer or a voluntary organisation.

Not only does participating in the Youth Employment Scheme help young people develop employability and work related skills, a work experience opportunity or placement with an employer can also offer the chance to sample particular types of work and improve levels of confidence and motivation.

Experience to date has demonstrated that employers are keen to become involved in the scheme and offer opportunities for young people.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how the need for current high level skills provision can be adequately delivered by further and higher education institutes.

(AQO 6600/11-15)

Dr Farry: Our higher education institutions, including further education colleges and universities, have a central role to play in driving up skill levels and in particular delivering higher level skills.

I am committed, through the Higher Education Strategy, to working closely with the sector to increase the number of students with higher-level skills in economically-relevant subjects. By 2015/16 I will have provided an additional 1,587 undergraduate places and 351 PhD places in STEM and economically-relevant subject areas.

Our further education colleges play an important role in increasing participation and achievement in higher education. The scale of the sector's contribution to higher education delivery is demonstrated by the fact that nearly one fifth of all higher education students in Northern Ireland are studying in one of the six further education colleges. In the last four academic years I have added an additional 377 full-time higher education places in the further education sector.

Furthermore, my Department enhances the capability of Northern Ireland to respond to the needs of potential investors by creating pools of talent with skills by up-skilling unemployed graduates through the "Academy Model". This is a short-term intervention to help companies meet specific needs. We have up-skilled unemployed graduates in software testing, cloud computing, data analytics, engineering, sales and marketing and professional software skills, and are planning an academy in visual effects/animation. The Level 5 Software Professional Course has also recently been restructured and it is hoped the programme will be delivered by all six college regions within the FE sector.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether the proposed cuts to his budget will impact on education at the Northern Regional College.

(AQO 6601/11-15)

Dr Farry: As members will know, a 2.1% in-year cut was agreed for my Department as part of the June Monitoring Round, and a further reduction of at least 2.3% is scheduled at this stage for the October Monitoring Round. At this juncture, the full extent of the budgetary reductions facing my Department in October Monitoring and moreover in 2015/16 remains unclear.

As recently discussed in the Committee, for 2014/15, as far as further education is concerned, the Department is seeking to find savings through making cuts to the central Departmental Budget, rather than to front line services. This will be much more difficult next year.

Until final decisions have been made regarding future budgetary reductions, I am unable to advise what the nature of the impact will be on the services offered at Northern Regional College. However, due to the potential scale of the proposed cuts, all services provided by my Department will be affected.

Should these budgetary cuts proceed, the further education sector, including Northern Regional College, will not be exempt. The college is currently undertaking a comprehensive exercise to review its strategy and the priority for this exercise is the efficient and effective delivery of student education.

While I can assure you that my Department will work directly with the sector to minimise the impact on delivery to students, my assessment is that front line services will be impacted.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the work of the ICT Working Group.
(AQO 6602/11-15)

Dr Farry: Mr Speaker, with your permission, I wish to group questions ten and thirteen, and would also like to request an extra minute for the answer.

I formed the ICT Working Group in January 2012, bringing together business leaders, employer representatives, government officials and representatives from local colleges and universities to consider how the current and future skills needs for the sector can be addressed.

In June 2012 we produced an action plan setting out the short, medium and long term actions to address skills shortages in the ICT Sector.

A central theme of the Action Plan is around skills provision. With software development and coding skills being identified by industry as a priority area, many of the actions focus on computer programming or software development skills.

Actions completed include developing a public/private ICT Apprenticeship scheme which has created 111 positions to date, creating Masters courses for over 100 Non-IT graduates, and funding a professional software development course for around 160 people.

Other notable achievements include the development of a Software Testers Academy which has delivered employment to 64 people, and pilot academies in the areas of data analytics and cloud computing.

My Department also funds the Bring IT On campaign which has been instrumental in raising awareness of the opportunities available in the ICT sector. This has led to an increase in applications for IT related degrees by approximately 90% at both of our local universities since the launch of the campaign.

Officials work closely with Invest NI, through its ICT Collaborative Network programme, to work on the streams of Aggregation and Fast Response, Courses and Alignment, Quality and Attract Back and ICT Careers and Incentives.

All of this is in addition to the comprehensive provision in our universities. By 2015/16 I will have provided an additional 1,587 undergraduate places and 350 PhD places in STEM and economically-relevant subject areas, including ICT.

We have also continued to deliver a rich curriculum in our further education colleges and have expanded the opportunities for progression through the piloting of a higher level apprenticeship.

In addition a new Software Systems Development A–Level is being delivered in our schools. This was designed in partnership with industry, Invest NI and the Department of Education. It is planned to extend this to GCSE level.

The Group, which is now called the ICT Sector Implementation Group, continues to interest and engage industry, and has recently been extended to include a further two employers.

This Group provides an excellent example of what can be achieved within the context of devolution, and continues to play a key role in supporting the sector to better contribute to our growing economy.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what efforts his Department is making to increase the number of people who cycle to Further Education Colleges and Higher Education Institutions.
(AQO 6603/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department has responsibility for the provision of funding for teaching, learning and research purposes in relation to further and higher education. Each college and higher education institution is responsible for its own policies and procedures, including the promotion of cycling.

The further education colleges and higher education institutions offer a variety of schemes and incentives to encourage students and staff to cycle. These include Cycle to Work schemes, which allow staff to purchase a bicycle and equipment up to the value of £1,000, tax free. Students can also avail of discount schemes to purchase bicycles from local suppliers and are actively encouraged to participate in health and wellbeing schemes.

Campuses provide secure bicycle parking facilities for students and staff, as well as shower and changing facilities. Sustainable travel plans have also been developed by the institutions and colleges to encourage staff, students and visitors to travel by bicycle, foot or public transport.

I would also like to refer to a draft Bicycle Strategy published by the Minister for Regional Development recently for public consultation, which will run until 21st November 2014. The draft strategy outlines his vision for cycling in Northern Ireland and his aspiration that implementing an agreed strategy will result in improved access to education and training.

The Department for Regional Development has also established a Cycling Unit and a Cross-sectoral Cycling Group with the aim of encouraging key stakeholders to work together to deliver a step change in cycling provision. The Cycling Unit has a particular focus on encouraging and assisting people to cycle as a means of everyday travel, including the daily commute to work, further education and training, and school.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline any reduction in places at Further Education Colleges as a result of potential cuts to his departmental budget.

(AQO 6604/11-15)

Dr Farry: At this stage, the level of budget reductions facing my Department in October Monitoring and in 2015/16 is not yet clear. However, budget cuts have already been imposed in-year.

With further budget cuts impending in both October Monitoring and 2015/16, this will affect all services provided by my Department. Given the potential scale of these cuts, I can give no guarantee that the current level of student places at further education colleges will continue to be funded.

I can however give an assurance that my department will work closely with the sector to minimise the impacts on front line delivery to students as even these core services are highly likely to be affected.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department provides training in computer programming.
(AQO 6605/11-15)

Dr Farry: I formed the ICT Working Group in January 2012, bringing together business leaders, employer representatives, government officials and representatives from local colleges and universities to consider how the current and future skills needs for the sector can be addressed.

In June 2012 we produced an action plan setting out the short, medium and long term actions to address skills shortages in the ICT Sector.

A central theme of the Action Plan is around skills provision. With software development and coding skills being identified by industry as a priority area, many of the actions focus on computer programming or software development skills.

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We have also continued to deliver a rich curriculum in our further education colleges and have expanded the opportunities for progression through the piloting of a higher level apprenticeship.

In addition a new Software Systems Development A-Level is being delivered in our schools. This was designed in partnership with industry, Invest NI and the Department of Education. It is planned to extend this to GCSE level.

The Group, which is now called the ICT Sector Implementation Group, continues to interest and engage industry, and has recently been extended to include a further two employers.

This Group provides an excellent example of what can be achieved within the context of devolution, and continues to play a key role in supporting the sector to better contribute to our growing economy.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on any recent discussions he has had in relation to the proposed expansion of the Magee Campus at the University of Ulster.

(AQO 6607/11-15)

Dr Farry: The member will be aware that I met with a delegation of representatives, including herself, on 14 August to discuss this issue. I also met earlier that day with the Vice-Chancellor and the Chief Finance and Information Officer of the University of Ulster.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the loans advanced by her Department through the Financial Transactions Capital Scheme in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) East Londonderry, since 1 April 2013.

(AQW 35267/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): No loans have been advanced to date by my Department through Financial Transactions Capital Funding.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what measures a home owner can take to re-coup a loss of income following the installation of Domestic Solar Panels, should the value of Renewables Obligation Certificates reduce.
(AQW 35298/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The value of a Renewables Obligation Certificate (ROC) is not fixed as they are tradable across the UK and their value can go up as well as down. Power NI is required through its licence conditions to offer terms for the export of electricity and offers a fixed ROC price for microgenerators on an annual basis. This fixed ROC price is set in agreement with the Utility Regulator. There is no mechanism to recoup losses if the ROC value reduces.

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the proportion of electricity exported from the grid to each renewable technology source, in each of the last five years.
(AQW 35299/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I refer the member to my response of 26 June 2014 to his previous Assembly Question AQW No. 34166/11-15.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the number of people trained in IT skills compared with the number of newly created jobs in this field.
(AQW 35305/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI does not hold figures on the number of people trained specifically in IT skills.

During 2013/14 Invest NI promoted 738 new jobs in the Computer Software and Services Sector.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment when the completed Tourism Strategy will be published.
(AQW 35319/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Tourism has an important role to play in our economy.

Final outcomes from the independent review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and wider tourism structures will inform our thinking on the way ahead. The public consultation period on the review report is due to close at the end of September.

When the responses from the review have been analysed, I will take stock of the action needed on a tourism strategy.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assessment her Department has made of the potential job losses in the (i) retail; (ii) services; and (iii) hospitality sectors should welfare cuts be introduced.
(AQW 35337/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As a result of penalties being imposed due to Sinn Fein's failure to implement Welfare Reform there is the potential of significant job losses across all sectors of the economy in Northern Ireland.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what cuts will be made to her budget as a result of the lack of agreement on Welfare Reform.
(AQW 35350/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department is currently assessing the potential impact of the cuts which will need to be made, including reductions across its arm's length bodies. Much of my Department's budget is allocated to Invest NI to support the growth of our economy, and to promote Northern Ireland as a tourist destination. The penalties arising from the failure to implement Welfare Reform impact on the resources available for economic development and tourism promotion and have the potential therefore to damage the excellent work of recent years to attract significant levels of investment and jobs and build on Northern Ireland's reputation as a world class venue for events.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on more efficient broadband provision in rural areas of East Londonderry.
(AQW 35358/11-15)

Mrs Foster: On 4 February 2014 my Department signed a contract with BT for delivery of the c£23.5million Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement project, which aims to provide improvements in access to basic and superfast fixed-line broadband services. It is anticipated that this project will bring more choice and improved broadband speeds to over 45,000 premises across Northern Ireland by the end of 2015.

The project is being delivered in eight phases which seeks to ensure that the project delivers benefit to the maximum number of premises while maintaining best value for money.

On 23 July we published details on NI Direct of the first implementation area to be completed and further details will be published as the roll-out continues. A list of the high level postcode areas where improvements are expected to take place

has also been included with proposed completion dates and this includes areas of East Londonderry. The information can be found at <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/broadband-improvement-project.htm>.

DETI has also been indicatively allocated £7.24million by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) for the extension of superfast broadband and which it is seeking to match, providing a potential funding pot of £14.48million.

On 26 August my Department commenced a public consultation on the proposed intervention area for a further project, to extend superfast broadband services to at least 95% of premises across Northern Ireland by 2017. The consultation document can be found at http://www.detini.gov.uk/index/what-we-do/deti-telecoms-index/consultations_from_2014/superfast_rollout_programme_phase_2.htm. If value for money is demonstrated, a mini-competition will be taken forward, using the existing BDUK framework and it is anticipated that a contract award may take place in early 2015.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the number of staff employed in her Department broken down by grade; and (ii) the total salary for each grade, for each financial year since 1 April 2010. **(AQW 35389/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: The number of staff, broken down by grade and the total salary for each grade is shown in the table below.

The number of staff and the salary costs are based on the position at 31 March in each of the four financial years.

**Staff Employed in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
(Including the Health and Safety Executive for N Ireland*)**

Grade		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Administrative Assistant/Industrial	Total Salary £	825,418.37	643,225.70	607,336.64	577,565.84
	Number of Staff	55.1	42.71	37.63	34.23
Administrative Officer	Total Salary £	1,888,062.32	1,666,597.80	1,795,367.5	1,968,880.54
	Number of Staff	102.07	88.88	94.59	97.94
Executive Officer 2	Total Salary £	1,830,138.00	1,591,518.18	1,884,338.62	1,828,187.81
	Number of Staff	88.96	75.61	82.92	76.69
Executive Officer 1	Total Salary £	2,071,443.00	2,032,854.33	2,368,962.35	2,615,220.90
	Number of Staff	87.49	83.37	89.30	97.11
Staff Officer	Total Salary £	2,412,280.25	2,559,246.45	2,684,054.95	2,762,414.10
	Number of Staff	88.28	91.54	89.45	90.52
Deputy Principal	Total Salary £	3,947,193.79	3,956,784.75	4,243,080.67	4,301,172.04
	Number of Staff	116.83	115.80	112.41	113.09
Grade 7	Total Salary £	1,774,746.72	1,908,597.61	2,314,091.22	2,547,217.90
	Number of Staff	44.91	46.15	47.55	51.75
Grade 6	Total Salary £	285,119.00	340,858.00	283,635.20	326,591.55
	Number of Staff	6	7	5.8	5.6
Senior Civil Servants	Total Salary £	906,259.00	990,983.30	884,863.60	899,722.88
	Number of Staff	15	16.1	14.8	14.83
Total	Total Salary £	15,940,660.45	15,690,666.12	17,065,750.75	17,826,973.56
	Number of Staff	604.64	567.16	574.45	581.76

* The Health and Safety Executive is a Non Departmental Public Body (with Crown status) of the Department and the staff therein are Civil Servants.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what consideration has been given to including Fermanagh as part of any future Gran Fondo stage events. **(AQW 35482/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: No decision has currently been taken with respect to a future Gran Fondo event however I would advise that the decision on routes would be the sole responsibility of the event organiser.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) her Department's plans to improve broadband provision in rural parts of West Tyrone; and (ii) the level of her Department's investment aimed at improving rural broadband provision, particularly in West Tyrone, in the last three years.

(AQW 35571/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) On 4 February 2014 my Department signed a contract with BT for delivery of the £23.5million Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project, which aims to provide improvements in access to basic and superfast fixed-line broadband services. It is anticipated that this project will bring more choice and improved broadband speeds to over 45,000 premises across Northern Ireland by the end of 2015.

The project is being delivered in eight phases which seeks to ensure that the project delivers benefit to the maximum number of premises while maintaining best value for money.

On 23 July we published details on NI Direct of the first implementation area to be completed and further details will be published as the roll-out continues. A list of the high level postcode areas where improvements are expected to take place has also been included with proposed completion dates and this includes a number of areas across West Tyrone. The information can be found at <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/broadband-improvement-project.htm>.

DETI has also been indicatively allocated £7.24million by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) for the extension of superfast broadband and, which it is seeking to match, providing a potential funding pot of £14.48million.

On 26 August my Department commenced a public consultation on the proposed intervention area for a further project, to extend superfast broadband services to at least 95% of premises across Northern Ireland by 2017. The consultation document can be found at http://www.detini.gov.uk/index/what-we-do/deti-telecoms-index/consultations_from_2014/superfast_rollout_programme_phase_2.htm. If value for money is demonstrated, a mini-competition will be taken forward, using the existing BDUK framework and it is anticipated that a contract award may take place in early 2015.

- (ii) My Department does not hold information on project investment at this level of disaggregation. However, I can advise that with the inclusion of the NI Broadband Improvement Project mentioned above, over the last six years my Department will have provided approximately £65m by the end of 2015, for the improvement of broadband infrastructure across Northern Ireland.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the extent of co-operation between her Department and mobile phone companies; and her Department's plans to ensure better mobile phone coverage in rural parts of West Tyrone.

(AQW 35574/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department maintains regular contact with the Mobile Network Operators and I am aware that they have been recently investing significantly to improve their 2G and 3G networks. For instance, to the end of 2013, 'EE' had invested some £30million in its Northern Ireland network while 'Three' had invested over £12million.

To address areas where the market is not currently investing, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is currently implementing the £150million Mobile Infrastructure Project (MIP), which aims to address mobile voice and basic data not-spots across the UK by March 2015. While the project is focused on 2G technology, it is understood that operators will future proof the infrastructure being deployed, in order to further support 3G, 4G and beyond, where possible.

Northern Ireland is in line for the deployment of 72 new mast sites under this project, with the first site expected to go live in the last quarter of 2014.

Throughout the implementation of this project, DETI has been in regular contact with DCMS and the Mobile Network Operators. The outcome of this initiative should help improve mobile services across Northern Ireland, including West Tyrone. Once completed, DETI will assess the need for future Government intervention.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many new jobs have been created in East Londonderry in the last twelve months.

(AQW 35603/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There were 199 new jobs created in the last financial year (2013-14) in the East Londonderry constituency as a direct result of Invest NI support.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the progress on the implementation of the Renewable Heat Incentive Programme Scheme, including a date for its launch.

(AQW 35684/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Since its introduction in November 2012 the Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Scheme has received 264 applications of which 225 have received accreditation to date. The Renewable Heat Premium Payment (RHPP) Scheme, introduced as an interim support scheme for domestic applicants has received 2004 applications with 1409 vouchers issued so far for technology support.

Subject to final financial and legal approvals, I will announce the launch of the Domestic RHI Scheme to replace the RHPP in the next few weeks with the intention that it will be open for applications before the end of the year.

In the meantime domestic customers can continue to avail of the RHPP Scheme.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment when the report into the NI Events Company will be published; and what was the final cost of the report.

(AQW 35712/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department appointed inspectors to the Northern Ireland Events Company Limited under Article 425(2) and Article 425(2A) of the Companies (NI) Order 1986. Under the terms of the appointment, and in line with Article 425(2A), any report made in connection with the inspection is not for publication. Accordingly, it is not the intention of my Department to publish the report of the company inspectors.

The total cost of the investigation was £1.24million.

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the roll out of high speed broadband in the Magheraconluce Road and Temple areas of Lagan Valley.

(AQO 6614/11-15)

Mrs Foster: On 4th February 2014 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment signed a contract with BT for a twenty three point five million pounds project which will see improvements in the broadband service for more than forty five thousand premises across Northern Ireland by the end of 2015.

The project will be completed in eight phases, each of which requires an extensive survey and design process which takes account of technical feasibility, quality of existing infrastructure in the area, reasonable costs, number of anticipated customers etc and seeks to achieve the greatest value for money and the highest number of beneficiaries.

On 23rd July DETI published details of the street level postcodes that benefited from completion of the first phase of the project together with a high level roll-out plan for future phases, including indicative completion dates.

Roll-out covering the Temple area, the BT27 6 postcode district, was completed on 30 June 2014 while roll-out in the Magheraconluce Road area, BT26 6 postcode district, is not due for completion until 31 December 2015. Details of the street level postcodes where improvements have been made in this latest phase will be published as soon as possible.

Mr Maskey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the recently published report by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action into the living wage.

(AQO 6608/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The DETI Minister has noted the findings of the report.

The DETI Minister is well aware of the need to raise wages in the economy. That is why the Economic Strategy clearly outlines an aim to improve the wealth and living standards of everyone through a focus on growing the private sector by investing in innovation and skills.

Invest NI's focus is on promoting jobs that pay salaries above the private sector median, which is significantly higher than the estimated Living Wage for Northern Ireland.

While the DETI Minister would support the aspiration of moving towards more firms paying the Living Wage, this must be on a voluntary basis as any mandatory approach may intensify cost pressures that local firms already have to deal with.

The report also includes a number of caveats which, if realised, will likely reduce the estimate of economic benefit included within the report. For example, it is unlikely that all firms will be able to fully absorb the additional costs associated with paying a living wage and some may shed labour as a result.

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what impact the reduction in her budget, as a result of the Welfare Reform penalties, will have on the work her Department carries out.

(AQO 6615/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I believe that the financial penalties from the failure by Sinn Fein to agree to the implementation of Welfare Reform will have serious implications not just for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment but for other Departments too. DETI is currently assessing the potential impact of the cuts which will need to be applied to it and its arm's length bodies, including Tourism Ireland and IntertradeIreland. However, much of that Department's budget is allocated to Invest NI to support the growth of our economy and to market Northern Ireland as a tourist destination. The penalties have the potential therefore to damage the excellent work of recent years to attract significant levels of investment and jobs and build on Northern Ireland's reputation as a world class venue for events.

Mr Douglas asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the economic and tourist impact of international events such as the Carl Frampton world title fight recently held in Titanic Quarter.

(AQO 6616/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Evaluation of a wide range of international events hosted in Northern Ireland has demonstrated that international sporting events, in particular, have the ability to greatly increase visitor numbers and revenue and generate a positive return on investment.

The associated media coverage from international events provides opportunities to showcase Northern Ireland on a worldwide platform. Live events also generate significant non-monetary benefits such as increasing Northern Ireland's reputation as a destination for holidays and major events and increased civic pride.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on her Department's efforts to improve broadband provision in rural areas.

(AQO 6617/11-15)

Mrs Foster: On 4 February 2014 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment signed a contract with BT for delivery of the twenty three point five million pounds, including five million pounds from DARD, Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement project, which aims to provide improvements in access to basic and superfast fixed-line broadband services. It is anticipated that this project will bring more choice and improved broadband speeds to over forty five thousand premises across Northern Ireland by the end of 2015 and, particularly, in rural areas.

The project is being delivered in eight phases, each of which requires an extensive survey and design process which takes account of technical feasibility, quality of existing infrastructure in the area, reasonable costs, number of anticipated customers etc and seeks to achieve the greatest value for money and the highest number of beneficiaries.

On 23 July 2014 DETI published details on NI Direct of the street level postcodes where improvements had been delivered under the first implementation phase together with a high level roll-out plan for future phases, including indicative completion dates. The intention is to update this information as each phase completes and services come online.

DETI has also been indicatively allocated seven point two four million pounds by Broadband Delivery UK, BDUK, for the extension of superfast broadband and is seeking to match this to provide a potential funding pot of fourteen point four eight million pounds.

On 26 August 2014 my Department commenced a public consultation on the proposed intervention area for a further project that will utilise this funding support and aimed at extending superfast broadband services to at least ninety five percent of premises across Northern Ireland by 2017. The consultation closes on 26 September 2014.

If value for money is demonstrated, a mini-competition will be taken forward, using an existing framework to find a suitable supplier and it is anticipated that a contract award may take place in early 2015.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline her proposals to enhance the accuracy and timeliness of the core economic data used to benchmark and evaluate economic growth.

(AQO 6618/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The responsibility for the production of economic and labour market statistics transferred out of the Department to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency in April 2011.

As part of the ongoing development of statistics, officials from the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment regularly attend expert user group meetings with the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency statisticians to feedback any issues and identify potential areas of improvement.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline her plans to improve mobile phone and mobile internet coverage in rural areas.

(AQO 6619/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The telecommunications market is fully privatised and independently regulated. Operators make network investments on the basis of commercial return.

Ofcom has indicated that between June 2012 and June 2013 Northern Ireland has seen the biggest improvement in reducing 3G not-spots of any UK nation

Moreover, it recorded that at a premises level, outdoor 2G and 3G coverage in Northern Ireland now stands at 98.9% and 99% respectively and is on a par with other parts of the UK with outdoor 4G coverage currently standing at 79.2%, the highest level of any UK nation.

The UK's four main mobile network operators have invested significantly to improve their 2G and 3G networks. For instance, to the end of 2013, EE had invested some £30million in its Northern Ireland network while Three had invested over £12million.

For those areas that are not currently being addressed by market forces the Department of Culture, Media and Sport is implementing the £150million Mobile Infrastructure project which aims to address mobile voice and basic data not-spots across the UK by March 2015. While the project is focused on 2G technology, it is understood that operators will future proof the infrastructure being deployed in order to further support 3G, 4G and beyond where possible. Northern Ireland is in line for the deployment of 72 new mast sites under this project with the first site expected to go live in the last quarter of 2014.

DETI is maintaining a watching brief on these ongoing initiatives and will assess the need for further government intervention once they have completed.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions she has had with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to make Northern Ireland a centre of excellence for cancer research and development.

(AQO 6620/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment attended Bio 2014 in San Diego in June 2014, along with four members of the ETI Committee, including yourself, during which the Minister met with representatives from Almac Sciences and three oncology FDI companies. Currently, four major oncology projects are in progress which will significantly increase the scope of oncology research in Northern Ireland.

The Minister's Department is currently working with DHSSPS, other Government departments and Industry to develop a strategy for Health & Life Sciences, which will include cancer research.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the proposal to extend the natural gas network to Whitehead, County Antrim.

(AQO 6621/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Utility Regulator and the natural gas industry have considered the possibility of bringing gas to Whitehead, and are continuing discussions with the aim of finding an economic option.

The DETI Minister continues to support the development of the gas industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the development of the Forthriver Innovation Park on the InvestNI site at Springfield Road.

(AQO 6622/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Belfast City Council have applied to Invest NI to access European Regional Development Funds to develop an Innovation Centre on the Invest NI owned site at Forthriver.

An independent appraisal has concluded and the project is progressing through the approvals process.

Council are working in parallel to the approval process and are well advanced in the procurement and planning stages.

Department of the Environment

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of derelict buildings.

(AQW 35221/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): My Department does not hold information on the number of derelict buildings in Northern Ireland as a whole.

I am aware that Belfast City Council carried out a survey which identified approximately 1,600 dilapidated buildings in its district.

I can also confirm that the Department of Social Development and Land and Property Services, Department of Finance and Personnel do not hold the information you have requested.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the powers that councils have in relation to derelict buildings.

(AQW 35222/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 (Articles 65 and 66 refer) is the main piece of legislation used by Councils to address ruinous and dilapidated buildings and defective premises. The legislation contains a number of provisions including a power whereby the council may by notice require the owner to execute such works of repair or restoration as may be necessary in the interests of amenity.

There is also a range of legislation dating back as far as 1847 which provides certain powers to Councils, in some cases only Belfast and Derry City Council, to deal with ruinous and/or dangerous buildings/structures. The legislation is as follows:-

- The Town Improvement Clauses Act 1847
- The Town Improvement (Ireland) Act 1854
- The Belfast Improvement Act 1878
- Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907
- The Belfast Corporation Act 1911
- The Londonderry Corporation Act 1918.

Problems with dilapidated buildings have become more prevalent in Northern Ireland in recent years. The negative impact on the amenity of local neighbourhoods can be serious and my Department is working to ensure that the most effective legislative framework is available to councils to take action to reduce the negative impact. My Department is reviewing all of the above legislation with a view to publishing a formal public consultation on policy proposals by 31 March 2015. I am fully committed to delivering a robust and effective legislative regime to allow councils to deal more effectively with the issues of dilapidated buildings.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment what are the anticipated savings that will result from the merger of North Down and Ards Borough Councils.

(AQW 35225/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The savings associated with the merger of councils, including those of North Down and Ards Borough Councils, will be assessed through a reform benefits analysis exercise, which I have asked each council to consider as soon as possible. The actual savings achieved will depend on key decisions that each of the new councils will need to make relating to future cost structures and service delivery models.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment whether he will order the video evidence specifically taken by Driver and Vehicle Agency enforcement staff in relation to taxi operator regulations enforcement at Ravenhill Rugby Ground on 23 August 2013, to be shown to the Committee for the Environment.

(AQW 35226/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The investigation into the provision of taxi services at Ravenhill Rugby Ground on 23 August 2013 was authorised under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). The video footage captured by enforcement officers was used to confirm their first hand observations regarding the manner in which taxi services were being provided at that time.

I am of the view that placing information gathered in this manner into the public domain would damage the investigatory process and inhibit my Department's statutory powers to pursue prosecutable offences. Therefore, it would not be appropriate for the video footage to be shown to the Committee for the Environment.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the daily staffing costs of the Coastal Zone Centre in Portrush from 22 August 2014 to 26 August 2014.

(AQW 35233/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The exact calculation of daily staffing costs will only be available when each staff member submits an overtime claim form, and they are processed for payment. The table below is therefore an estimate based on the maximum hourly rate for each grade and overtime premiums.

Dates	Estimated Staffing Costs £
Fri 22 Aug	Total £255.89 (including Agency Staff)
Sat 23 Aug	Total £203.80
Sun 24 Aug	Total £450.60
Mon 25 Aug	Total £184.47
Tues 26 Aug	Total £240.90

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment what cuts will be made to his budget as a result of the lack of agreement on Welfare Reform.

(AQW 35244/11-15)

Mr Durkan: As part of October Monitoring the Executive will consider the potential budget implications for all departments associated with Welfare Reform.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 26630/11-15, for an update on the adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan.

(AQW 35279/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan was adopted on 3 September 2014 and became operative on 9 September 2014.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what legal and financial responsibilities do local councils have for waste collected by the council but disposed of illegally by a contracted third party.

(AQW 35280/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The producer and/or holder of waste (for the purpose of this question councils and their contracted parties) have legal duties under "Duty of Care" legislation. This stems from requirements of Article 5 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 which means that a local council is required to keep certain records and ensure that waste collected by or for them is being managed legally and in a way that does not pose any threat to the environment or human health.

If councils enter into a contract with a third party for the treatment or disposal of the waste in line with the requirements of the Waste Framework Directive they continue to have responsibility for the waste through the various steps in the chain until the final treatment or disposal. Responsibility for the waste does not automatically end when it is handed over to a contractor. The council will need to be able to produce evidence that they have taken all reasonable steps to comply with Duty of Care. Failure to comply with any of the requirements of Duty of Care is a criminal offence. Further information can be found at: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/waste_management_duty_of_care_code_of_practice_for_ni.pdf

In the event of Council waste found to have been illegally dumped, it will be a matter for the courts to determine who is responsible and the magnitude of any financial sanction or obligation.

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of the Environment what steps he has taken to ensure that recyclable material from councils is not being landfilled.

(AQW 35282/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Under the Waste Management Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011, councils have a duty to apply the waste hierarchy to the waste under their control in accordance with Article 4 of the Waste Framework Directive. From 1 January 2015, councils will have a duty to separately collect the recyclable materials – paper, metal, plastic and glass. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency will check compliance with this requirement as part of its normal compliance monitoring of waste facilities and waste duty of care.

In October 2013 the Department published a revised Waste Management Strategy. The Strategy contains 47 actions and targets designed to deliver resource efficient and move waste up the waste hierarchy i.e. supporting waste prevention, re-use and recycling and seeking to minimise disposal to landfill.

The three Waste Management Groups have, on behalf of their constituent Councils, set out in revised Waste Management Plans how they will fulfil these duties in line with the objectives of the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy.

Landfill tax was introduced in 1996 to encourage the diversion of waste materials from landfill disposal to recovery. The current rate of landfill tax is £80 per tonne. Most recyclable materials have a positive economic value. Therefore there is a strong economic driver to divert recyclable materials from landfill disposal to recycling or recovery. Additionally, the Department introduced, in 2005, the Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme which set challenging targets for landfill diversion for all Councils. Councils which fail to meet these targets face the prospect of fines.

Under the Transfrontier Shipment of Waste Regulations 2007, waste materials can only be exported for recovery. It is not permitted to export waste for landfill disposal.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) how long each of the agency workers in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, who had their employment terminated prematurely, had remaining on their contracts; (ii) the site that each agency worker was located; and (iii) the role each agency worker carried out.

(AQW 35283/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Of the temporary agency workers who were released from their contracts earlier than originally planned:

- five would have had their contracts ended by 31 August, 24 by 15 September, and 22 by 30 September; and
- the remaining recruitment agency workers were covering longer term needs and their contracts would have ended for example when a vacancy was filled or an individual returned from sickness absence. Therefore, there was no fixed contract end date and it is not possible to state how long each individual had left.

(ii) & (iii). The sites where the temporary agency workers operated are shown in the table below which also indicates their roles by grade or title.

Location	FTE	Role
Resource Efficiency Division, - Water Management Unit, Lisburn.	11	Administrative Grades, Personal Secretary, Security Grade Band 2 and Investigation Officers
Resource Efficiency Division - Land Resource Management, Klondyke Building, Belfast.		
Historic Environment Division - Historic Monuments Unit, Waterman House, Hill Street, Belfast.		
Natural Environment Division - Klondyke Building, Belfast.		
Resource Efficiency Division - Environmental Crime Unit, Klondyke Building, Belfast.		

Location	FTE	Role
Historic Environment Division - Historic Buildings Unit, Waterman House, Hill Street, Belfast. Historic Environment Division - Historic Monuments Unit, Waterman House, Hill Street, Belfast Natural Environment Division - Country & Coast, Conservation Science, Conservation Designations, Klondyke Building, Belfast Resource Efficiency Division - Land Resource Management, Klondyke Building, Belfast. Resource Efficiency Division - Drinking Water Inspector, Lisburn. Innovation Strategies Division, Castlearchdale Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division – Regional Operations Headquarters, Klondyke Building, Belfast.	19	Professional and Technical Grades including Scientific Officers, Architects , Curatorial Grade E.
Innovation Strategies Division - Carrickfergus Castle. Innovation Strategies Division – Dunluce. Innovation Strategies Division - Castlearchdale Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division -Crawfordsburn Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division - Greypoint Fort. Innovation Strategies Division - Peatlands Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division - Bellaghy Bawn. Innovation Strategies Division - Hillsborough Fort. Innovation Strategies Division - Roe Valley Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division - Ness Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division - Scrabo Country Park. Innovation Strategies Division – Greencastle. Innovation Strategies Division - Greencastle/Narrow Water. Innovation Strategies Division - Narrow Water. Innovation Strategies Division - Ballycopeland. Innovation Strategies Division - Kilclief Castle. Innovation Strategies Division - Quoile Countryside Centre.	49.2	Rangers at Country Parks and State Care Monuments.
Total	FTE 79.2	

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the number; (ii) breed; and (iii) location of animals currently owned by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency; and (a) each of the animals sold over each of the last 6 months; (b) the reason for the sale of each; and (c) the intention of the purchasers for each.

(AQW 35285/11-15)

Mr Durkan: NIEA livestock animals as of 8 September 2014.

(i) Existing Number	(ii) BREED	(iii) Location
5	Shetland cattle (steers)	An Carn, Maghera.
1	Shetland cattle (cow)	Shetland Isles, Scotland
1	Shetland cattle (bull)	Downpatrick
11	Bretagne - type sheep	Castle Archdale Country Park
2	Red Deer	Castle Archdale Country Park
8	Konik ponies	Rossinan, Fermanagh
11	Konik ponies	Quoile Pondage , Downpatrick

(i) Existing Number	(ii) BREED	(iii) Location
2	Konik ponies	Downpatrick
1 Bull, 31 Cows with 16 calves (still calving)	Dexter Cattle	Northern Nature Reserves (Binevenagh and Ballymaclary)
8	Wiltshire Horn Sheep	Northern Nature Reserves
10	Exmoor Ponies	Northern Nature Reserves
(a) Numbers of ANIMALS SOLD	(b) REASON for sale	(c) Purchaser intention
43 Shetland Cattle	Herd dispersal sale	41 – breed perpetuation 2 – meat trade
143 Non-pedigree sheep (Shetland/Hebridean/Bretagne)	Flock dispersal sale	Commercial farming/ open farms
14 Wiltshire Horn Sheep	Flock dispersal sale	Commercial farming

In response to the increasing costs of managing its own livestock and the Agency's experience in drawing up accurate grazing prescriptions it was considered that grassland conservation and better value for public money could be achieved by licensed grazing.

The sale provided the best opportunity for these animals to contribute to the conservation of their respective rare breed and the auctioneer holds all the detail of the buyers.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment which measures are being taken to improve the Northern Ireland marine network of Special Protection Areas.

(AQW 35302/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Measures are being taken which improve Northern Ireland's marine network of Special Protection Areas both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The number and extent of marine Special Protection Areas in Northern Ireland is being considered as part of the UK SPA Marine Review. Recommendations have been made with regard to the extent of existing marine Special Protection Areas. In addition potential new sites have been identified covering inshore marine areas of importance for waterbird/seabird populations.

The planned outcome for Northern Ireland by 2016 will be an increase in the number of marine Special Protection Areas and an increase in the total designated marine area.

The condition of existing marine Special Protection Areas, together with all marine areas of ornithological significance, is also of importance to ensure that no adverse impacts affect these sites and the bird populations using them.

These populations are monitored regularly as part of Northern Ireland's site condition assessment of designated sites. This, together with wider monitoring activities elsewhere inform the Department of site changes, placing these in a wider context.

Evidence of change is typically further investigated to determine the cause and informing any necessary management interventions.

At national and European scales, management of the marine environment is addressed through the Marine Strategy Framework Directive which includes a range of targets specific to marine areas used by birds as well as the bird populations themselves.

Targets address issues including maintaining seabird populations, distributions, and breeding productivity as well as wider marine targets which would benefit seabirds such as sustainable management of selected fish populations.

Finally, engagement with marine stakeholders and developers ensures that site targets, identified through the Special Protection Area Conservation Objectives, are addressed.

Ms Lo asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the timescales over which the review of current marine Special Protection Areas will be achieved.

(AQW 35303/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The existing network of Special Protection Areas in Northern Ireland already includes a number of sites selected specifically for their marine importance including a number of coastal and estuarine sites.

Additional Special Protection Areas have also been designated for their important breeding seabird colonies, some of which include adjoining marine areas.

Work is currently underway at a United Kingdom level to identify additional marine areas which will be considered for designation as additional Special Protection Areas or as extensions to existing sites.

This UK SPA Marine Review has been addressing a wide range of species and the areas they use. A comprehensive picture of additional important marine areas in Northern Ireland will not be available until all of the relevant work is completed. My Department will receive the last report on this by the end of 2014.

It is intended that consultation with stakeholders will be progressed through 2014 and 2015 on the recommendations for Northern Ireland of the UK SPA Marine Review.

The UK Government and Devolved Administrations have an agreed objective to substantially complete a well-managed network of Marine Protected Areas, including Special Protection Areas, by 2016.

My Department is currently working to ensure that this target is achieved for Northern Ireland.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment whether an individual can apply for funding from the recently launched £240,000 Rethink Waste Capital Fund.

(AQW 35341/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Only Third Sector organisations are eligible to apply for the Rethink Waste Third Sector Capital Fund which I launched on 22 August 2014. However, collaborative partnership arrangements are welcome, for example with the private and/or public sector. In this situation the Third Sector organisation must be the lead partner and contractual entity with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), which administers the scheme. The Third Sector organisation is also responsible for ensuring compliance with the European Commission state aid de minimis rules. If an applicant is proposing a collaborative approach, they should attach letters of intent, as a minimum, from the other parties as appendices to the application form.

Additional conditions of the funding are:

- the project needs to be located in Northern Ireland;
- the organisation will need to be a registered legal entity and an existing established Third Sector business; and
- the project must source the majority of its inputs from waste streams in Northern Ireland.

The Third Sector has been historically successful in promoting and developing waste prevention and recycling projects. This capital funding has been identified as a result of stakeholder engagement to reinforce success in this area in order to develop geographical and capacity expansion of the sector. In addition to the obvious environmental benefits, Third Sector projects provide broader social benefits such as jobs and training opportunities.

Earlier in 2014 the Department provided revenue funding for resource efficiency projects relating to landfill diversion. This funding was open to applications from the Third Sector, private sector, councils and waste management groups - individually or in partnership. Funding of £227K has been allocated to nine projects in 2014-15.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has had any discussions with the Secretary of State for Transport to remove tax discs from cars in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 35343/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Vehicle Licensing is an excepted matter, which is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport.

Any decision to abolish tax discs is a matter for the Department for Transport. In the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor announced that vehicle excise tax discs would cease to be issued from October 2014. This change will apply across the UK.

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of the Environment how many enforcement notices have been issued in respect of monuments erected without planning permission, in the last ten years.

(AQW 35362/11-15)

Mr Durkan: According to the Department's records, no enforcement notices have been issued in respect of monuments erected without planning permission in the last ten years.

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the current legislation in relation to Japanese Knotweed.

(AQO 6531/11-15)

Mr Durkan: It is an offence to cause to 'grow in the wild' any plant listed in Schedule 9 PART II of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. Japanese Knotweed is included on this list. My Department upholds this part of the legislation in conjunction with the P.S.N.I.

There is no legal requirement for a landowner to control or remove existing established areas of Japanese Knotweed from their own land.

However should a land owner wish to excavate or remove Japanese Knotweed then the removal and disposal of this 'controlled non-hazardous waste' is regulated under the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997 articles 4 (1a) and 4 (1b) and by the Waste Management Licensing (NI) Regulations 2003 schedule 2.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the number of staff employed in his Department broken down by grade; and (ii) the total salary for each grade, for each financial year since 1 April 2010.

(AQW 35390/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The number of staff employed by the Department of the Environment for each financial year since April 2010 is detailed in the Table 1 below.

The total salary for each grade in each of the financial years from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2014 is detailed in the Table 2 below.

Table 1

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Analogous Grades					
Industrial	64	57	55	57	59
Administrative Assistant, Technical Grade II, Typist, Support Grade Band 2	177	159	165	177	163
Administrative Officer, Technical Grade I, Information Communication Technology 2, Support Grade Band 1	949	890	900	902	886
Executive Officer 2, Information Communication Technology 3, Traffic Examiner, Enforcement Officer	196	175	169	172	195
Executive Officer 1, Scientific Officer, Professional Technical Officer, Information Communication Technology 4, Assistant Information Officer, Senior Traffic Examiner	486	408	394	381	452
Staff Officer, Higher Scientific Officer, Higher Professional Technical Officer, Information Communication Technology 5, Information Officer, Curatorial E.	527	497	508	528	498
Deputy Principal, Senior Professional Technical Officer, Senior Scientific Officer, DP Information Officer, Information Communication Technology 6, Senior Traffic Examiner, DP Accountant, Curatorial D	354	333	330	321	343
Grade 7, Unified Grade 7	133	115	108	105	120
Grade 6, Unified Grade 6	24	20	16	19	23
Senior Civil Servants (ie Grade 5, grade 3 & grade 2)	15	17	16	14	14

Table 2

	2010-11 £'000	2011-12 £'000	2012-13 £'000	2013-14 £'000
Salary per Grade				
Industrial	1,378	1,350	1,291	1,419
Administrative Assistant, Technical Grade II, Typist, Support Grade Band 2	2,866	3,107	2,834	2,784
Administrative Officer, Technical Grade I, Information Communication Technology 2, Support Grade Band 1	21,421	22,854	21,309	22,083
Executive Officer 2, Information Communication Technology 3, Traffic Examiner, Enforcement Officer	5,057	5,152	6,387	6,979
Executive Officer 1, Scientific Officer, Professional Technical Officer, Information Communication Technology 4, Assistant Information Officer, Senior Traffic Examiner	13,498	12,179	13,044	13,849
Staff Officer, Higher Scientific Officer, Higher Professional Technical Officer, Information Communication Technology 5, Information Officer, Curatorial E.	17,890	17,591	18,362	18,304
Deputy Principal, Senior Professional Technical Officer, Senior Scientific Officer, DP Information Officer, Information Communication Technology 6, Senior Traffic Examiner, DP Accountant, Curatorial D	15,237	15,043	16,147	15,374

	2010-11 £'000	2011-12 £'000	2012-13 £'000	2013-14 £'000
Grade 7, Unified Grade 7, Principal	7,401	6,946	7,797	7,641
Grade 6, Unified Grade 6	1,800	1,452	1,609	1,481
Senior Civil Servant, Servants (ie Grade 5, grade 3 & grade 2)	1,590	1,658	1,687	1,781

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment how her Department has sought to better manage local heritage sites in the Coleraine area, and explore the potential value of such sites for local business.

(AQW 35417/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department directly manages ten historic monuments in the Coleraine District Council Area, as State Care Monuments, including Dunluce Castle.

To conserve and promote local heritage sites, my Department continues to work closely with industry and owners, and to invest in these unique assets to ensure their protection and to realise their full potential value for local businesses.

For example, Mountsandel Fort suffered from a substantial landslide last December and DOE subsequently funded repair works to the value of over £28,000 to consolidate the impacted area of the mound and make it safe once again for visitors.

At Dunluce Castle, my Department is currently working with the NITB, Heritage Lottery Fund and local stakeholders to provide a unique heritage destination that complements other major tourist attractions on the north coast, by revealing the lost town of Dunluce and providing a world class visitor centre experience.

This project offers fantastic opportunities for partnership, not only with bodies such as NITB, the National Trust and the Causeway Coast and Glens Council, but also with the surrounding community.

In addition to Dunluce and Mountsandel, there are a number of other local heritage sites: namely

State Care Monuments:

Ballintemple Bullaun
Dunalis Souterrain
Gortycaven Mound
Lissanduff Earthworks
Mill Loughan Motte
Tamnyrankin Court Tomb

Nature Reserves:

Altikeeragh
Portrush

I will continue to both preserve their condition and explore their potential value to the local economy.

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the impact on fuel poverty in rural areas from the introduction of any legislation on the use of smoky fuels.

(AQW 35434/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department is currently engaged through the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC), with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in Dublin, in a study to examine the issue of air pollution from residential combustion of solid fuels and 'smoky' coal.

The Terms of Reference for this study include an examination of fuel poverty in both jurisdictions. Any policy options which are put forward for consideration will also include an examination of their effects on issues such as fuel poverty.

The findings of the report will be presented to the Assembly after the completed report has been presented to the NSMC.

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment how many households currently use smoky fuel.

(AQW 35435/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A research report was commissioned by my Department in 2011 (published in early 2012) to look at levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) – pollutants which are produced from solid fuel burning – in Northern Ireland. The report states that 5,356 Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) properties were still using solid fuel as a primary fuel, and estimated that this number represented approximately 10 per cent of the total number of homes in Northern Ireland using solid fuel for primary heating. This would give an estimate of 50,000-55,000 homes in Northern Ireland which use solid fuel for primary heating.

The report can be viewed at: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/pah_in_ni_report_final_published_version_v2.pdf

Figures compiled by NISRA (census 2011) show that 18,120 households (2.6% per cent of all households) used solid fuel (wood and coal). Census figures showed that a further 94,440 households (13.4 per cent) used two or more types of fuel for central heating, one of which may include solid fuel. These figures show that oil-fired central heating accounts for heating in the majority of households in Northern Ireland (62.2 per cent), followed by gas central heating (17.2 per cent).

These NISRA figures relating to central heating can be accessed under the search term 'ks404ni' on the NISRA Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service website: <http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/>

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the areas where smoky fuel is most frequently used.
(AQW 35436/11-15)

Mr Durkan: 'Smoky fuel', which comprises solid fuels such as wood and bituminous coal, tends to be most frequently used in smaller towns and rural areas in Northern Ireland, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, larger urban areas (for example, Greater Belfast) frequently have Smoke Control Areas, in which the burning of unauthorised fuels (such as 'smoky' fuels) is prohibited.

Secondly, solid fuel use is more prevalent in rural areas where there is no connection to the natural gas network, and where the choice of fuels for domestic home heating is therefore more limited.

According to data published by NISRA (census 2011), the prevalence of solid fuel use by households in current local government divisions varies from less than two per cent in parts of the Greater Belfast area (Belfast, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, North Down, Newtownabbey) to more rural districts in which the percentage of households burning solid fuel exceeds four per cent (for example, Omagh, Moyle, Limavady). Overall, the proportion of Northern Ireland households (total 703275) using solid fuel (wood and coal) is 2.58 per cent (18120).

These census figures relating to central heating can be accessed under the search term 'ks404ni' on the NISRA Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service website: <http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/>

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of the Environment whether the consumption of smoky fuels is higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

(AQW 35437/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The consumption of smoky fuel, which comprises solid fuels such as bituminous coal and wood, tends to be more prevalent in rural areas compared to urban areas in Northern Ireland, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, urban areas frequently have Smoke Control Areas, in which the burning of unauthorised fuels (such as 'smoky' fuels) is prohibited. Currently, 16 councils have declared a total of 126 smoke control areas.

Secondly, solid fuel use is more prevalent in rural areas where there is no connection to the natural gas network, and where the choice of fuels for domestic home heating is therefore more limited.

NISRA (census 2011) statistics show that the proportion of households using solid fuel is at its lowest in parts of the Greater Belfast area (less than two per cent of households) to more rural areas in which it exceeds four per cent (Omagh, Moyle, Limavady). Overall, the proportion of Northern Ireland households (total 703275) using solid fuel (wood and coal) is 2.58 per cent (18120).

These NISRA figures relating to central heating can be accessed under the search term 'ks404ni' on the NISRA Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service website: <http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/>

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the discussions, including the date they were held, that he or departmental officials had with the Federation of Small Businesses in relation to the impact the proposed new taxi regulations will have on smaller operators.

(AQW 35442/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Federation of Small Business has been issued with copies of all of the consultation documents that the Department has issued on taxi reform. The Department does not have a record of having received a response from the Federation to any of the consultations.

I am not aware of any meetings having been held between the Federation and my officials on taxi reform.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has viewed the video evidence gathered by departmental staff at Ravenhill Stadium on 23 August 2013; and if so, for his assessment of the content; and if not, the reasons for this and when he intends to view the evidence.

(AQW 35459/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I have not viewed the video footage recorded at Ravenhill rugby ground on 23 August 2013. The footage was viewed by the relevant Driver & Vehicle Agency (DVA) enforcement officers to confirm their first hand observations at that time.

My Department has since determined that the provision of taxi services at Ravenhill rugby ground is compliant with the requirements of the Taxi Act (NI) 2008 and other related legislation and published its interpretation of the legal position in this regard on 18 October 2013. I therefore do not intend to revisit this matter or view evidence collected by DVA enforcement officers during the course of their investigations.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the proposals for the operations of Grey Point Fort in Helen's Bay, Co. Down, including staff and opening hours.

(AQW 35461/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Grey Point Fort opens daily between 10:00am – 5:00pm to 15 September 2014 at which stage it moves to weekend only opening on Saturdays and Sundays between 12 noon – 4:00pm, as is normal practice each year, through to 31 March 2015. The Fort will also open daily from 10:00am – 5:00pm from Monday 10th November 2014 to Friday 14th November 2014 for the special World War One opening week as planned.

For the remainder of this financial year the site will be opened by permanent NIEA staff with assistance from local volunteers.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of visitors to Grey Point Fort in Helen's Bay, Co. Down, in the last three years.

(AQW 35462/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Visitor numbers to Grey Point Fort prior to 2013 were not recorded. Recording commenced in 2013. Details of visitor numbers to the site in 2013 and 2014 (up to 1/9/14) are as follows:

Year	Visitor numbers
2013	14,376
2014	10,587 (to 1/9/14)

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment how much it costs to maintain Grey Point Fort in Helen's Bay, Co. Down.

(AQW 35463/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In the most recently completed 2013/14 financial year it is estimated that £46,675.50 was spent maintaining the Grey Point Fort site.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment (i) to detail the minimum length of time Planning Service take at a local level to initiate prosecution proceedings against a person for unauthorised activity; and (ii) for his assessment of the length of time required and whether it appropriate, effective and efficient.

(AQW 35495/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There is no specified minimum length of time for DOE Planning to initiate prosecution proceedings against a person for alleged unauthorised activity. Enforcement can be a lengthy, protracted and complex process and if a person decides to submit a planning application or appeal an enforcement notice, action may be held in abeyance; which is likely to add to the time taken to resolve a case. Priority is given to those breaches where it is determined that the greatest harm is being caused or likely to be caused to the environment.

I am satisfied that the process involved in seeking to remedy potential breaches in planning control is appropriate, given the complexity of this area of work.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the number of jobs that the new Seamus Heaney Interpretive Centre in Bellaghy, Londonderry, will create.

(AQW 35497/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The applicant, Magherafelt District Council, has advised that a minimum of five jobs will be created.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment how many times since May 2011 have requests from MLAs for meetings on a specific issue for discussion with officials in departmental agencies been transferred to a Freedom of Information request; and of these, to detail whether the relevant Member was advised of this procedure in advance of the transfer, broken down by year and relevant agency.

(AQW 35523/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Where any person requests either to view information held by the Department or to be provided with copies of any such information, the request falls to be considered within the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 or the Data Protection Act 1998, or any combination thereof.

When a request is received, an acknowledgment letter is issued advising the applicant, including MLAs, that the request is being dealt with under the relevant legislation and a copy of the Department's leaflet explaining its procedures is also provided.

Since May 2011, the Department has responded to 28 requests from MLAs under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Environmental Information Regulations as appropriate.

YEAR	Northern Ireland Environment Agency	Planning Service/Core Department	Driver and Vehicle Agency
2011 (from May)	2	4	1
2012	0	5	0
2013	3	6	1
2014	1	4	1

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether any agreements were signed, or committed to, by recipients of certificates of aggregates credit levies that obliged them to make significant environmental improvements to their operations; and if so, to detail the required improvements.

(AQW 35565/11-15)

Mr Durkan: All operators who became members of the scheme signed a legal agreement to abide with the conditions of the scheme. A requirement of the conditions was to carry out independent environmental audits of the site and, where necessary, comply with resultant improvement notices issued by my Department. The key areas, under which sites were assessed, are detailed in the Code of Practice document, a copy of which, I have placed in the Assembly library.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether cement kilns are permitted to reuse derived fuel taken from municipal waste.

(AQW 35566/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Cement kilns are permitted to use refuse derived fuel from municipal waste as a fuel source. There are a number of examples elsewhere in the UK.

In Northern Ireland, cement kilns require a permit variation if operators wish to use refuse derived fuel. There are currently no cement kilns in Northern Ireland authorised to use such fuel although one application is currently under consideration.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment how cemeteries are regulated to prevent water contamination.

(AQW 35568/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Cemeteries are generally not regulated under the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 or the Groundwater Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009.

However, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is a consultee to DoE Planning for new cemetery developments and extensions to existing developments. As part of the planning consultation process, NIEA will assess the supporting information regarding potential impacts on groundwater (quality and resource) and proposed mitigation measures to ensure that no unacceptable risks to groundwater result from the proposed development.

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of the Environment why his Department is delaying the approval of a request from Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council to release Dungannon Enterprise Centre from the charge on their land located at 2 Coalisland Road, Dungannon.

(AQW 35714/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I can assure the Member that my Department is not delaying this matter.

There are legal issues attaching to the case, and my officials are awaiting clarification and comment from the Council on these. On receipt of that response, the Council's request will be determined as quickly as possible.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment when his Department completed an Environmental Impact Assessment screening process on the proposal by InfraStrata to drill at Woodburn Forest.

(AQW 35783/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department carried out an Environmental Impact Assessment Determination on the 19 December 2013.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 35491/11-15, to detail the legal basis upon which his Department is permitted to withhold the names of organisations that made unsuccessful bids.

(AQW 35849/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The procurement of this contract was conducted by the Irish Environmental Protection Agency, on behalf of the Programme Steering Committee, under the auspices of the Republic of Ireland's public procurement Regulations.

I am advised that due to data protection considerations the names of unsuccessful tenders cannot be released.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment when his Department communicated the decision of the Lamont case, No. [2014] NIQB 3, to Divisional Planning Officers.

(AQW 35869/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Mr Justice Treacy, on 15 January 2014 in the High Court in Belfast, quashed a decision by the Planning Service to grant planning permission for the building of an additional dwelling on a farm at Ballyclough Road, Lisburn.

The findings were presented to senior managers in the Planning Service at the Local Planning Management Group (LPMG) on 7 February 2014.

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department communicated the impending Lamont case, regarding the challenge to CTY10, to the Divisional Planning offices; and if so, to detail the instruction provided.

(AQW 35889/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Following the judgment of the judicial review to which you refer, the findings were presented to senior management at the Local Planning Management Group (LPMG) meeting on 7 February 2014.

On 4 April 2014, officials withdrew internal guidance which had previously issued on CTY 10 regarding applications where there were no buildings on a farm.

In order to allow consideration of the issues raised, I asked for applications relating to CTY10 to be held temporarily. On 4 June, I further advised officials that applications being held could proceed to decision.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of the Environment what steps his Department is taking to address the recent back-log of clients taking the off-road and on-road motorcycle test in Ballymena; and whether his Department intends to increase efficiency by appointing an additional examiner.

(AQW 35916/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Arrangements are currently underway to train four members of staff to conduct off-road and on-road motorcycle tests. Subject to successful completion of training, it is anticipated that one of those staff will be placed in Ballymena Test Centre to be operational by week commencing 29 September. This will address the immediate issue of availability of motorcycle testing services in the area.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether Land and Property Services has considered implementing a direct line of contact for MLAs and support staff in order to access ownership details of a property or piece of land in their constituencies.

(AQW 25671/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): My officials in Land & Property Services (LPS) Registration have advised me that business users may access the Landweb Direct Service from their own premises once they have become registered users. Any MLA can make an application to LPS Registration Directorate to become a registered user of Landweb Direct. The registration process to avail of the service is straightforward and is free of charge.

When registration is complete, access is given to Landweb Direct, which is available 24/7 and searches can be made on-line on payment of the appropriate fees. Should any MLA wish to register as a user, they should contact Ashlin Sharvin at ashlin.sharvin@dfpni.gov.uk or telephone 02890 251760.

To assist newly registered users, initial training on how to carry out searches can be provided by LPS staff and a helpdesk is available should any difficulties arise.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to list the number of occasions, including dates, his Department has liaised with the Department of Education on the incorporation of Organ Donation and Transplantation into schools criteria as recommended in the Taking Organ Transplantation to 2020 report.

(AQW 35252/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Taking Organ Transplantation to 2020 recommends that the UK Health Departments should "explore with Education Departments the possibility of incorporating donation and transplantation into schools curricula". My officials have met with officials from the Department of Education and other stakeholders on 15 April 2013, 24 July 2013, 18 November 2013 and 18 August 2014.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the loans advanced by her Department through the Financial Transactions Capital Scheme in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) East Londonderry, since 1 April 2013.
(AQW 35269/11-15)

Mr Poots: As part of the 2014/15 Capital Budget exercise, my Department successfully bid for £5m under Financial Transactions Capital, split equally between a scheme for Dentists and GPs, with a view to utilising this funding to support investment in premises and equipment across GP and Dental Practices.

While development of the process for implementation of the loan scheme is progressing well, this work has not, as yet, advanced to the point when loans can actually be made.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has spent on legal fees in each of the last three years.
(AQW 35273/11-15)

Mr Poots: Expenditure by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust on legal fees in each of the last three years is set out in the table below:

2013/14 £	2012/13 £	2011/12 £
3,723,000	2,613,289	2,120,041

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions have taken place to initiate an equivalent of the NHS Redress Bill in England to reduce the number of compensation claims.
(AQW 35274/11-15)

Mr Poots: The NHS Redress Act 2006 allows for the establishment of a Redress Scheme to deal with lower value medical negligence claims. Although the Act is in place, the scheme has never been finalised as the sub-ordinate legislation required has not been introduced. The scheme is therefore not in operation.

My officials will continue to keep the policy under review and consider developments as they arise.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when domestic and catering assistants in Antrim Hospital will receive five years back pay.
(AQW 35292/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am advised by management at the Trust that as of 8 September 2014, 63 Catering Assistants in Antrim Hospital have applied for re-banding. All calculations for Catering Assistants have been completed and processed to payroll for payment. 163 Domestic Assistants in Antrim Hospital have applied for re-banding. 63 out of 163 have been processed and sent to payroll for payment. The 100 outstanding are currently being processed.

It is anticipated that re-banding arrears for all Domestic Assistants and Catering Assistants working in Antrim Hospital will be calculated and completed and processed by payroll by March 2015.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what work has been done to ensure that the relevant recommendations from the Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability are reflected in the Mental Capacity Bill.
(AQW 35325/11-15)

Mr Poots: Following the decision taken in 2009 to develop the comprehensive legislative framework recommended by the Bamford Review, the Department put in place an inclusive project management structure, involving many of the stakeholders previously involved in the Bamford Review, including the Chair of that Review.

Detailed policy papers were presented, revised and agreed within that structure over a number of years and it is this inclusive approach which has informed the content of the draft Mental Capacity Bill, recently the subject of a full public consultation which ended on 2 September. My officials are currently analysing the responses to that consultation and an outcomes report will be published later this year.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the collaboration between his Department and the Department of Education in preparing the Mental Capacity Bill.
(AQW 35326/11-15)

Mr Poots: Comments have been sought from all Departments, including the Department of Education, at key stages of the development of the draft Mental Capacity Bill. Most recently, the draft Bill was circulated to all Departments prior to being published for consultation in May this year. Further engagement will take place as the draft Bill is finalised for introduction into the Assembly following the outcomes of the consultation, and throughout the remaining stages of the legislative process. My

Department will also be working closely with other Departments with a role to play in planning for the implementation of the Bill. This will include the development of a Code of Practice and subordinate legislation.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what cuts will be made to his budget as a result of the lack of agreement on Welfare Reform.

(AQW 35349/11-15)

Mr Poots: I wrote to the Executive and Health Committee on 28 August to outline the financial position facing my Department in 2014/15 and my significant concerns about it. Following the outcome of the June Monitoring Round and in the absence of additional funding being provided to my Department, I also outlined a range of options available to the Executive to address a financial gap of at least £140m.

Given the serious and detrimental impact that these options would have on patients and clients, I do not support their implementation. The failure to agree Welfare Reform is unforgivable, as the financial penalties being imposed by Treasury would be better directed at meeting the real and pressing health and social care needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much money has been spent on translators in each Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35351/11-15)

Mr Poots: Translation service costs include written, face to face interpreting and spoken word. The cost of translation services in each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years is set out in the table below.

	2013/14 £	2012/13 £	2011/12 £	2010/11 £	2009/10 £
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	755,307	717,799	536,462	448,576	412,739
Northern Health & Social Care Trust	435,605	364,641	309,832	295,496	334,437
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust	158,931	119,151	115,391	93,600	81,273
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	1,309,514	1,358,177	924,136	919,977	749,889
Western Health & Social Care Trust	246,952	216,809	220,052	166,239	172,699
NI Ambulance Service Health & Social Care Trust	658	995	1,268	2,357	1,208
Total	2,906,967	2,777,572	2,107,141	1,926,245	1,752,245

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total cost of infrastructural improvements conducted at Lurgan Hospital, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35377/11-15)

Mr Poots: The following monies were spent on infrastructure improvements in the past three years at Lurgan Hospital

2011/2012	£1,250,000	Internal Refurbishment Works and Car Park Management projects
2012/2013	£570,000	Fire Evacuation Lift Extension, Upgrade of Lighting, Voice Over Internet Protocol Phones, Creation of a Safe and Effective Clinical Environment works (£40K)
2013/2014	£742,000	Electrical Back Up (Secondary Power Supply), Gas Conversion projects

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of staff employed in his Department broken down by grade; and (ii) the total salary for each grade, for each financial year since 1 April 2010.

(AQW 35392/11-15)

Mr Poots: The table below shows the number of staff directly employed in my Department for each financial year from 1 April 2010.

The figures provided detail the number of staff including analogous grades (i.e. professional and specialist), the Full Time Equivalent and the Salary cost.

This information has been supplied by HRConnect, the NICS provider for payroll services and excludes agency workers or officers seconded into the Department. These officers are not directly employed by the Department and are therefore not on DHSSPS payroll records.

Analogous Grade	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Administrative Assistant				
Number of Staff	50	45	47	42
Full Time Equivalent	46.2	41.7	43.6	38.1
Salary	£753,742	£698,382	£740,531	£660,633
Administrative Officer				
Number of Staff	58	59	57	54
Full Time Equivalent	53.7	54.4	51.1	48.7
Salary	£1,048,735	£1,087,740	£1,057,454	£1,033,162
Executive Officer 2				
Number of Staff	71	71	65	68
Full Time Equivalent	66.6	66.4	61.0	64.4
Salary	£1,448,405	£1,471,129	£1,453,385	£1,572,828
Executive Officer 1				
Number of Staff	64	59	55	54
Full Time Equivalent	60.8	54.3	50.6	48.5
Salary	£1,500,297	£1,360,799	£1,326,224	£1,304,925
Staff Officer				
Number of Staff	131	128	123	111
Full Time Equivalent	127.1	121.5	115.5	103.0
Salary	£3,614,636	£3,526,045	£3,433,056	£3,147,003
Deputy Principal				
Number of Staff	141	141	135	137
Full Time Equivalent	137.8	136.3	129.1	129.7
Salary	£5,030,510	£5,051,721	£4,880,556	£4,950,604
Grade 7				
Number of Staff	87	80	79	88
Full Time Equivalent	82.8	76.7	76.5	84.8
Salary	£3,906,853	£3,664,434	£3,721,969	£4,162,081
Grade 6				
Number of Staff	13	14	14	12
Full Time Equivalent	13.0	14.0	14.0	11.9
Salary	£774,051	£840,478	£863,198	£716,294
Senior Civil Servant				
Number of Staff	23	26	23	24
Full Time Equivalent	22.6	25.6	22.6	23.6
Salary	£1,687,103	£1,914,511	£1,746,435	£1,754,637
DHSSPS				
Number of Staff	638	623	598	590
Full Time Equivalent	610.6	591.0	563.9	552.6
Salary	£19,764,331	£19,615,238	£19,222,807	£19,302,167

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what correspondence the Northern Health and Social Care Trust had with his Department prior to the consultation on proposals to develop a new purpose built Mental Health Inpatient Unit for the Northern Trust area.

(AQW 35395/11-15)

Mr Poots: Prior to the current consultation on proposals to develop a new purpose built Mental Health Inpatient Unit, the Northern Health and Social Care Trust submitted a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) in May 2012.

Following review of the SOC by both my Department and DFP, the Trust was advised to proceed to develop an outline business case.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether refurbishment grants will be available to GP practices.

(AQW 35397/11-15)

Mr Poots: On an annual basis the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) offers the opportunity for GP practices to submit applications for improvement grants. These fund a proportion of the costs of work to bring GP premises up to a higher standard with the remaining percentage being funded by the practice.

The HSCB invites practices to submit applications for improvement grants at the beginning of each financial year and considers and approves grants based on the appropriateness of the work proposed, their relative priority, whether they involve an additional revenue cost, and taking account of available funding and budgetary constraints.

The HSCB will continue to consider all applications for improvement grants for the remainder of 2014/15 financial year in accordance with this process.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the actions implemented to assist people with a disability live an independent life in the community rather than in residential care, given that the Independent Living Fund is permanently closed to new applications.

(AQW 35407/11-15)

Mr Poots: My department is working to deliver the proposals set out in Transforming your Care: Vision to Action, which include the promotion of independence and control for people with a disability. It encourages more control for service users over budgets, with continued promotion of direct payments, and a common approach to personalised budgets with advocacy and brokerage support where required.

In addition, the joint DSD/DHSSPS Inter-Departmental Review of Housing Adaptations Services has already made significant progress in implementing recommendations which will assist people with a disability live an independent life in the community. These include:

- the launch of a Housing Adaptations Design Communication Toolkit which will speed up and standardise inter-agency communications for housing adaptations recommendations;
- the development of an electronic communication infrastructure between health and social care and housing providers to ensure secure and rapid inter-agency communications; and
- raising awareness through posters, leaflets and relevant websites of minor housing adaptations which can be delivered directly by social housing providers without referral to HSC Trusts.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the current arrangements for people travelling to Northern Ireland from areas which have experienced an outbreak of the Ebola virus.

(AQW 35431/11-15)

Mr Poots: Current advice from the World Health Organisation states that there should be no general ban on international travel with the affected countries and that risk to travellers is very low. There are therefore no entry restrictions for individuals travelling from the affected countries to the UK.

The Public Health Agency, through its Health Protection Service, has communicated with colleagues covering all sea ports and airports in Northern Ireland informing them of the current situation in relation to the outbreak and directing them to sources of further information, including actions to be taken should a sick traveller, potentially with an infectious disease, come to their attention.

In order to reduce the risk of international spread of the disease, and in line with World Health Organisation guidance, the affected countries have introduced exit screening at airports to ensure that individuals who are unwell do not board flights.

The World Health Organisation will continue to monitor the situation and amend recommendations if necessary.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many home help staff there are in each Health and Social Care Trust area; (ii) whether home help staff are have been offered other roles in Health and Social Care Trusts when the service is removed; and (iii) whether there will be redundancy packages available to staff.

(AQW 35478/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) The number of home care workers directly employed by Trusts is set out in the following table.

Belfast Trust	784
Northern Trust	1025
Southern Trust	1048
South Eastern Trust	526
Western Trust	230

- (ii) There are no plans to remove the home care service, however the Western Trust is in the process of reforming its home care services. Most affected staff are being accommodated within the reformed service. Those who cannot be accommodated or who decline a new role within home care will be offered suitable alternative employment within the Western Health & Social Care Trust.
- (iii) The Trust advises that there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of this re-organisation.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the progress made on the payroll difficulties faced by the Western Health and Social Care Trust in relation to pay and back pay for auxiliary and portering staff. **(AQW 35479/11-15)**

Mr Poots: The Western Health and Social Care Trust and the Business Services Organisation have been working closely together to ensure that the causes of recent payroll difficulties are clearly understood and a range of remedial actions has been taken by both organisations to rectify the problems.

This has included strengthening the ICT infrastructure; introduction of more advanced call management systems; streamlining the process for transfer of payroll data between the 2 organisations; further training for staff, additional support for query resolution; and liaison with HM Revenue and Customs on behalf of all Trust staff in the HSC with respect to problems with incorrect income tax codes.

These measures have resulted in a steady improvement in the processing of the Western Trust's payroll in recent months and in relation to the August 2014 payroll run, the error rate had reduced to 0.5%..

The payroll records for 3,934 staff are currently being reviewed to determine whether the staff are due to receive any arrears (back pay). This covers a range of staff groups in addition to auxiliary and portering staff. The vast majority of auxiliary and portering staff have had their entitlements paid to them, with approximately 50 calculations outstanding for these staff. The Trust is working to complete this work and to make the payments to staff as soon as possible.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much is currently being spent on the Independent Living Fund. **(AQW 35487/11-15)**

Mr Poots: The Independent Living Fund (ILF) has advised that the anticipated cost to provide support to ILF users in Northern Ireland for financial year ending 31 March 2015 will be in the region of £8.4 million.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there has been financial provision for the removal of the Independent Living Fund to ensure that people with a disability are not disadvantaged. **(AQW 35488/11-15)**

Mr Poots: The UK Government decided to close the Independent Living Fund (ILF) with effect from 30 June 2015. As I have made very clear, my Department will do all it can to ensure that those in Northern Ireland who are affected by the decision of the Department for Work and Pensions are not disadvantaged.

Funding for the ILF will transfer to DHSSPS in 2015 and my Department is currently undertaking a full and comprehensive public consultation on how best to support Independent Living Fund (ILF) users in Northern Ireland following the closure of the fund. The consultation closes on 30 November 2014 and I would encourage everyone to share their views on this crucial issue. Following consultation, I will carefully consider the results before deciding on the way forward.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the impact of changes to the Independent Living Fund. **(AQW 35489/11-15)**

Mr Poots: When the UK Government first announced its intention to close the Independent Living Fund (ILF) I robustly conveyed my disappointment to the then Minister concerned, Esther McVey MP, stating that I considered the decision damaged the very ethos of caring. As I have also made very clear, my Department will do all it can to ensure that those in Northern Ireland who are affected by the decision are not disadvantaged.

My Department is currently undertaking a full and comprehensive public consultation on five potential options in respect of how best to support ILF users in Northern Ireland following the closure of the fund with effect from 30 June 2015. The consultation closes on 30 November 2014 and I would encourage everyone to share their views on this crucial issue. Following consultation, I will carefully consider the results before deciding on the way forward.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are currently in receipt of the Independent Living Fund.
(AQW 35490/11-15)

Mr Poots: At 31 August 2014 there were 643 people in Northern Ireland in receipt of support from the Independent Living Fund.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will follow the example set by Scotland and ring fence funding to sustain the Independent Living Fund.
(AQW 35492/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department is currently undertaking a full and comprehensive public consultation on how best to support Independent Living Fund (ILF) users in Northern Ireland following the closure of the fund. In developing the consultation, my Department examined carefully the actions of other jurisdictions, including Scotland, and five potential options were identified for consideration in the consultation.

I do not wish to prejudice the outcome of the consultation, which closes on 30 November 2014, and I would encourage everyone to share their views on this crucial issue. Following consultation, I will carefully consider the results before deciding on the way forward.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the future of the Independent Living Fund in Northern Ireland.
(AQW 35494/11-15)

Mr Poots: The UK Government decided to close the Independent Living Fund (ILF) with effect from 30 June 2015. As I have made very clear, my Department will do all it can to ensure that those in Northern Ireland who are affected by the decision of the Department for Work and Pensions are not disadvantaged.

My Department is currently undertaking a full and comprehensive public consultation on how best to support Independent Living Fund (ILF) users in Northern Ireland following the closure of the fund. The consultation closes on 30 November 2014 and I would encourage everyone to share their views on this crucial issue. Following consultation, I will carefully consider the results before deciding on the way forward.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the consultation on a bill containing provisions aimed at restricting the sale of products that contain nicotine will also consider restricting how electronic cigarettes can be used.
(AQW 35500/11-15)

Mr Poots: The draft Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill was issued for a twelve-week consultation on 1 September 2014.

Provisions relating to electronic cigarettes in the draft Bill are restricted to the age of sale for these products, therefore, respondents have been asked to comment on this issue only. Views have not been sought on restricting the use of electronic cigarettes in indoor spaces.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an overview of the mental health services available to prisoners; and to detail the number of qualified staff in each prison facility.
(AQW 35508/11-15)

Mr Poots: Mental health services within the NI prison healthcare service are delivered by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

The Mental Health Team is structured to ensure that there is a process in place for early identification of mental illness. The approach covers both identifying those prisoners who may already have a diagnosis, are previously known to Community Mental Health or have concerns the time of their committal and also supporting prisoners who experience difficulties during their imprisonment.

During their imprisonment, the Home Treatment Team, an integrated multi-disciplinary team provides a 7 day a week response service to prisoners experiencing an acute crisis and/or severe mental health difficulties and requiring same day assessment and intervention. In addition work is ongoing to develop and introduce Stepped Care Models within prisons to help prisoners who have difficulty adjusting and/or coping with imprisonment. Sessions provided include anxiety management, self esteem and confidence building and sleep hygiene and provided by either the Mental Health Team or Action Mental Health.

The complement of qualified mental health staff for each prison establishment is set out below:

HMP Maghaberry	Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist	1
	Staff grade Psychiatrists	2 x 0.5 WTE
	Registered Mental Health Nurses	14
	Health Care Assistants for Mental Health	2
	Forensic Occupational Therapists	2.8 WTE
HMP Magilligan	Staff Grade Psychiatrist	1 x 0.5 WTE
	Registered Mental Health Nurses	2
HMP/YOC Hydebank Wood	1 Consultant Psychiatrist	1
	Staff grade Psychiatrist	1 x 0.5 WTE
	5 Registered Mental Health Nurses	5
	2 Health Care Assistants	2

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 34547/11-15, for an update on when it is expected that the terms of reference for the evaluation of whether the Individual Funding Request process is meeting its objectives will be announced.

(AQW 35517/11-15)

Mr Poots: I plan to announce the terms of reference and next steps for the evaluation shortly.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps the Food Standards Agency are taking to ensure that transglutaminase is not being used within the food industry.

(AQW 35518/11-15)

Mr Poots: This is a matter for the Food Standards Agency (FSA) which is a non-ministerial government department. The FSA has advised as follows:

Transglutaminase can be used in food as long as it complies with the relevant legislation such as General Food Law and the enzyme legislation EC Regulation No. 1332/2008. The Food Standards Agency is therefore not taking steps to ensure that transglutaminase is not being used within the food industry.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what measures are taken to ensure that meat or meat products entering Northern Ireland do not contain transglutaminase.

(AQW 35519/11-15)

Mr Poots: This is a matter for the Food Standards Agency (FSA) which is a non-ministerial government department. The FSA has advised as follows:

Transglutaminase can be used in food as long as it complies with the relevant legislation such as General Food Law and the enzyme legislation EC Regulation No. 1332/2008. No measures are taken therefore to ensure that meat or meat products entering Northern Ireland do not contain transglutaminase.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of hours per week that chaplaincy support is provided by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, broken down by (i) denomination; and (ii) hospital.

(AQW 35525/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of hours per week worked by Chaplaincy staff in the Southern HSC Trust, broken down by denomination and hospital, is shown in the table below. These figures have been provided by the Southern Trust, and have not been validated by the Department.

Hospital Location	Hours per week	Denomination
St Luke's Hospital -Longstone Site	1.92	Presbyterian
St Luke's Hospital -Main Building	1.92	Presbyterian
	1.92	Church of Ireland
	9.00	Roman Catholic

Hospital Location	Hours per week	Denomination
Craigavon Area Hospital	18.75	Roman Catholic
	5.67	Presbyterian
	11.25	Church of Ireland
	4.50	Methodist
Lurgan Hospital	3.75	Methodist
	3.75	Roman Catholic
	3.75	Presbyterian
	3.75	Church of Ireland
South Tyrone Hospital	3.75	Roman Catholic
	3.75	Presbyterian
	3.75	Church of Ireland
	3.75	Presbyterian
Daisy Hill Hospital	3.50	Presbyterian
	21.00	Roman Catholic
	1.75	Methodist
	3.50	Church of Ireland
	3.37	Presbyterian
Total	118.05	

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when will he make an announcement regarding the future support of Independent Living Fund users in Northern Ireland; and whether he can provide an assurance that current users will see no reduction in the support offered.

(AQW 35542/11-15)

Mr Poots: The UK Government decided to close the Independent Living Fund (ILF) with effect from 30 June 2015. As I have made very clear, my Department will do all it can to ensure that those in Northern Ireland who are affected by the decision of the Department for Work and Pensions are not disadvantaged.

My Department is currently undertaking a full and comprehensive public consultation on how best to support Independent Living Fund (ILF) users in Northern Ireland following the closure of the fund. The consultation closes on 30 November 2014 and I would encourage everyone to share their views on this crucial issue. Following consultation, I will carefully consider the results before deciding on the way forward. I anticipate that I will announce my decision in early 2015.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the prospects of the extension of the Cancer Drugs Fund to include Northern Ireland, giving local cancer patients access to life-extending cancer drugs.

(AQW 35561/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am sympathetic to the establishment of a Specialist Drugs Fund which would not only be available for unapproved cancer drugs but would apply to other serious conditions. However, I could only establish such a fund by diverting funding from existing services or by raising money. One means I am considering is a prescription charge. This would be subject to public consultation and Executive approval. Any charge should be modest and not punitive to individuals who are unable to pay such a charge.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the departmental services, provided through statutory and non-statutory bodies, to address the needs of alcohol and drug dependents in East Londonderry.

(AQW 35563/11-15)

Mr Poots: Through my Department's New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs Phase Two, the Health & Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency commission a full range of alcohol and drug services – from education and prevention through to treatment and support – that are provided across the Northern and Western Health and Social Care Trust areas, both by Statutory and Voluntary/Community sectors.

Details of the full range of alcohol and drug services, for both young people and adults, in both the Northern and Western areas can be found by accessing the following links:

http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/DrugsAlcohol_Directory_Northern_12_12.pdf

http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/DrugsAlcohol_Directory_Western_12_12.pdf

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been admitted to hospital in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area for alcohol related problems, in the last three years.

(AQW 35564/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of people admitted to hospital in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust for alcohol-related conditions in each of the last three years, is given in the table below.

HSC Trust	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Northern	839	858	1,124

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the pathways available to patients from Northern Ireland requiring mental health or addiction services who may need to access relevant services in the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 35570/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board operates a process which allows consultants in the local Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland, in exceptional circumstances, to refer patients outside NI by means of an Extra Contractual Referral (ECR). ECRs for services outside of NI must be based on clinical recommendations for specific treatment needs that cannot be met in NI. Such a referral must outline all of the resources that have been considered locally, and why these are felt to be inappropriate.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on building of the new local hospital in Omagh, including the timeline for the completion of this project.

(AQW 35573/11-15)

Mr Poots: Construction of the new enhanced local hospital in Omagh commenced on 21st July 2014 with contract completion scheduled for July 2016. The hospital is expected to become operational in autumn 2016.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the case of Mr Stephen Clarke, who is currently being held in the Mater Hospital under mental health legislation.

(AQW 35577/11-15)

Mr Poots: It would not be appropriate to provide information on the particular arrangements in place for the treatment or care of any individual.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the required ratio of carers to dependants is being fulfilled in private care homes in East Londonderry.

(AQW 35581/11-15)

Mr Poots: All nursing and residential care homes in both the statutory and private sectors are required to operate in compliance with minimum standards.

These standards require that at all times there must be enough staff with the appropriate skills to meet the assessed needs of the residents – taking into account the size and layout of the home, as well as the Statement of Purpose and fire safety requirements.

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is responsible for the registration and inspection of nursing and residential care homes. RQIA provides guidance to registered homes on the minimum staffing levels they should maintain and, through inspection, ensures compliance with these levels.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the capacity of health services in East Londonderry to deal with the potential health and safety risks of hosting major events.

(AQW 35582/11-15)

Mr Poots: In accordance with good practice guidance, the responsibility to conduct a risk assessment of the health and safety elements arising from a major event, rest with the event organiser. In doing so, the event organiser should ensure that appropriate medical, ambulance and first aid provision is put in place and that any arrangements minimise the impact of the event on local Health and Social Care (HSC) and emergency services.

The event's organiser is also responsible for appointing a medical provider who should produce a medical plan which outlines roles and responsibilities and confirms liaison arrangements with the relevant HSC Trust(s). From an emergency

planning perspective, the health service should be made aware of a major event from an early stage in order that it can plan appropriately.

The Northern HSC Trust's Major Incident Plan and Corporate Business Continuity Plan provide extensive procedures to guide the Trust should a response be required to an emergency arising from a major event. As part of emergency preparedness, representatives from the Northern HSC Trust work closely with councils, event organisers and 'blue-light' responders to ensure it is represented in the event multi-agency planning groups and as a member of the 'Multi-Agency Control Room' throughout the event, to ensure effective communication should an incident require Trust input. Appropriate Trust services are informed of planned events and co-ordination of Trust preparedness to respond to potential incidents and there is participation in the multi-agency debrief to share any learning points arising from the event.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has considered how people who are dependent on the Independent Living Fund will maintain their independence from July 2015.
(AQW 35583/11-15)

Mr Poots: The UK Government decided to close the Independent Living Fund (ILF) with effect from 30 June 2015. I have made it very clear that my Department will do all it can to ensure that those in Northern Ireland who are affected by the decision of the Department for Work and Pensions are not disadvantaged.

My Department is currently undertaking a full and comprehensive public consultation on how best to support Independent Living Fund (ILF) users in Northern Ireland following the closure of the fund. The consultation closes on 30 November 2014 and I would encourage everyone to share their views on this crucial issue. Following consultation, I will carefully consider the results before deciding on the way forward.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Northern Ireland.
(AQW 35591/11-15)

Mr Poots: Professor Kathleen Marshall is leading the Independent Inquiry into CSE in Northern Ireland. The Inquiry is being undertaken in phases and started with a Call for Evidence, which closed in March 2014. The Inquiry Team has sought the views and experiences of children and young people, their parents and communities through a parallel strand of engagement and a number of stakeholder events, with both the statutory and voluntary sector, took place in early June 2014. The purpose of the events was to inform stakeholders about initial findings and key messages from the Call for Evidence and engagement to date.

In its second phase the Inquiry held both oral hearings and a programme of engagements with key organisations in the health and social care, criminal justice and education sectors. A further stakeholder event, for both statutory and voluntary sectors, took place on 10 September 2014. It is expected that the Independent Inquiry will conclude and report in November 2014.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Public Health Agency's 10,000 Voices project.
(AQW 35595/11-15)

Mr Poots: The PHA have advised that the 10,000 Voices project has been ongoing since my last update in June 2014. Since then, a further 1583 stories have been collected for the 10,000 Voices project, bringing the total to 5488 patients, families and carers sharing their experiences of HSC services.

A Regional Outcomes Report has not yet been published. The PHA has advised that the report is currently awaiting approval from their Board and it is anticipated that it will be available in due course.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the negotiation of the contract for community pharmacists; and whether he will ensure that it reflects the value of the professional advisory services which they provide to patients in addition to their responsibility for dispensing.
(AQW 35617/11-15)

Mr Poots: In 2010 the HSC Board was mandated by my Department to develop a community pharmacy contract with Community Pharmacy NI (CPNI), which is the representative body for community pharmacy in Northern Ireland. Negotiations continue between the Board and CPNI to develop a framework for the community pharmacy contract.

In March 2014 I launched "Making It Better through Pharmacy in the Community," a five year strategy for pharmacy in the community. The direction for the delivery of pharmacy services in the community set out in the strategy will underpin the negotiations for the pharmacy contract. In particular the strategy supports an increased utilisation of pharmacists' skills in medicines management and public health and recognises their role in the provision of advice and information to patients.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will review the funding allocation model for the Supplement for Undergraduate Medical and Dental Education, which is weighted towards training in secondary

care, given the implications of Transforming Your Care and the need for increased numbers of medical graduates to pursue a career in General Practice.

(AQW 35618/11-15)

Mr Poots: Officials in my Department are considering issues associated with the current SUMDE funding allocation model. This includes the need to ensure that medical undergraduate training supports the changes in service delivery from hospital to community settings under Transforming Your Care. I will consider their advice in due course.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33234/11-15, to detail (i) the shortfall in spend compared to the funding initially earmarked for the Personality Disorder (PD) Strategy; (ii) the amounts allocated to the delivery of the PD Strategy during each of the last four financial years; and (iii) the proposed spend on delivering the PD Strategy during the next financial year.

(AQW 35630/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) Due to budgetary pressures during the last Comprehensive Spending Review, the funding initially earmarked for the Personality Disorders (PD) Strategy was reduced from £2.5M to £1.174M.
- (ii) The Health and Social Care Board has confirmed that the initial funding allocation is now included in Trust baseline allocations each year, and therefore the amount allocated to the delivery of the PD Strategy in each of the last four financial years has been £1.174M.
- (iii) There are no plans to increase or reduce current expenditure on the delivery of the PD Strategy in 2015/16.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33234/11-15, to detail (i) the facilities and services available to patients within the Community Personality Disorder (PD) Service, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) the process by which a person with a PD is referred to these services in each Trust; and (iii) whether support, such as independent advocacy, is available in each Trust area to assist patients with access to PD services.

(AQW 35631/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) Community Personality Disorder services have been established in each Health and Social Care Trust. They offer specialist treatment services on a 1:1 basis and in groups for individuals with a diagnosis of Personality Disorder. These treatments include Dialectical Behavioural Therapy and Mentalisation-based treatment. The Personality Disorder Services teams work jointly with Community Mental Health Teams.
- (ii) In all Trusts, referral to Community Personality Disorder Services is generally made through Community Mental Health Teams following triage and assessment of mental health needs. Patients may be referred to the Community Mental Health Team by their GP or Emergency Departments. In Belfast HSC Trust, referrals can also be made directly by the Probation Board's psychology service.
- (iii) Independent advocacy is available in the Northern, South Eastern, Southern and Western HSC Trusts via various contracted community and voluntary sector bodies. The Belfast Trust has commenced the process to appoint an advocacy service for its Personality Disorder Service.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the role of local health commissioning groups and agencies, working in conjunction with his Department, in determining priority need for new primary care centres in rural towns and villages, including Carrickmore and Fintona in Co. Tyrone.

(AQW 35646/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board, through its Local Commissioning Groups, and in association with HSC Trusts, undertook detailed analysis to determine the most appropriate locations for the various 'hubs' and 'spokes' which will form the basis of the future health and care centre network and deliver on the Transforming Your Care (TYC) vision. Local Commissioning Groups were specifically tasked with undertaking a prioritisation exercise to identify the optimal hub and spoke configuration within their respective areas and identify their priorities for development. The prioritised list of proposed developments submitted by each of the LCGs was carried out in consultation with the HSC Trusts and representatives of the GP community.

Both Carrickmore and Fintona are included in the HSCB's Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) as spokes of the new 'hub' in Omagh. The HSCB has indicated, in the SIP, that as spokes of a Tranche 1 hub, both practices will have been consulted to obtain a view as to their potential investment requirements.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what advice his Department offers to people who take, or are concerned about others who take, legal highs.

(AQW 35647/11-15)

Mr Poots: I would like to begin by reiterating that we do not use the term “legal highs” as I believe this is misleading and can give the impression these substances are safe for human consumption and, as this is not the case, we therefore refer to them as “New Psychoactive Substances”.

My Department has provided publicly available information on the dangers of New Psychoactive Substances through the CMO Alert system and through our Drug and Alcohol Monitoring and Information System, combined with a number of media messages. This advice remains clear and consistent: any substance (whether a New Psychoactive Substance, an illicit substance like ecstasy, or prescription drugs that have not been prescribed for you) can pose real – potentially fatal – risks to your health and wellbeing. This message also applies to substances obtained over the internet, when individuals can be even less confident about what they actually contain. Therefore, the safest option is not to buy or take any of these substances. However, some people will continue to misuse drugs; they should be aware that the risks are increased substantially by combining more than one substance and/or alcohol as the effects may be exacerbated. Bingeing (taking a high number of drugs over a number of days) also increases risk significantly.

Information on a range of substances, including New Psychoactive Substances, can be found online at <http://www.talktofrank.com/> or individuals can call the confidential National Drugs Helpline on 0800 776 600. In addition, a range of local services – from information and education through to treatment and support – is available across Northern Ireland. Information on these services is available on the Public Health Agency Website at: <http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/drug-and-alcohol-directories-services>

The Public Health Agency has also developed a range of information, including harm reduction advice, that has been circulated to all key groups and which has also been discussed widely on the media.

([http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Harm%20Reduction%20Advice%20GB%20\(2\)_0.pdf](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Harm%20Reduction%20Advice%20GB%20(2)_0.pdf))

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the business case for the Derry Health and Social Care campus.

(AQW 35680/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board’s high level Strategic Implementation Plan for future investment in primary care infrastructure, which includes a proposal for Cityside, Londonderry, is currently under consideration.

This Plan will be considered alongside other capital investment priorities and will be dependent on the outcome of future budget exercises and confirmation of value for money and affordability. It is therefore not possible to give an indication of the timescale for any future health & care centres, and unfortunately this includes the Cityside scheme.

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been spent on interpretation services in (i) hospitals; (ii) GP practices; and (iii) dental surgeries, in each of the last seven years.

(AQW 35682/11-15)

Mr Poots: Expenditure on interpretation services in (i) hospitals; (ii) GP practices; and (iii) dental surgeries, in each of the last seven years is not collected centrally and is therefore not available.

However, details of expenditure incurred by each Health and Social Care Trust in each of the last five years on translation services is set out in the table below. Translation service costs include written, face to face interpreting and spoken word.

	2013/14 £	2012/13 £	2011/12 £	2010/11 £	2009/10 £
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	755,307	717,799	536,462	448,576	412,739
Northern Health & Social Care Trust	435,605	364,641	309,832	295,496	334,437
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust	158,931	119,151	115,391	93,600	81,273
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	1,309,514	1,358,177	924,136	919,977	749,889
Western Health & Social Care Trust	246,952	216,809	220,052	166,239	172,699
NI Ambulance Service Health & Social Care Trust	658	995	1,268	2,357	1,208
Total	2,906,967	2,777,572	2,107,141	1,926,245	1,752,245

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current waiting list, per constituency, for people seeking appointments for consultations relating to neurological illnesses.

(AQW 35687/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of people waiting for an appointment with a consultant in relation to a neurological illness in each constituency is not available.

However information is available on the number of people waiting for a first consultant led outpatient appointment in the neurology specialty, within each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust, and is detailed in the table below for the position at the 30th June 2014 (latest information available).

HSC Trust	Number of patients waiting for first outpatient appointment in the neurology specialty
Belfast	3,093
Northern	421
South Eastern	567
Southern	949
Western	1,062
Northern Ireland	6,092

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people waiting for community care packages in the (i) Northern Health and Social Care Trust; and (ii) Western Health and Social Care Trust. **(AQW 35689/11-15)**

Mr Poots: At 30 June 2014, there were 120 people in the Northern HSC Trust and 25 people in the Western HSC Trust waiting at home or in another community setting for a community care package.

The number of people currently waiting in a hospital setting for a care package is not available.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service of (i) all 4x4 vehicles purchased; (ii) boats and related equipment; and (iii) all training attributed to new rescue responsibilities, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35691/11-15)

Mr Poots: NIFRS expenditure under the various categories is as follows:

NIFRS expenditure	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
4x4 vehicles	Nil	Nil	£359,474
Boats and related equipment	Nil	£16,799	£29,646
Training*	£10,628	£94,618	£84,453

* NIFRS expenditure on all training, external and internal, attributed to its new rescue responsibilities as required under The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Northern Ireland) Order 2011, including flooding and wildland fires.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration he has given to extending legislation concerning learning disability to include children with autism at the moderate or high functioning end of the spectrum in order to widen the services which they can access.

(AQW 35696/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is no legislation which sets out specific services to be provided to children with a learning disability or other individual disability or condition.

Access to health and social care services generally is determined by assessment of an individual's needs. There is no automatic link between children on the autistic spectrum and those with learning disability, although ASD and learning disability may co-occur in some instances.

The Autism Act (NI) 2011 however, provided for the development of the cross-departmental Autism Strategy (2013-2020) and Action Plan (2013-2016). This Strategy and Action Plan provides for the improvement in services and support for all people with autism and their families and carers.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in the absence of residential or inpatient care for people with autism who are prone to violent episodes, what options are available to families who cannot manage their child's aggression in the home.

(AQW 35697/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are currently two specialist residential units in Northern Ireland, the Iveagh Centre which focuses on the needs of children with Learning Disability, who display challenging behaviour, and the regional in-patient unit at Beechcroft, which supports children and young people with a range of mental illnesses and emotional health and well-being needs.

Children with autism and their families can access support provided by the Trusts through the disability services, and/or community and voluntary sector providers.

The focus of all intervention in relation to children, including children with autism, is supporting children within their families. Central to any intervention is the requirement to provide a person centred and effective assessment of need.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consideration has been given to providing residential or inpatient care to young people with autism who are prone to violent episodes and are not manageable in the home environment.

(AQW 35698/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are currently two specialist residential units in Northern Ireland, the Iveagh Centre which focuses on the needs of children with Learning Disability, who display challenging behaviour, and the regional in-patient unit at Beechcroft, which supports children and young people with a range of mental illnesses and emotional health and well-being needs.

Children with autism and their families can access support provided by the Trusts through the disability services, and/or community and voluntary sector providers.

The focus of all intervention in relation to children, including children with autism, is supporting children within their families. Central to any intervention is the requirement to provide a person centred and effective assessment of need.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 34544/11-15, how the agreement of all parties to the repatriation of patients is assured and recorded.

(AQW 35703/11-15)

Mr Poots: The agreement of all parties to repatriation is assured via discussion. The agreement, while not necessarily explicitly set out in writing, is evidenced by a paper trail of clinical correspondence demonstrating discharge of the patient from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and onward referral.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what level of service should be provided for young children with Down Syndrome.

(AQW 35718/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Children Order (NI) 1995 creates a duty to provide services to disabled children and to give them the opportunity to lead lives which are as normal as possible. A range of services to fulfil this duty are provided on the basis of assessment of need. A person centred approach is taken, which may involve a range of disciplines.

Down Syndrome, while recognised as primarily a learning disability, may also reflect a number of other diagnoses associated with the condition which may be more significant in terms of impact such as: visual; hearing; or cardiac defects. Services may be provided from a range of disciplines, for example, paediatrics, speech and language, occupational therapy and family support. Many of these services work in conjunction with other services such as Early Years provision, Pre-school Education, Education and Library Board provision, and Community or Voluntary services.

Information on disability services and services accessible to families who have a child with disability can be found on the Family Support NI website.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33234/11-15, to detail (i) the structure of the Integrated Care Pathway for patients with a Personality Disorder (PD); and (ii) the measures being taken to promote effective interfaces between PD services and other general and specialist mental health services.

(AQW 35725/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) The Personality Disorder Care Pathway outlines the mental health care available in Northern Ireland for people with a Personality Disorder, the steps involved in accessing this care, the types of interventions that may be offered, and what patients and their carers can expect from professionals providing care and treatment. It is intended to launch the care pathway in October 2014, subject to approval by the Personality Disorder Network Group and the HSCB/PHA.
- (ii) The Integrated Care Pathway for patients with a Personality Disorder promotes effective interfaces between PD services and other mental health services and includes arrangements for consultation and co-working across interfaces with other relevant health care services.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33234/11-15, to detail (i) the structure of the inter-agency Personality Disorder Network Group including the agencies that are members of the group; and (ii) the mechanisms by which the group supports people with a Personality Disorder diagnosis and the staff involved in their care.

(AQW 35726/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) The Personality Disorder Network Group operates as a clinical network reporting to the Bamford High Support Services Subgroup. It has five constituent working groups taking forward the main health and social care objectives of the PD strategy:
- Developing an agreed integrated care pathway.
 - Developing a training strategy.
 - Developing Key Performance indicators.
 - Audit working group.
 - Research group.

Members of the network include:

- Health Social Care Board.
 - Public Health Agency.
 - All five Health and Social Care Trusts.
 - Prison Health Care.
 - Probation Board NI.
 - CAUSE (carers representatives).
 - Service user representatives.
 - Queen's University Belfast and University of Ulster.
- (ii) The PD Network Group supports the delivery of care and treatment by providing a clinical support network for staff; providing a forum to share best practice, actively seeking the views of people who have used services and their carers, and supporting them to participate in shaping the development of services. The PD Network Group also provides a forum for coordinating service development across the region and negotiating interface arrangements.

Mrs Cochrane asked 3234/11-15, to outline the educational and training opportunities, including those that constitute Continuing Professional Development, which have been put in place for mental health professionals who will be involved in providing services to patients with a Personality Disorder (PD) as a result of broadening access to mental health services in line with the PD Strategy.

(AQW 35727/11-15)

Mr Poots: Experienced and professionally qualified staff have been recruited to PD services. Training in relevant evidence based therapies (where the staff member does not already have these competences) has been made available. Support for completing accreditation to enable the provision of clinical supervision locally, has been made available to senior clinicians.

A number of staff and service users have been trained to deliver awareness level training in the Knowledge and Understanding Framework (KUF). This training is currently available to HSC staff, criminal justice staff, service users and family carers through the Beeches Management Centre. Some Trusts are planning to offer this through their Recovery College syllabus.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the provision for Speech and Language Therapy, including Makaton Signing, within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust; and the age groups covered by this provision.

(AQW 35731/11-15)**Mr Poots:****Annex A****Speech and Language Therapy Provision– Northern Health and Social Care Trust**

Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) are the lead experts regarding communication and swallowing disorders. They lead on the assessment, differential diagnosis, intervention with and management of individuals with communication and/or swallowing disorders. SLTs aim to help each individual achieve their optimum level of communication. They work closely with families/carers and other professionals. SLTs have a leading role in training others to support people with communication difficulties and in developing environments which support good communication.

The Role of the SLT

The SLT works with children and adults who have communication and/or eating or drinking difficulties. This includes: -

- Spending time talking to families and carers to find out the specific communication needs of their family member and the impact of the communication difficulty on everyday life.
- Assessing the individual's communication ability. This assessment may occur in a variety of settings, for example, at home, clinic or school.
- Deciding if therapy/support is appropriate at this time and discussing these decisions with the individual and his/her family.

- Where therapy/support is appropriate, working jointly with the individual and where appropriate, family and carers to devise agreed goals and discussing who is best to deliver this support.
- Working with other professionals and members of the multidisciplinary team involved in an individual's care.
- Introducing other modes of communication, for example, the use of objects, pictures and signing, communication aids, if appropriate.
- Providing family and carers with the skills they need to support the family member's communication.
- Evaluating the outcome of the intervention programme to determine if speech and language therapy has made a difference and if further therapy is required.

Speech and Language Therapy support may include: -

- Advice and information.
- Training for family/carers.
- Group therapy.
- Individual therapy.
- Home/school programmes supporting the individual.
- Training of other professionals.

For children and adults experiencing difficulties with eating, drinking or feeding (dysphagia) the SLT will support them by: -

- Carrying out a detailed assessment of his/her eating, drinking and swallowing skills at home and where appropriate other settings, e.g. school/nursing home.
- Offering guidance to ensure safe eating and drinking, using appropriate strategies that promote safe and adequate nutritional support.
- Working with other members of the multidisciplinary team involved.

Who do SLTs support?

SLTs work with: -

Babies with feeding and swallowing difficulties

Children with: -

- Mild, moderate and severe learning difficulties.
- Physical difficulties.
- Language delay.
- Specific language impairment.
- Specific difficulties in producing sounds.
- Hearing impairment.
- Cleft palate.
- Stammering.
- Autism.
- Voice disorders.

Adults with: -

- Communication or eating and swallowing disorders following neurological impairments and degenerative conditions including stroke, head injury and Parkinson's Disease.
- Head, neck or throat cancer.
- Voice problems.
- Learning difficulties.
- Stammering.

Where do SLTs work?

Speech and Language Therapy Services are provided in: -

- Community clinics.
- Hospital wards.
- Outpatient departments.
- Special schools and units.
- Adult centres.
- Nursing and residential homes.
- Day centres.
- Child development centres.

- Sure Start Schemes and Larne Parental Project.
- Community Rehabilitation and Stroke Services.
- Clients' homes.
- Multi disciplinary support teams to schools.

2 Makaton Signing

Makaton is available in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust from infancy (through baby sign) and further Makaton support is available to children, of all ages, and their environment.

Training is provided to parents and in education settings as and when required as part of a total communication package.

Makaton is available to adults as specific needs are identified and addressed.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been spent on Research and Development, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in the last five years.

(AQW 35734/11-15)

Mr Poots: The amount spent on Research and Development in each of the last five years broken down by Health and Social Care Trust is set out in the table below.

	2013/14 £	2012/13 £	2011/12 £	2010/11 £	2009/10 £
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	3,878,290	4,065,601	4,261,198	4,820,515	5,481,401
Northern Health & Social Care Trust	359,050	421,143	476,009	717,500	607,088
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust	461,246	475,050	546,011	437,275	362,025
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	456,217	437,611	420,401	354,867	241,147
Western Health & Social Care Trust	563,580	572,317	535,347	438,926	360,271
Total	5,718,383	5,971,722	6,238,966	6,769,083	7,051,932

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the actions that he is taking to encourage collaboration between clinicians, the public and businesses, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 35735/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am committed to the pursuit of healthcare innovation and recognise the benefits this can bring to improving health and social care services for patients and clients. For innovation to be effective it requires collaboration between our health and social care sector, our businesses and also our universities as well as listening to what patients say. While industry can develop new solutions and bring them to market, it is essential that their work and that of the universities is directed by a clear understanding of health and social care priorities.

To facilitate this interaction between the sectors the Northern Ireland Connected Health Ecosystem was established in September 2012. The Eco-System meets quarterly at different locations across Northern Ireland with each meeting having its own theme. For example the theme of the next Eco-System meeting is procurement and previous meetings have focussed on Innovation, supporting transformative change; etc. These quarterly meetings are supplemented by other topic specific meetings where a number of representatives across the sectors come together to consider and explore particular issues identified by health professionals.

In order to maximise engagement and the potential for collaboration the Connected Health Eco-System has been established as a regional initiative. I have not taken action to establish any separate initiatives of this nature at individual Trust level.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will respond to the College of Emergency Medicine regarding their proposals to deal with 'exit block' in Emergency Departments.

(AQW 35739/11-15)

Mr Poots: I wrote to the College of Emergency Medicine (CEM) on 14 August 2014 welcoming its report 'Acute and Emergency Care: Prescribing the Remedy' which includes proposals to address exit block. My Department is working closely with CEM and the Royal College of Nursing to bring about improvements in the delivery of unscheduled care and value the engagement that we have so far on this important matter. There appears to be common ground between the recommendations in this report and the output from the summits held earlier this year. The recommendations also reflect the proposals put forward by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) following its review of unscheduled care in the Belfast Trust with a view to the regional implications.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much his Department has spent on health and social care research, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, since 2013.

(AQW 35752/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on expenditure is collected by fiscal year; the amount spent by each Health and Social Care Trust on Research and Development since April 2012 is set out in the table below.

	2013/14 £	2012/13 £
Belfast Health & Social Care Trust	3,878,290	4,065,601
Northern Health & Social Care Trust	359,050	421,143
South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust	461,246	475,050
Southern Health & Social Care Trust	456,217	437,611
Western Health & Social Care Trust	563,580	572,317
Total	5,718,383	5,971,722

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how many different types of cancer drugs have been prescribed to patients; and (ii) how this compares to the number prescribed in England, since 2013.

(AQW 35753/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) has responsibility for commissioning specialist drugs, including cancer drugs in Northern Ireland.

The HSCB advise that there are in the region of 100 different medicines prescribed in the treatment of cancer and many of those medicines are used for a range of different tumours and as part of different drug regimes. A proportion of those medicines are not specifically 'cancer drugs' but may also be licensed for use in other diseases. It is therefore not possible to provide a definitive position regarding how many different types of drugs are prescribed.

The HSCB does not hold data on drugs prescribed in England therefore a comparison since 2013 is not possible.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the annual cost of the Patient and Client Council; and whether there has been a value for money assessment.

(AQW 35767/11-15)

Mr Poots: The PCC budget allocation for 2014/15 is £1,764,386.

In 2011, a review of ALBs, led by the Ministerial Budget Review Group, considered the scope for each ALB to be abolished, integrated with its parent Department or merged with another body. I stated in the DHSSPS return in June 2011 that I had no plans for immediate change to the functioning of the PCC, where fundamental change would entail primary legislation and this remains the position.

The PCC was established specifically to be part of an interdependent system of modern organisations, collectively capable of providing high quality and responsive health and social care to the people of Northern Ireland

The Department regularly monitors PCC performance against the objectives set out in its Business Plan through its performance review process and my Department continues to look at ways of maximizing the efficiency of the Council's operations and those of all other Arms Length Bodies.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to his comments on UTV Live Tonight on 5 February 2013 regarding the introduction of legislation to create a new soft opt-out organ donation system by the end of 2014, whether this assessment of his legislative timetable remains valid.

(AQW 35778/11-15)

Mr Poots: As I stated to the Assembly on 11 February 2014, I believe that it is best to take a considered approach to future organ donation policy, and so I have deferred my decision on this until the views and opinions of the wider Northern Ireland public are known. Following the ongoing extensive Public Health Agency (PHA) campaign on organ donation, the PHA will carry out a further survey in November 2014 to establish the campaign's impact on public understanding of organ donation issues, including the possible introduction of an opt-out system. I hope to be in a position to make a decision on the future of organ donation policy, including the legislative impact, in early 2015.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the weaknesses of the Individual Funding Request (IFR) mechanism in relation to cancer medicines; and to outline the groups and individuals he has met to date to discuss the IFR process, including (i) the name of the groups; and (ii) the dates of the meetings.

(AQW 35779/11-15)

Mr Poots: Figures supplied by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) indicate that the majority (around 98%) of the applications for unapproved specialist drugs are accepted through the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process. I have had discussions with a wide range of key stakeholders group and individuals regarding their concerns about the IFR process. The number of meetings and organisations involved are too numerous to set out in the detail requested; however they include cancer patients and survivors, charities, political representatives and the pharmaceutical industry. Having listened to those genuinely held views I directed my Department to carry out an evaluation of the IFR process. I plan to make an announcement on next steps for the evaluation shortly.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the discussions he has had to date on the Individual Funding Request process; and for an update on the evaluation his Department is undertaking in relation to whether this process is working.

(AQW 35780/11-15)

Mr Poots: Figures supplied by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) indicate that the majority (around 98%) of the applications for unapproved specialist drugs are accepted through the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process. I have had discussions with a wide range of key stakeholders group and individuals regarding their concerns about the IFR process. The number of meetings and organisations involved are too numerous to set out in the detail requested; however they include cancer patients and survivors, charities, political representatives and the pharmaceutical industry. Having listened to those genuinely held views I directed my Department to carry out an evaluation of the IFR process. I plan to make an announcement on next steps for the evaluation shortly.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) terms of reference; (ii) estimated timescale, including the conclusion date; and (iii) patients and patient groups who have been consulted for his Department's evaluation into the Individual Funding Request process.

(AQW 35781/11-15)

Mr Poots: Figures supplied by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) indicate that the majority (around 98%) of the applications for unapproved specialist drugs are accepted through the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process. I have had discussions with a wide range of key stakeholders group and individuals regarding their concerns about the IFR process. The number of meetings and organisations involved are too numerous to set out in the detail requested; however they include cancer patients and survivors, charities, political representatives and the pharmaceutical industry. Having listened to those genuinely held views I directed my Department to carry out an evaluation of the IFR process. I plan to make an announcement on next steps for the evaluation shortly.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to resolve the situation at the out of hours service in Strabane, which currently does not have a sufficient number of GPs.

(AQW 35787/11-15)

Mr Poots: Within OOHs the issue of filling GP shifts is a situation which affects a number of providers across Northern Ireland and the Health & Social Care Board (HSCB) is working with all of the OOHs providers in order to try and address the issue of unfilled shifts. In supporting both GP and nursing colleagues the HSCB has invested an additional £1.5million to the OOHs budget during 2014/15 in order to support the provision of OOHs services across NI. The western area has been allocated its share of funding to support the 5 centres in the Western LCG area.

Western Urgent Care has already taken action to address issues around the delivery of GP OOHs services such as on-going recruitment for GPs, flexible working arrangements, enhanced payment rates for difficult to fill shifts, liaising with members of the Local Medical Committee in relation to encouraging GPs to work out of hours from their local centre as well as the recent recruitment of a pool of nurses to assist with OOHs provision in the Western area.

The HSCB meets regularly with the Trusts to review performance and will continue to explore opportunities to improve OOHs services. I am aware that there has been an ever increasing demand for OOHs services and the challenges this brings and I have already approved the HSCB's Regional Strategic Framework for GP OOHs services which focuses on:

- Simplifying access;
- Improving organisational efficiency; and
- Improving alignment with other healthcare services.

In implementing the changes in the framework the HSCB will work with providers to ensure high standards in the handling of calls from patients; maintaining the safety and quality of services currently provided, both during the transition to, and in delivery of, the new working arrangements.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps his Department is taking to improve formal diagnosis rates of dementia, in order to ensure patients receive the correct care.

(AQW 35840/11-15)

Mr Poots: Since the launch of the regional strategy 'Improving Dementia Services in Northern Ireland' in 2011, a key objective for the Regional Dementia Strategy Implementation Group is to raise diagnosis rates across NI to 75% and above.

The most recently available figures show that NI has a diagnosis rate of 63.2% which is well above the UK average (46%).

Recurrent investment over the past two years has led to the enhancement of memory services, and their development where none existed previously. Criteria and protocols have been developed for referrals into memory services and work is ongoing to achieve timely assessment and diagnosis.

In addition, I have set a target which states that a first out-patient appointment should take place within 9 weeks of referral, and this is monitored across all Trusts by the HSCB Performance Monitoring Department. However, some types of dementia are particularly difficult to diagnose, and in some cases further scanning and testing may be required before a diagnosis can be confirmed.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are currently provided for people living with dementia in North Antrim.

(AQW 35846/11-15)

Mr Poots: Services for people living with dementia in the North Antrim area are provided by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust's (NH&SCT) Community Mental Health Team for Older Persons. This multi-disciplinary team provides assessment, diagnosis, review and support services, from pre-diagnosis to ongoing support throughout. An out-patient memory service is also provided. The Dementia Home Support Team provides specialist input for individuals in care home settings with challenging behaviours.

The Alzheimer's Society are contracted to provide a range of services which include: a Dementia Support Worker providing a support and information service throughout the Trust area; and a befriending service which provides one-to-one support to people with dementia and their carers. Trained volunteers spend at least two to four hours a week with the individual who has been matched with the trained volunteer during the early stages of dementia. The Society also provides an advocacy service in relation to all aspects of care and support throughout the NHSCT area.

Good Morning Ballycastle, run by three local churches, operates a daily telephone call service to individuals, which also serves as a valuable resource for people with dementia in the area.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what support his Department provides to the Alzheimer's Society.

(AQW 35847/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department provides grant aid of £42,794 to the Alzheimer's Society each financial year. This grant goes towards the cost of core services within the organisation and is provided under Article 71 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972.

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service have a policy in place to recoup the costs of responding to repeat unwanted fire signals; and if so, to detail the process involved.

(AQW 35861/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service does not have a policy in place to recoup the costs of responding to repeat unwanted fire signals.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the thirteen recommendations contained within 'Acute and emergency care: prescribing the remedy' published jointly by the College of Emergency Medicine, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the Royal College of Physicians of London and the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

(AQW 35873/11-15)

Mr Poots: I wrote to the College of Emergency Medicine (CEM) on 14 August 2014 welcoming this report. My Department is working closely with CEM and the Royal College of Nursing to bring about improvements in the delivery of unscheduled care and value the engagement that we have so far on this important matter. There appears to be common ground between the recommendations in this report and the output from the summits held earlier this year. The recommendations also reflect the proposals put forward by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) following its review of unscheduled care in the Belfast Trust with a view to the regional implications.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, given the stringent criteria required to qualify for the Community Meals Service, for his assessment of elderly and vulnerable people being forced to purchase ready meals which may have questionable nutritional value and be unaffordable.

(AQW 35912/11-15)

Mr Poots: All of our clients have the right to choose what they wish to eat and to source meals available from a range of providers.

In recent years, we have seen a gradual reduction in the numbers receiving community meals services. There are a number of possible explanations for this, including: the availability of alternatives such as ready meals from supermarkets; an increase in the number of older people being supported by family members; and a growing number of cases where re-ablement support is offered to promote the independence of the individual.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the action he will take to support the 20,000 people identified by the Alzheimer's Society as living with dementia.

(AQW 35922/11-15)

Mr Poots: I launched the Regional Strategy, "Improving Dementia Services in Northern Ireland" in November 2011. Recurrent investment over the past two years has led to the enhancement of memory services, and their development where none existed previously. Criteria and protocols have been developed for referrals into memory services and work is ongoing to achieve timely assessment and diagnosis. Work is also on-going with GPs to enhance referrals to memory clinics.

Over the next 3 years, in addition to those plans already in place, the Implementation Group will focus on the key target areas of (i) awareness raising, information and support, (ii) training and (iii) short-breaks, respite and support to carers.

All five Trusts are committed to providing timely diagnosis, and services are being developed to include pre and post diagnostic counselling, comprehensive assessment, support and education.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of children who have been placed in foster care in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) East Londonderry, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35950/11-15)

Mr Poots: Figures on the number of Looked After Children placed in foster care are not available by Constituency. The lowest geographical output available is at Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust area. As the East Londonderry constituency falls within both the Western and Northern HSC Trust areas, figures on the number of children who were placed in foster care have been provided for both Trusts.

Table 1: Children Placed in Foster Care in the Northern HSC Trust, the Western HSC Trust and Northern Ireland at 31 March (2011 – 2013)

Area	2011	2012	2013
	No. Children Placed in Foster Care	No. Children Placed in Foster Care	No. Children Placed in Foster Care
Northern HSC Trust	426	447	510
Western HSC Trust	291	325	350
Northern Ireland	1,862	1,946	2,112

Source: Health and Social Care Board Delegated Statutory Functions Returns

Department of Justice

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he will bring forward legislation to have manslaughter charges brought against suppliers of illicit drugs in cases in which death is ruled as having been caused by the consumption of the drug; and charges of causing grievous bodily harm in instances of serious reaction ruled to have been caused by the drug.

(AQW 35227/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): I am aware that the House of Lords has considered a case where death occurred from the unlawful supply of drugs. In Northern Ireland, following the completion of any investigation by the PSNI, it is the role of the Public Prosecution Service to independently examine whether or not there is sufficient evidence that meet the required test for prosecution and to bring forward charges in relation to the offence or offences committed.

The Department has no current plans to bring forward legislative proposals to charge those who supply illicit drugs with manslaughter or grievous bodily harm in instances where a serious reaction or death is caused by consuming the drug supplied.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice what percentage of complaints of rape in each of the last five years have resulted in (i) prosecution; and (ii) conviction.

(AQW 35306/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice does not hold this information. The decision whether to prosecute a complaint is taken by the Public Prosecution Service (PPS). I am committed to respecting the independence of the PPS. You may therefore wish to direct your question to the PPS.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether prisoners have access to social networking sites.

(AQW 35308/11-15)

Mr Ford: NIPS does not permit access to social networking sites.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 34984/11-15, (i) to provide any updates he has received on this matter; (ii) whether a Serious Case Review has been undertaken; if so, (iii) when it was completed; and (iv) when it will be published.

(AQW 35309/11-15)

Mr Ford: A Serious Case Review has not been commissioned in this case as the matter falls outside the remit for a Serious Case Review as per the Public Protection Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI) Manual of Practice Section 18.1.

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice to detail the amount claimed by prison chaplains in each of the last five years, broken down by (i) prison; and (ii) denomination.

(AQW 35331/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below details the cost of providing Chaplaincy services for years 2010 to 2014 across the three prison Establishments broken down by denomination and faith.

Establishment	Denomination	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
		Amount Paid	Amount Paid	Amount Paid	Amount Paid
Maghaberry	Roman Catholic	£46,163.78	£49,985.76	£52,431.80	£59,187.05
	Church of Ireland	£19,189.70	£20,068.00	£17,717.70	£17,073.39
	Presbyterian	£48,620.16	£62,892.52	£57,355.28	£65,145.65
	Methodist	£27,595.29	£12,906.61	£13,278.90	£11,641.68
	Free Presbyterian	£20,777.12	£21,913.05	£21,101.82	£21,238.74
	Muslim	£8,672.99	£8,073.31	£6,377.44	£4,406.16
	Total		£171,019.04	£175,839.25	£168,262.94

Magilligan	Roman Catholic	£21,762.13	£17,658.28	£18,209.23	£21,979.34
	Church of Ireland	£12,565.95	£11,674.76	£8,319.85	£6,694.77
	Presbyterian	£26,024.85	£23,608.95	£7,322.17	£5,346.60
	Methodist	£9,204.92	£4,217.00	£7,957.90	£12,493.00
	Free Presbyterian	£18,416.72	£20,635.76	£17,921.03	£15,994.68
	Muslim	0	0	£1,850.40	£3,571.20
	Total		£87,974.57	£77,794.75	£61,580.58

HBW	Roman Catholic	£32,066.01	£31,483.27	£31,620.99	£27,543.91
	Church of Ireland	£5,541.05	£5,834.49	£1,498.26	£4,424.82
	Presbyterian	0	0	0	0
	Methodist	£6,489.78	£6,537.64	£5,821.96	£3,975.75
	Free Presbyterian	£3,384.66	£2,782.80	£675.15	£63.59
	Muslim	0	0	£504.00	£294.00
	Total		£47,481.50	£46,638.20	£40,120.36

Overall Total		£306,475.11	£300,272.20	£269,963.88	£281,074.33
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Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the (i) bed capacity; (ii) number of people in custody; and (iii) percentage of capacity occupied on (a) 1 September 2014; (b) 1 August 2014; (c) 1 July 2014; and (d) 1 June 2014, broken down by prison.

(AQW 35336/11-15)

Mr Ford: Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) establishments do not have a maximum operational capacity. For that reason it is not possible to illustrate population figures as a percentage of that figure.

Each establishment has a Certified Normal Accommodation (CNA) figure and NIPS accommodates people in custody based upon the requirements of the courts.

	CNA	Population 1 June	Population 1 July	Population 1 August	Population 1 September
Maghaberry	988	1022	1031	1072	1041
Magilligan	568	553	548	565	541
Hydebank	362	226	223	212	217

Some accommodation at Hydebank Wood is currently temporarily closed to facilitate refurbishment.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice what cuts will be made to his budget as a result of the lack of agreement on Welfare Reform.

(AQW 35352/11-15)

Mr Ford: In the Finance Minister's 31 July Written Statement to the Assembly on 2013-14 Provisional Outturn and 2014-15 June Monitoring Round, he has stated:

'The Executive has agreed to further Resource DEL reductions in the October Monitoring Round to cover the welfare reform penalties. If there is no agreement on Welfare Reform this would amount to the full £87 million penalty, which would be a further 2.3 per cent reduction for those departments not protected. Any reduced requirements declared in the October Monitoring Round by individual departments will be used to reduce the level of any adjustments applied to that department in the October round.'

The Department is currently working through the October monitoring round process, and part of that will be to determine what areas of the budget will be affected by the anticipated budget cuts.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of staff members (i) recruited to; and (ii) who have resigned from, the Prison Service in each of the last three years, broken down by grade.

(AQW 35364/11-15)

Mr Ford: The numbers of staff, broken down by grade, recruited to or resigned from the Northern Ireland Prison Service in the last three years are as follows:

Recruited:

Grades	4 September 2011 to 3 September 2012	4 September 2012 to 3 September 2013	4 September 2013 to 3 September 2014
General Service/Support Grades	5	9	1
Custody Prison Officers	20	284	0
Prison Custody Officers	0	0	99
Governors	0	1	0
Total	25	294	100

Resigned:

	4 September 2011 to 3 September 2012	4 September 2012 to 3 September 2013	4 September 2013 to 3 September 2014
General Service/Support Grades	2	5	9
Governors	1	0	1
Night Custody Officers	3	0	2
Main Grade Officers	4	0	0
Operational Support Grades	3	2	0
Prison Custody Officers	10	4	10
Custody Prison Officers	0	17	43
Total	23	28	65

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice how many Prison Service staff are currently on sick leave, broken down by grade.
(AQW 35365/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number of Prison Service Staff on sickness absence, as at 3 September 2014, is 129. This is broken down by Grade as follows:

■ Custody Prison Officers/Operational Support Grades	–	49
■ Officers	–	48
■ Prison Custody Officers	–	11
■ Night Custody Officers	–	5
■ Senior Officers	–	5
■ General Service Grades	–	11

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of assaults on Prison Service staff in each of the last three years.
(AQW 35366/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number of assaults on staff is shown in Table A below. It is important to note that during this period there has been a rising prisoner population.

The physical environment at Maghaberry has also changed with the opening of Quoile House in late 2012. This was the first accommodation block to be built in Maghaberry Prison in five years and can hold up to 160 prisoners.

Table A

Year	Assaults (Prisoner on Staff)	Total Assaults
August 2011 – July 2012	47	316
August 2012 – July 2013	81	408
August 2013 – July 2014	94	342

These figures have been drawn from the Prisoner Information System (PRISM). Care is taken when processing and analysing this information but the detail is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large scale recording system.

A more accurate source of reliable information is NIPS Key Performance Measurement information. This was only introduced in 2013.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the required levels of staff of each grade for (i) HMP Maghaberry; (ii) HMP Magilligan; and (iii) HMP Hydebank.
(AQW 35367/11-15)

Mr Ford: The current Target Staffing Level (the number of staff required to carry out the work in each establishment) figures are set out in the table below.

Grade	Target Staffing Level (Maghaberry)	Target Staffing Level (Magilligan)	Target Staffing Level (Hydebank)
Governor	1	0	0
Functional Head	5	3	3
Unit Manager	8	5	4
Senior Officer	70	33	25
Officers	272	111	98
Operational Support Grades	3	9	7
Night Custody Officers	56	24	16
Custody Prison Officers	324	122	103
General Service Grades	98	54	44
Support Staff	24	7	6
Total	861	368	306

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the current levels of staff of each grade for (i) HMP Maghaberry; (ii) HMP Magilligan; and (iii) HMP Hydebank.
(AQW 35368/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Staff in Post (Full Time Equivalent) figures, as of 1 August 2014, are as follows:

Grade	Staff in Post (Maghaberry)	Staff in Post (Magilligan)	Staff in Post (Hydebank)
Governor	1	0	0
Functional Head	5	3	3
Unit Manager	6	6	4
Senior Officer	55	28	24
Officers	252	128	100
Operational Support Grades	3	9	7
Night Custody Officers	56	24	16
Custody Prison Officers	310	103	66
General Service Grades	97	54	48
Support Staff	27	10	6
Total	812	365	274

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Justice what plans his Department has to provide resource funding for The Street Angels project in Omagh; and for his assessment of the value of the work undertaken by this project to date.

(AQW 35386/11-15)

Mr Ford: I understand that the Omagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) has committed £17,555 from its 2013/15 budget to support the Omagh Street Safe Project. It has also been awarded £10,000 for the period 2013/15 from my Department's Asset Recovery Scheme.

The funding provided to Omagh PCSP by my Department and the Policing Board is aimed at supporting the PCSP in delivering its objectives with regard to improving community safety and building community confidence in policing in the local area. However, any decision on how that funding is allocated is a matter for Omagh PCSP, on the basis of consultation, community engagement and research carried out to identify local priorities. My Department currently has no plans to allocate any further specific funding to this project.

The Omagh Street Safe Project commenced in November 2013 and, as a relatively recent night time economy intervention, an outcome impact evaluation of the project is yet to be commissioned. However, early project monitoring reports from Omagh PCSP indicate that this initiative makes a valuable contribution as part of a multi-agency approach to reducing alcohol related harm, protecting health and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour linked to the Omagh town centre night life.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether serving prison or police officers are prohibited from discussing employment-related matters with MLAs or any other elected representatives; and if so, where this is stated in their employment contract; and if not, to provide an assurance that such measures cannot be imposed.

(AQW 35438/11-15)

Mr Ford: Prison officers are not precluded from approaching elected representatives. However, the Standards of Conduct chapter of the Northern Ireland Civil Service HR Handbook, which applies to prison officers, states that if staff are dissatisfied on a personal matter they should approach their line manager or raise the matter through established policies. Staff are informed they must not attempt to bring political or other outside influence to bear in support of personal claims as a Civil Servant.

Police officers are not precluded from approaching elected representatives. They do not have a contract of employment, but are bound by the PSNI Code of Ethics and the Official Secrets Act. Provided that the discussions are not inconsistent with the obligations set out in both of these documents, then there is no reason why employment-related matters cannot be discussed.

Generally, staff would not be permitted to discuss any matter that is part of an employment law settlement, or indeed any settlement, which has confidentiality as one of its terms. In such circumstances staff would not be at liberty to discuss any matter covered by the settlement.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice why the tender for drug testing in the Prison Service has not been published.

(AQW 35440/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the Member to the reply I gave to AQW/35311 /11-15 on 17 September 2014.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what measures exist to prevent convicted prisoners contacting or harassing victims or procuring others to carry out actions on their behalf; and whether mail, telephone calls, text messages, email and social media is monitored.

(AQW 35441/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are a number of measures in place to prevent prisoner's contacting or harassing victims. All prisoners must provide numbers and contact details for anyone they wish to contact via the internal pin-phone telephone system; these numbers are verified before contact is permitted.

Telephone calls and prisoner mail are also monitored and necessary action taken where appropriate.

Mobile phones are not permitted within any establishment. Internet access is strictly controlled for educational purposes only.

Any prisoner caught in possession of a mobile phone or attempting to use another prisoner's pin-phone account will be charged under prison rules.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the extent of consultation with police charities on the decision to place £383,000 from HM Treasury into a new police museum to honour the Part-Time Reserve.

(AQW 35444/11-15)

Mr Ford: Officials from my Department sought the views of the RUC GC Foundation, the RUC-PSNI Benevolent Fund, the Disabled Police Officers' Association Northern Ireland and the Retired Police Officers' Association, on the disbursement of the £383,000. This £383,000 relates to the unallocated amount from the Police Reserve Gratuity Scheme.

Following further discussions, and taking account of views, I decided to make this funding available to the Police Museum to publicly mark the service and dedication of the Part Time Reserve.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice what impact the additional £383,000 of HM Treasury funding will have on the new Police Museum following the allocation of £5.59m to this project.

(AQW 35445/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department allocated up to £5.5m to the Police Museum following approval of the Outline Business Case (OBC) in July 2012. The additional £383,000 allocated to the Museum relates to the unallocated amount from the Police Part Time Reserve Gratuity Scheme.

I have made this funding available to the Police Museum to publicly mark the service and dedication of the Part Time Reserve and provide a lasting and enduring tribute to their role in policing in Northern Ireland.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the total Legal Aid paid to date and the projected final Legal Aid costings in cases (a) 13/099496; (b)13/099497; (c) 13/099503; (d) 13/099511; (e) 13/099513; (f) 13/099517; (g) 13/099519; (h) 13/099521; (i) 13/099522; (j) 13/099498; and (k) 13/099510, all collectively 14/084646 at Dungannon Magistrates Court; and (ii) the number of law firms instructed, including Junior and Senior Counsel.

(AQW 35457/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) To date a total of £780.00 (inclusive of VAT of £130.00) has been paid to four solicitors in respect of Magistrates' Court proceedings in the above cases.

The Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission has estimated that the total cost of the Magistrates' Court proceedings (including those fees already paid) will be £19,428.00 (inclusive of VAT of £3,238.00).

It is not possible, at this stage, to estimate the final costs payable for the Crown Court proceedings and no pleas have been entered.

- (ii) In the Magistrates' Court, legal aid was granted to a total of nine separate solicitors; nine junior counsel were instructed in the course of these proceedings. To date, seven separate solicitors have been engaged for the Crown Court proceedings.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether the timing of the re-tendering process for drug testing in local prisons is determined by the Scottish Prison Service.

(AQW 35458/11-15)

Mr Ford: The contract for Drug Testing used by NIPS is maintained by Scottish Prison Service (SPS). The timing for retendering is a matter for SPS.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to provide a copy of the report into the investigation of a collapsed trial in 2010 relating to allegations including assaults on police, connected to an illegal republican parade in Rosslea, County Fermanagh which was dismissed after the prosecution counsel failed to appear at court.

(AQW 35460/11-15)

Mr Ford: The issues raised are matters for the Public Prosecution Service (PPS). I am committed to respecting the independence of the PPS.

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

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to provide the Terms of Reference for the review being carried out into the August 2010 agreement reached with dissident republicans in Roe House at Maghaberry Prison.

(AQW 35480/11-15)

Mr Ford: Following a recommendation by the Prisoner Ombudsman I initiated the Stocktake of the implementation of the August 2010 agreement. I expect to receive the report at the end of September.

I have provided a copy of the Terms of Reference for the Stocktake with this response.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice who initiated the 'stocktake' exercise at Roe House in Maghaberry Prison; and when it will be completed.

(AQW 35481/11-15)

Mr Ford: Following a recommendation by the Prisoner Ombudsman I initiated the Stocktake of the implementation of the August 2010 agreement. I expect to receive the report at the end of September.

I have provided a copy of the Terms of Reference for the Stocktake with this response.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to outline the business case for the proposed refurbishment of the visitors facility, including the segregated visitors facility, at Maghaberry Prison; and what steps are being taken to ensure the facilities are compliant with Home Office specifications to maximise security.

(AQW 35483/11-15)

Mr Ford: The objectives outlined in the approved business case for the refurbishment of the visiting area at Maghaberry Prison are:

- To refurbish the current visits area of Maghaberry in order to meet the needs of the increasing population.
- To update the current layout to improve visibility and acoustics and ensure the design of tables meets security needs and the overall layout is aesthetic; and,
- To improve the current visits area to accommodate more visits and make the experience better for those visiting as recommended in the inspection of Maghaberry Prison in March 2012 by Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland.

The new facilities have been designed to provide what NIPS considers to be appropriate levels of security, which are equivalent to Home Office design standards for prisons.

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice what supervisory mechanisms exist in the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's office to ensure statutory compliance with the procedures that have been laid down for its operation.

(AQW 35501/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is operationally independent of the Department. However I am advised by its Chief Executive that the office has a number of mechanisms in place to make sure it delivers on its statutory obligations under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. These include the Quality and Standards Board; supervision by senior investigation officers; and review by senior management including the Police Ombudsman. A customer complaints procedure exists which allows those unhappy with any aspect of an investigation carried out by the Office to have their case reviewed.

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Justice what professional supervision exists in the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland's office to ensure the evidential accuracy of its reports.

(AQW 35502/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Office of the Police Ombudsman is operationally independent of my Department. However, I am advised by its Chief Executive that statements and reports of investigations carried out by the Office are subject to rigorous quality control measures throughout their lifespan. Professional supervision by a senior investigating officer, or deputy, continues during the course of the investigation, with intervention where appropriate. Upon completion of the investigation, a report is produced and its content scrutinised by a group of senior staff, including the Police Ombudsman and Chief Executive. All reports intended for publication will be sent to the PSNI for them to check for factual inaccuracies.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice why the Northern Ireland Police Fund has not yet implemented the recommendations of the Steele Report that those 'directly affected by terrorism' could be clients of the fund.

(AQW 35510/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Police Fund is operationally independent of the Department of Justice. I note however that the Steele Report's primary recommendation on the scope of the Police Fund stated that it "should be limited in its coverage

to deaths and injuries caused directly by terrorist violence". This was consistent with paragraph 10.20 of the Report of the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland, recommending that the Fund be established. The further recommendation that the Fund should support those 'directly affected by terrorism' must be interpreted in that context.

Paragraph 44 of the Steele Report noted that "it will of course be for the Fund itself to interpret its role in practice".

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice to detail under what circumstances funding for the Disabled Police Officers Association Northern Ireland was withheld, despite satisfactory annual accounts and other identifiable groups which struggled to be granted funding.

(AQW 35512/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Disabled Police Officers' Association of Northern Ireland receives funding from one of my Department's arm's-length bodies, the Northern Ireland Police Fund. The Fund is operationally independent of the Department: however, I am advised by its Chief Executive that, when an allegation of fraud was received, further funding was withheld pending the outcome of a Charity Commission investigation.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the number of staff employed in his Department broken down by grade; and (ii) the total salary for each grade, for each financial year since 1 April 2010.

(AQW 35513/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice came into existence on the 12 April 2010 and information can only be provided from this date.

The information requested can be found in the tables attached at Annex A and Annex B.

Figures provided in Annex B include basic salary only, and do not include any allowances, overtime or employer costs.

Annex A

Table 1 - Showing number of staff employed in Department of Justice since April 2010, broken down by grade

Grade	Current Staff In Post (FTE)			
	12 April 2010	1 April 2011	1 April 2012	1 April 2013
DOJ & Agencies*	2471.43	0	0	0
Prison Grades	1853.29	1775.99	1516.36	1501.2
SCS (General Service)	0	27.77	25.76	25.85
Grade 6	0	3.00	6.00	7.00
Grade 7	0	74.97	79.29	78.79
Deputy Principal	0	149.13	149.08	137.41
Staff Officer	0	250.80	218.99	216.86
Executive Officer	0	371.47	0	0
Executive Officer 1	0	0	259.43	260.11
Executive Officer 2	0	0	102.53	141.43
Administrative Officer	0	628.08	629.41	570.60
Administrative Assistant	0	94.57	90.97	79.78
Non-General Service Disciplines	0	726.71	698.11	719.97
Total	4324.72	4102.49	3775.93	3739

* Staff breakdown of DOJ & Agency grades not available at 12 April 2010.

An individual's full time equivalent (FTE) value is calculated as their expected weekly hours divided by the number of weekly hours worked by a full-time member of staff.

Annex B

Table 2 - Total salary for each grade, for each financial year

Grade*	12/4/2010 – 31/3/2011	1/4/2011 – 31/3/2012	1/4/2012 – 31/3/2013	1/4/2013 – 31/3/2014
Administrative Assistant	£1,247,577.13	£1,171,017.75	£1,084,954.19	£1,201,475.92

Grade*	12/4/2010 – 31/3/2011	1/4/2011 – 31/3/2012	1/4/2012 – 31/3/2013	1/4/2013 – 31/3/2014
Administrative Officer	£4,009,896.86	£3,997,779.63	£3,839,436.45	£10,236,221.75
Executive Officer 2	£2,214,362.07	£2,282,544.33	£2,431,312.55	£3,504,922.64
Executive Officer 1	£1,366,260.50	£2,455,285.21	£2,756,184.44	£7,464,661.78
Staff Officer	£4,504,298.88	£4,478,668.59	£4,508,760.07	£6,992,178.23
Deputy Principal	£4,653,109.30	£5,220,118.45	£5,713,381.75	£7,709,350.70
Grade 7	£3,234,295.34	£3,602,473.56	£3,708,355.20	£5,551,404.16
Grade 6	£318,112.00	£378,769.00	£561,070.00	£699,948.00
Senior Civil Servant	£1,130,868.95	£1,033,697.95	£1,422,510.27	£1,942,118.62

* Incorporates analogous grades

Note:

- Salary information provided above only relates to those employees paid via HR Connect payroll;
- Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS), Youth Justice Agency Non-General Service (YJA NGS) and NI Courts and Tribunal Service (NICTS) (prior to their transfer to HR Connect payroll at the end of October 2013) are unable to extract salary information by grade from their system. Tables 3-5 inclusive provide aggregated data.

Table 3 - Total spend for all grades for all employees on YJA NGS payroll

	YJA NGS salary costs
12/4/2010 – 31/3/2011	£8,120,216.67
1/4/2011 – 31/3/2012	£7,872,655.62
1/4/2012 – 31/3/2013	£7,718,027.86
1/4/2013 – 31/3/2014	£7,409,665.60

Table 4 - Total spend for all grades for all employees NIPS payroll from 1 April 2010

	NIPS salary costs
1/4/2010 – 31/3/2011*	£69,010,748.63
1/4/2011 – 31/3/2012	£74,492,009.15
1/4/2012 – 31/3/2013	£71,055,926.16
1/4/2013 – 31/3/2014	£61,274,294.94

* NIPS payroll system can only calculate figures from 1 April 2010.

Table 5 - Total spend for all grades for all employees on NICTS payroll from 12 April 2010 until transfer on to HR Connect.

	NICTS salary costs
12/4/2010 – 31/3/2011	£16,600,377.06
1/4/2011 – 31/3/2012	£18,964,114.78
1/4/2012 – 31/3/2013	£19,083,540.15
1/4/2013 – 31/10/2013	£10,285,873.99

Note:

- NICTS transferred on to HR Connect payroll with effect from 1st November 2013. Salary costs from this date are included in Table 2.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of visits made by political representatives from Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann to dissident republicans in Maghaberry Prison in (i) 2012; (ii) 2013; and (iii) 2014.

(AQW 35531/11-15)

Mr Ford: Political representatives from Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann have visited Maghaberry Prison on one occasion in 2012, on one occasion in 2013 and on three occasions to date in 2014.

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice what procedures exist for requests from politicians outside of the United Kingdom entering Northern Ireland prisons and meeting prisoners.

(AQW 35532/11-15)

Mr Ford: The procedures are contained in the Northern Ireland Prisons Standing Orders. Standing Order 5.7.3 General Interest Visits – Elected Representatives states: General interest visits to prisons in Northern Ireland may be considered by the Department of Justice to groups of elected representatives. Any such requests received should be communicated to NIPS HQ who will liaise with Private Office.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to case number 12/087229 and 12/087230 at Downpatrick Magistrates Court, to detail (i) the dates on which this case has been listed, and for what reason; (ii) the reasons for the delay; and (iii) whether a Legal Aid certificate has been granted; and if so, (a) the total has been paid to date and the estimated final cost; and (b) whether an extension has been granted to cover counsel.

(AQW 35537/11-15)

Mr Ford: The defendant in case numbers 12/087229 and 12/087230 has not applied for Legal Aid. A timeline of the court hearings and the adjournment reasons are detailed in the table below.

Date	Hearing Type	Adjournment Reason
04-Sep-14	Preliminary Enquiry	Defence Not Ready
21-Aug-14	Preliminary Enquiry	Prosecution Not Ready
07-Aug-14	Preliminary Enquiry	Defence Not Ready
10-Jul-14	Preliminary Enquiry	Prosecution Not Ready
12-Jun-14	Preliminary Enquiry	Prosecution Not Ready
29-May-14	Preliminary Enquiry	Prosecution Not Ready
01-May-14	Preliminary Enquiry - For Mention	Prosecution Not Ready
27-Mar-14	Preliminary Enquiry - For Mention	Defence Not Ready
13-Mar-14	Preliminary Enquiry	Defence Not Ready
03-Mar-14	Preliminary Enquiry - For Mention	Prosecution Not Ready
20-Feb-14	Preliminary Enquiry	Prosecution Not Ready
06-Feb-14	Preliminary Enquiry	Defence Not Ready
09-Jan-14	Preliminary Enquiry	Prosecution Not Ready
14-Nov-13	Preliminary Enquiry - For Mention	Defence Not Ready
07-Nov-13	Preliminary Enquiry	Prosecution Not Ready
26-Sep-13	Preliminary Enquiry	Defence Not Ready
27-Jun-13	Preliminary Enquiry	Defence Not Ready
23-May-13	Preliminary Enquiry	Defence Not Ready
09-May-13	Preliminary Enquiry	Defence Not Ready
25-Apr-13	Preliminary Enquiry	Defence Not Ready
11-Apr-13	Preliminary Enquiry - For Mention	Defence Not Ready
14-Mar-13	Preliminary Enquiry	Prosecution Not Ready
14-Feb-13	Preliminary Enquiry - For Mention	Prosecution Not Ready
31-Jan-13	Preliminary Enquiry - For Mention	Defence Not Ready
21-Jan-13	Preliminary Enquiry - For Mention	Defence Not Ready
03-Jan-13	Preliminary Enquiry - For Mention	Prosecution Not Ready
01-Nov-12	Preliminary Enquiry	Defence Not Ready
06-Sep-12	Preliminary Enquiry - For Mention	Defence Not Ready
09-Aug-12	Preliminary Enquiry - 1st Appearance	Defence Not Ready

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many complaints have been made of harassment, including threats or menacing communicated by or at the behest of prisoners, broken down by (i) prison facility; (ii) how communication took place; and (iii) the subsequent action taken, in each of the last three calendar years.

(AQW 35538/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no record of any specific complaints of harassment, threats or menacing communications.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 32575/11-15, to detail (i) whether this is an accurate response given it is a matter of public record that the original contracted term expired on 31 August 2013; and (ii) the departmental source or agency that drafted the reply.

(AQW 35539/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) I would refer the Member to the reply I gave him on 17 September 2014.
- (ii) The reply to AQW/32575/11-15 was drafted by Northern Ireland Prison Service, Security Information Branch.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice why a former prisoner at the Prisoner Assessment Unit (PAU) has been permitted to return to Burren House despite assurances from the Prison Service that this would not be the case, and particularly in light of offending being committed whilst resident in the PAU.

(AQW 35540/11-15)

Mr Ford: NIPS can confirm that no prisoner formerly located at the Prisoner Assessment Unit, Belfast has been permitted to return to the Working Out Unit, Burren House.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice why the Disabled Police Officers Association Northern Ireland has to identify Police Fund clients individually, when the Benevolent Fund is only required to provide numbers.

(AQW 35559/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Police Fund is operationally independent of the Department. However, I am advised by its Chief Executive that it encourages organisations seeking funding to provide information on client participation as fully as possible, without seeking to place disproportionate burdens on those bodies. Given the relatively small membership of the Disabled Police Officers' Association of Northern Ireland, it was felt useful to ask it to identify Police Fund clients individually. In contrast, the Benevolent Fund has several thousand members. To provide accurate figures on its clientele in the same manner would be a considerably larger, more complex and disproportionate exercise.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether prisoners who abscond whilst on temporary leave are re-sentenced and returned to custody when they are detected; and if not, why this is not regarded as a crime.

(AQW 35611/11-15)

Mr Ford: All instances of prisoners being unlawfully at large (UAL) will be reported to PSNI.

Sentenced prisoners who fail to return from a period of temporary leave at the appointed time will be subject to adjudication for breach of prison rules.

Sentenced prisoners UAL for a considerable period are considered for prosecution: the offence carries a sentence of up to two years. Those prisoners UAL for a period greater than 24 hours will have all days UAL added to their current sentence. These days will be served on return to prison, even if their Custody Expiry Date or Earliest Date of Release has passed.

There are no temporary release arrangements for untried prisoners. It is a matter for the courts to decide whether Compassionate Bail or Bail is granted to untried prisoners.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) on how many occasions during 2013 and 2014 to date has the Northern Ireland Prison Service conducted drugs searches and recovered legal highs; (ii) of these how many were found to be within the banned substance category allowing for charge or penalty; and (iii) of these how many were adjudicated.

(AQW 35612/11-15)

Mr Ford: I refer the member to the response provided on 17 September to AQW/35310/11-15.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in light of the Prisoner Ombudsman report into the death in custody of Mr David Brown, why two new recruit officers who were four weeks out of training were left without senior officer supervision or experienced support; and why these officers were unable to cope with the situation.

(AQW 35613/11-15)

Mr Ford: An experienced Senior Officer was available to support the two operational officers who were involved in this tragic incident. The role of Senior Officers is not to provide direct supervision.

The Prisoner Ombudsman made three recommendations directly to NIPS as a result of his investigation into the death of Mr David Brown, including a recommendation that NIPS should ensure that all its new recruits are able to identify potential emergencies, and act swiftly and appropriately upon them. Each of the recommendations has been accepted and implemented.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Justice what steps his department has taken to assist farmers in protecting their farms and livestock from crime.

(AQW 35641/11-15)

Mr Ford: Building safer rural communities is an important commitment for my Department and tackling this issue relies on strong partnership working across and beyond Government.

At a strategic level, this is carried out through the work of the Rural Crime Partnership, which comprises representatives of the PSNI, NFU Mutual, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and my Department. The Partnership has developed a range of dedicated initiatives designed to tackle agri-crime. These include the establishment of the Rural Crime Unit, which provides a dedicated Data Analyst resource to identify trends and patterns in rural crime and agricultural crime to assist District Commanders in developing their operational decisions and targeting the deployment of police resources. This information also informs the work of the Rural Crime Partnership in the development of crime prevention initiatives.

In July 2014, after a successful pilot in E and F policing districts in which over £1.7 million of farming equipment was fitted with security devices, the Rural Crime Partnership rolled out a regional initiative to encourage the fitting of TRACKER devices to farm machinery to combat thefts.

At a local level, my Department supports Policing and Community Safety Partnerships in rural areas to, where appropriate, develop and deliver tailored solutions to address rural crime. Actions being delivered include Farm Watch schemes, trailer marking, 4 Tier Security schemes, CCTV schemes and Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

In addition, my Department is currently working with the Ulster Farmers' Union to support their delivery of a rural crime conference, which is being held in November.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Justice whether he will make representations to the United States Administration to help with the removal of barriers to the travel into and out of America of former prisoners and their extended families.

(AQW 35645/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have no plans to make representations to the US Government on this issue, which is a matter that would fall under the responsibilities of the UK Government. I understand however there are processes in place to allow those who are refused entry to the United States of America on the grounds of a previous conviction to seek a waiver on such a decision.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice whether his Department has completed a retention and disposal schedule for records; and if so, has it been properly enacted upon by his Department and its arm's-length bodies.

(AQW 35655/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department has had approved retention and disposal schedules for records since January 2012. The current version has been in operation since June 2014, and is available on the website:

(see www.dojni.gov.uk/index/publications/publication-categories/pubs-departmental-business/doj-departmental-business/doj-policies-and-procedures/doj_retention_and_disposal_schedule.pdf).

In accordance with the practice of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), this schedule applies to the Department and its Executive Agencies; PRONI deals with arms-length bodies separately.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to outline any legislation covering the use of private CCTV cameras based on property.

(AQW 35657/11-15)

Mr Ford: The use of CCTV is covered by the Data Protection Act (1998). The Information Commissioner has provided a CCTV Code of Practice which provides guidance and advice for CCTV users on how to comply with the Act.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether allowing the contract for drug-testing in the Northern Ireland Prison Service to expire without a re-tendering process having been commenced is in line with procurement best practice.

(AQW 35666/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Drug Testing contract used by NIPS is administered by Scottish Prison Service (SPS). SPS have informed NIPS that the contract has been extended until February 2015 to allow them to prepare for re-tendering.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) to list the dates of the meetings he, or his departmental officials, attended relating to police pensions; (ii) whether a Northern Ireland based lawyer was present or represented Staff Side at any of these

consultations and discussions; (iii) whether minutes were taken at the meetings; (iv) if not, why none were taken; and; (v) if minutes were taken, whether they have been supplied to the Police Federation of Northern Ireland.

(AQW 35671/11-15)

Mr Ford: The dates upon which my officials attended meetings relating to police pensions are listed at Annex A.

Minutes are recorded for meetings of the Police Negotiating Board (PNB), PNB Pensions Working Party and the Police Advisory Board for Northern Ireland. However, in line with normal practice such consultations are carried out in confidence. Minutes of these meetings are distributed to members of each of the Boards listed above. Their membership includes the Police Federation of Northern Ireland.

Meetings of the PNB Police Technical Working Group are of a very detailed and technical nature and consider the minutiae of any proposed changes to the police pension scheme. These meetings are not chaired or minuted.

With regard to legal representation, the Police Federation of Northern Ireland have advised that PNB Staff Side, which represents all United Kingdom Staff Associations in the consultation i.e. England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, was represented by one Legal Team. The Legal Team was and is not Northern Ireland specific, but represents all the constituent members of Staff Side PNB.

Annex A

The Dates Upon which my Officials Attended Meetings Relating to Police Pensions

2012	
18-19 January	Police Negotiating Board
31 January	Police pensions technical working party
14 March	Police pensions working party
11-12 April	Police Negotiating Board
2 May	Police pensions technical working party
30 May	Police pensions technical working party
07 June	Police pensions technical working party
12 June	Police pensions technical working party
21 June	Police pensions working party
23-24 July	Police Negotiating Board
25 September	Police pensions working party
24 - 25 October	Police Negotiating Board
11 December	Police pensions working party
2013	
16-17 January	Police Negotiating Board
28 January	Police pensions technical working party
12 February	Police pensions technical working party
26 February	Police pensions technical working party
13 March	Police pensions technical working party
09 April	Police pensions technical working party
10 – 11 April	Police Negotiating Board
29 May	Police pensions technical working party
9 July	Police pensions working party
24- 25 July	Police Negotiating Board
23-24 October	Police Negotiating Board
10 December	Police pensions working party

2014	
15 – 16 January	Police Negotiating Board
28 January	Police pensions technical working party
26 March	Police pensions technical working party
01 April	Police pensions working party
30 April - 1 May	Police Negotiating Board
6 May	Police pensions technical working party
8 July	Police pensions technical working party
22 – 23 July	Police Negotiating Board

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice what is the current time limit for the result of a Court of Appeal case to be heard; and how many times this limit has been breached in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35681/11-15)

Mr Ford: The setting of timescales for the delivery of Court of Appeal judgments is a matter for the Lord Chief Justice. His Guidance on the delivery of judgments states that in cases where it is not possible to give an ex tempore judgment, the vast majority of judgments should be delivered within days or weeks of the conclusion of the proceedings. In longer or more complex cases, Judges should aim to deliver judgment within three months.

Information about the time taken to deliver Court of Appeal judgments is not routinely collated, however, from the start of the legal year on 5 September 2013 to 12 September 2014 the Court of Appeal has heard 114 appeals. In the cases where judgment has been delivered, the average time taken is 11 working days. The table below sets out the time taken to deliver these judgments and the cases where judgment is outstanding:

Time Taken	Number
Delivered on the day ("ex tempore" or judgment delivered and reasons reserved)	60
Within two weeks	20
two weeks to three months	23
Over three months	7
To be delivered	4
Total	114

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Justice, given his Department's withdrawal of guidance on injury on duty pensions in Northern Ireland following legal challenges in mainland UK, to outline the timescales in which he will provide new guidelines for these pensions.

(AQW 35730/11-15)

Mr Ford: I should clarify that the guidance on injury on duty pensions remains in place. The Department, like the Home Office, withdrew only Annex A to the guidance, as this was the section directly affected by the legal challenges.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, given that Section 75 is grounded on equality, to what extent can persons within, or considering themselves to be within, Section 75, use this as mitigation for, or as, a defence in criminal proceedings.

(AQW 35765/11-15)

Mr Ford: Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 does not apply to decision-making in court or by prosecutors. There are defences that an individual may seek to rely on, or mitigating factors that he or she may raise at the point of sentencing. However, these are not available as a result of section 75, but as part of a wide body of criminal law and sentencing practice.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in light of recently published figures of 452 drugs finds at Maghaberry Prison in 2013, how many of the finds were (i) banned substances; (ii) prescription drugs held unlawfully; and (iii) banned and legal so-called legal highs.

(AQW 35770/11-15)

Mr Ford: It would not be possible to provide the information as required without disproportionate cost. The NIPS does not differentiate between banned substances and so called 'legal highs' which are not permitted in prison.

Those occasions where substances are found, and can be attributed to an individual are referred to PSNI. These substances are analysed for evidential purposes in regard to prosecutions.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice under what authority his Department's Security Branch allowed the Charity Commission access to the private offices of the Disabled Police Officers Association Northern Ireland.

(AQW 35816/11-15)

Mr Ford: A member of staff from my Department attended the premises of the Disabled Police Officers' Association to give general advice to Association members. His access was on the invitation of and in the presence of the Charity Commission and two trustees of the Association.

Department for Regional Development

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are plans to upgrade the street lighting surrounding Moira Train Station.

(AQW 29893/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): In order to best target the finite resources available for the provision and upgrading of street lighting in rural areas, it is necessary to establish certain criteria. These relate to the density of development along a road, or where it is likely to help at sites that have a significant history of night-time collisions.

The area surrounding Moira train station is rural in nature and street lighting is situated at either side of the train station, in the direction of Glenavy as far as the Chestnut Hill Road junction and in the direction of Moira as far as the bridge near Ballycanal Holiday homes. My Department's assessment of the locations beyond those areas already lit is that they fall short of the minimum criteria required and consequently it are no plans to either install or upgrade the street lighting at this particular location.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) on what date was his Department first notified that the street lighting in Tamnamore was on 24 hours a day; (ii) when action was taken to address this issue; and (iii) what is the estimated cost of this wastage.

(AQW 35228/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department was notified on 11 July 2014 that a street lighting column had been damaged by a vehicle. As this particular column contains a light sensor that controls a group of the lights in the area, a decision had to be made whether to leave all the lights on until the damage could be repaired or to turn all of the lights off. My officials decided the interests of the public would be better served by leaving the lights on until the repair could be carried out. A work instruction to replace the damaged column was issued to the contractor on 11 July 2014 and the repair work was carried out on 12 August 2014.

With regard to cost, my Department pays a fixed annual charge for street lights based on different types and wattages of the lanterns. This low increase in usage of a relatively small number of lanterns (27 out of a total stock of over 276,000) does not affect the agreed rates and therefore there will be no additional cost to the Department associated with the decision to leave the street lights on until repairs were carried out.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development how much has been paid out by his Department in each Road Service Division for public liability claims, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35249/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of Public Liability claims compensation paid out in each Transport NI (formerly Roads Service) Division in each of the last five financial years are set out in the table below:

Public Liability Compensation

Fin. Year	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Eastern	£858,857	£897,172	£1,033,245	£856,041	£1,090,121
Northern	£285,447	£681,571	£356,776	£261,783	£455,554
Southern	£546,623	£569,880	£641,746	£736,308	£638,085
Western	£277,270	£180,969	£264,428	£216,205	£234,057
Totals	£1,968,197	£2,329,592	£2,296,195	£2,070,337	£2,417,816

The amount of expenditure paid in any specific year does not necessarily relate to claims received in that year, as there may be a time delay between the date a claim is received and the date it is settled.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development how many complaints about potholes have been made to each Roads Service Division; and how many requests have been made for the resurfacing of roads owing to road defects, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35250/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Unfortunately, my Department does not hold the information in the format requested. However, my Department does maintain a record of the number of defects detected, which includes potholes, during routine safety inspections. The table below sets out the total number of defects recorded, in each Transport NI Division, in the last three years:

Number of Recorded Defects

	10/11	11/12	12/13
Northern	53329	42762	36358
Southern	73887	74590	69971
Eastern	44227	42426	38332
Western	68233	59987	52078
Total	239676	219765	196739

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development how many parking ticket fines remain unpaid in each Roads Service Division from each of the last three years.

(AQW 35251/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department does not maintain this information in the format requested.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he is taking to resolve the delay of the new Millisle Sewage pumping station.

(AQW 35304/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The commencement of construction of the Millisle Sewerage Pumping Station continues to be delayed owing to legal negotiations and site purchasing processes taking longer than anticipated. This is due to the preferred site's shoreline location and the need to satisfy the interests of the two existing landowners, Ards Borough Council and Crown Estates, in respect of title, conveyancing and leasing arrangements. Both Ards Borough Council and Crown Estates are aware of the urgency of the project and of the benefits that it will provide for the local community.

In order to complete the purchase and bring the project to construction as soon as possible, NI Water is continuing to engage with all interested parties on the outstanding matters that are presently outside of its direct control.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development, further to the Private Members' Motion on 4 February 2013 on school transport, and pursuant to AQW 23441/11-15, whether the Department for Education has sought to engage with his Department in relation to the Review of the Home to School Transport policy, and in particular with respect to the feasibility of providing free public transport for all school pupils.

(AQW 35344/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has provided the Department of Education's Home to School Transport Review Team with briefing and information on the policy and operations of the public transport system in Northern Ireland. Translink has also provided briefing to the Review Team. My Department is also working with a number of other organisations on a pilot project to trial the better integration of publicly funded passenger transport services in the Dungannon area. The organisations involved include the Department of Education, The Southern Education and Library Board, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Health and Social Care Board, the Southern Health Trust, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Translink, community transport and the Federation of Passenger Transport. The Departments are all involved in the evaluation of the pilot and in the appraisal of the options for wider implementation.

The public transport and home to school transport systems in Northern Ireland are closely linked as Translink transports around 60% of pupils who are currently eligible for home to school travel assistance. Translink currently receives substantial contract income from the education authorities for the provision of home to school transport. The cost involved will need to be reimbursed in the future under any existing or new arrangements, if services are to be maintained. Therefore, when the Department of Education review is finalised, my Department will need to be involved in decisions about the implications of any proposed changes.

The Department and the Public Health Agency have jointly awarded a delivery project to Sustrans to provide a programme of cycle and walking skills training to pupils in 180 schools across Northern Ireland over a three year period. Now in its second year, the objective of this programme is to encourage school pupils to adopt cycling and walking as their main mode of transport to and from school, with the overall aim of improving health and fitness levels of all participants.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he is taking to remove illegal Republican road side monuments.

(AQW 35369/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can assure the Member neither I nor my Department approves of, or support the unauthorised use of Departmental property for illegally erected roadside memorials.

Memorials erected without lawful authority have much in common with other unauthorised activities, such as kerb and lamp post painting, and have the potential to create tension within local communities as well as posing a risk to those tasked with their removal.

As was the practice under my predecessors Mr Conor Murphy MP, Mr Gregory Campbell MP and Mr Peter Robinson MLA, my officials do not remove terrorist commemorations on departmental controlled or associated property unless road safety is being compromised, or there are clear indications that action to remove them would have widespread local support.

Unauthorised memorials on the property of the Department's arms-length bodies are matters for the Boards of those organisations.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions have taken place between North Down Borough Council and NI Water on the sale of Portavoe reservoir.

(AQW 35370/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water representatives have held a number of meetings with both North Down and Ards Borough Councils regarding Portavoe Reservoir. At the last meeting on 25 April 2014 the possibility of the Councils acquiring the reservoir was discussed and the representatives of the Councils advised that they were considering their position. Council representatives indicated that a decision may not be made until the new Council arrangements are established in 2015.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many reservoirs are deemed surplus to requirements.

(AQW 35371/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water currently has 26 impounding reservoirs which have been declared surplus to requirements.

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the costs associated with the change of name from Roads Service to transportni.

(AQW 35374/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm there are no costs associated with the change of name from Roads Service to Transport NI. Changes have been made to electronic templates at no cost, and signage and other changes have been phased in as old stocks have run out and been replaced, or when vehicles are being serviced. Branding of new plant and equipment is already included in the purchase price.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what proposals there are to build more park and ride spaces over the next two years.

(AQW 35380/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As you are aware, my Department's Park & Ride Programme Board has prepared a "Park & Ride Strategic Delivery Programme 2013-15", which is a prioritised schedule of Park & Ride projects with clearly defined responsibilities for funding, implementation, maintenance and operation. The aim of this Programme is to deliver at least an additional 1,000 spaces across Northern Ireland. To date, over 600 additional spaces have been provided under the Programme with a further 750 spaces scheduled to be completed by 31 March 2015.

My Department is currently considering the options for the delivery of additional Park & Ride and Park & Share facilities post 2015, when the current programme expires. This future programme is likely to include the completion of some sites from the current programme, totalling approximately 1,500 spaces, together with the development of other new facilities. The scale of the Park & Ride proposals post 2015 will be dependent on the availability of funding.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what percentage of this year's departmental budget for roads infrastructure will go towards cycling specific infrastructure.

(AQW 35381/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department anticipates spending approximately £725,000 on cycling measures this financial year, which equates to around 5% of the Local Transport and Safety Measures allocation. In addition, I have secured £1 million of funding for infrastructure works related to the Active Schools Travel Programme. Schools that would benefit from improvements are currently being identified and the scale of work required is currently being assessed.

I expect to bid again for an additional £1 million for cycling infrastructure in the October monitoring round. A previous bid in the June monitoring round for this funding was not met. Future years' bidding for capital cycling funding will be in the region of £3 million for 2015/16 rising to £5 million in 2019/20.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development how his Department has developed greenways in North Antrim.

(AQW 35453/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Historically, Transport NI has prioritised the implementation of cycling measures in accordance with the blueprints of the Sub Regional Transport Plan 2015, utilising land within or alongside the existing road network. Local councils have generally taken the lead in developing greenways, which by their nature are often remote from the existing road network. However, Transport NI has liaised with both Ballymoney and Moyle councils in relation to potential links to such provision, where appropriate.

My Department's Cycling Unit is considering the potential to improve cycling provision in urban areas, starting with Belfast, and to support the development of greenways throughout Northern Ireland making use of former canal towpaths and disused railways, where possible.

I believe that, initially, there is scope to develop a 'Greenway spine' as part of the proposed Eurovelo route from Belfast to Londonderry (via North Armagh) using existing paths along the Lagan and linking to the existing Newry Canal towpath route. This would provide new routes for commuting but would also develop opportunities for boosting the local economy and improving provision for leisure, recreation and tourism. Following this, consideration would be given to providing Greenway connections to other areas such as North Antrim.

It is worth noting that Transport NI continues to maintain a considerable portion of the National Cycle Network, which traverses North Antrim. This is a comprehensive network of safe and attractive cycling routes developed by the charity Sustrans. In Northern Ireland the Network extends to more than 800 miles and includes 106 miles of traffic free paths.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the reasons for the delay in scheduled grass cutting in North Down.

(AQW 35465/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Member will be aware of my recent announcement of the significant budget shortfall my Department is facing and its consequences. This shortfall has resulted in a suspension of work being issued to external contractors covering work functions such as footway and carriageway patching, grass cutting and environmental maintenance, road marking maintenance and renewal, traffic sign maintenance and replacement and repair to street lights which fail, unless they pose an electrical hazard to members of the public.

My Department's Operations and Maintenance staff will endeavour to keep the road network in as safe a condition as possible, however, given the limited resources available, they will not be able to provide the full service the public would expect in normal circumstances.

My Operations and Maintenance staff are currently carrying out the third cut of the season in the North Down area.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the proposals to create more Park and Ride spaces in South Antrim, in the next three years.

(AQW 35475/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As you are aware, my Department's Park & Ride Programme Board has prepared a "Park & Ride Strategic Delivery Programme 2013-15", which is a prioritised schedule of Park & Ride projects with clearly defined responsibilities for funding, implementation, maintenance and operation. The aim of this Programme is to deliver at least an additional 1,000 spaces across Northern Ireland. To date over 600 additional spaces have been provided under the Programme, with a further 750 spaces scheduled to be completed by 31 March 2015.

My Department is currently considering the options for the delivery of additional Park & Ride and Park & Share facilities post 2015, when the current programme expires. This future programme is likely to include the completion of some sites from the current programme, totalling approximately 1,500 spaces, together with the development of other new facilities. The 1,500 additional spaces include around 420 spaces at a new Park & Ride facility at Ballymartin, Templepatrick. A number of additional projects are also currently under consideration, including extension of the rail-based facility at Mossley West. The scale of the Park & Ride proposals post 2015 will be dependent on the availability of funding.

Mr Wilson asked the Minister for Regional Development how many (a) churches; (b) community organisations; and (c) businesses have been impacted by Northern Ireland Water's failure to charge the full amount for water bills.

(AQW 35506/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The number of accounts which have been impacted by the addition of retrospective charges to water and sewerage bills between 1 April 2012 and 31st March 2014 are (a) 21 churches, (b) 36 community organisations and (c) 1020 businesses.

NI Water fully appreciates that retrospective charges are unwelcome, however the company has a duty to levy and recover costs for services provided. They also have a responsibility to ensure that all non-domestic customers are billed fairly and accurately. As a body which has a responsibility to manage public money, NI Water must ensure that costs for services which have been provided over a number of years at the public expense are recouped.

NI Water has a range of measures in place to accommodate customers who may face genuine hardship with paying a bill. Various payment plans can be discussed with its' Billing team.

Mr Wilson asked the Minister for Regional Development whether community organisations who have been levied for back payments for water bills, as a result of the failure of Northern Ireland Water to monitor the usage of water on their premises, have made representations to his Department.

(AQW 35507/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm that no representations have been made by community organisations directly to my Department during 2012/13 and 2013/14 in relation to retrospective billing of water charges.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the number of staff employed in his Department broken down by grade; and (ii) the total salary for each grade, for each financial year since 1 April 2010.

(AQW 35515/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below contains details of the number staff employed by my Department (headcount and full time equivalent) at 1 April in each of the last four financial years. Basic salary details are broken down by grade and include information for analogous grades.

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Admin Assistant				
Employee Headcount	124	114	116	108
Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	108	103	108	102
Salary	£1,782,230	£1,729,705	£1,796,166	£1,708,287
Admin Officer				
Employee Headcount	520	487	482	448
FTE	481	453	446	412
Salary	£9,468,305	£9,168,082	£9,297,074	£8,819,712
EO2				
Employee Headcount	135	135	123	128
FTE	128	127	116	120
Salary	£2,750,453	£2,809,515	£2,746,595	£2,899,343
EO1				
Employee Headcount	507	493	478	473
FTE	487	479	463	460
Salary	£12,033,374	£11,974,608	£12,134,365	£12,351,381
Staff Officer				
Employee Headcount	346	340	328	306
FTE	332	327	312	291
Salary	£9,632,463	£9,574,533	£9,322,570	£8,807,841
DP				
Employee Headcount	218	210	210	213
FTE	211	203	202	203
Salary	£7,744,140	£7,553,587	£7,630,772	£7,707,331
Unified Grade 7				
Employee Headcount	76	75	74	79
FTE	75	74	72	77
Salary	£3,474,525	£3,527,935	£3,476,669	£3,742,427
Unified Grade 6				
Employee Headcount	13	11	10	10
FTE	13	11	10	10

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Salary	£717,560	£620,907	£573,070	£572,754
Senior Civil Servant				
Employee Headcount	20	19	19	15
FTE	20	19	19	15
Salary	£1,420,793	£1,293,029	£1,319,638	£1,113,064
Industrial				
Employee Headcount	537	517	511	512
FTE	537	516	510	511
Salary	£7,550,171	£7,064,960	£6,746,693	£7,022,206

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development why local residents were not informed of the new sewerage facility at Clandeboye Primary School prior to the commencement of works.

(AQW 35528/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Work on the new sewerage facility has not yet commenced, although some preparations have taken place such as the erection of a temporary fence at Clandeboye Primary School to comply with Child Protection and Health and Safety procedures. This permits safe access to the site in order to survey and undertake trial holes prior to the commencement of construction works and was agreed with school representatives. Subject to obtaining the necessary statutory approvals, it is anticipated that construction work will commence in November 2014.

Northern Ireland Water has held a number of meetings with Clandeboye Primary School and local residents to discuss the planned works. Initial discussions were held with the School in December 2013, and a further meeting was held with the Clandeboye Residents' Association, including representatives of the school and local Church affected by the works, in February 2014. A full public meeting to address local concerns was held on 15 May 2014 at which it was agreed that a further public meeting will be held on appointment of a contractor and prior to commencement of work on site. The Senior Project Manager responsible for delivery of the project will provide an update to the Clandeboye Inter Agency Group Meeting, which includes representatives of the local residents' group, on 16 September 2014.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department spent on creating new roads, in each of the last two years.

(AQW 35529/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of my Department's outturn allocation in the last two financial years, 2012/13 and 2013/14, which relate to creating new roads, are provided in the table below:

Roads Expenditure

Work Activity	Financial Year	
	2012/13 (£million)	2013/14 (£million)
Major Road Improvements (includes development, land and works costs)	52.0	76.8
Minor Local Road Improvements and Road Safety (including bridge strengthening and Belfast Rapid Transit)	11.3	21.4

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department spent on creating new footpaths, in each of the last two years.

(AQW 35530/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department undertakes new footway construction through its annual programme of Local Transport Safety Measures. These measures cover areas such as network development, traffic calming, collision remedial and pedestrian measures. Work on new footways is often carried out as part of an overall scheme and, as such, the costs of the footway element is not allocated or captured separately.

New footway schemes are subject to an assessment process that is used to compare and prioritise schemes, which ensures finite resources are directed at those schemes where the needs are greatest.

The Local Transport Safety Measures outturn expenditure for the 2012/13 and 2013/14 financial years was £8.9 million and £16.9 million, respectively.

New footways may also be provided as part of the Department's major road projects, however, the footway costs on these schemes are not captured separately.

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 34553/11-15, whether the road sweeper and vacuum tanker available for use in the Ballymena area are sufficient to cover this area; and if these vehicles are owned by his Department or owned privately.

(AQW 35534/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Pursuant to question AQW 34553/11-15, I can advise the Member that the external contractor is no longer being used due to budget cuts. However, Transport NI has been able to reallocate an in-house vacuum tanker for use in the Ballymena area.

Once the drainage systems are all checked and cleaned prior to the incoming winter season, the in-house road sweeper and vacuum tanker should be sufficient to cover normal maintenance work within the Ballymena Borough.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how much has been spent on, or budgeted for, the rebranding of Roads Service to Transport NI.

(AQW 35551/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm that no money has been spent on the rebranding of Roads Service to Transport NI nor, are there plans to provide a budget for the rebranding exercise. Changes have been made to electronic templates at no cost and signage and other changes, have been phased in as old stocks have run out and been replaced, or when vehicles are being serviced. Branding of new plant and equipment is already included in the purchase price.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the benefits of rebranding Roads Service to Transport NI.

(AQW 35552/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: With the establishment of Transport NI on 1 April 2013, the Roads Service brand no longer reflected the full role Transport NI plays in facilitating the safe and convenient movement of people and goods throughout Northern Ireland. The benefit of rebranding ensures these key business activities are accurately reflected in the title the business unit now holds.

Transport NI plays a vital role in the success of Northern Ireland and the safety of road users through the delivery of road maintenance services and the management and development of the road network. It also informs the Department's policy development process to ensure measures to encourage safe and sustainable travel are practical and can be delivered.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development why Roads Service have changed their name to Transport NI.

(AQW 35553/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Transport NI was officially established on 1 April 2013, through an internal re-organisation of a number of business units within my Department. It was agreed that the Roads Service brand would be retired and the re-organised business units would officially become known as Transport NI.

I understand that the Roads Service brand has been in place for 40 years and is well known within the communities it serves, however, this title did not adequately reflect the full role the organisation was playing in facilitating the safe and convenient movement of people and goods throughout Northern Ireland.

Transport NI plays a vital role in the success of Northern Ireland and the safety of road users through the delivery of road maintenance services and the management and development of the road network. It also informs the Department's policy development process to ensure that measures to encourage safe and sustainable travel are practical and can be delivered.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the plans for capital works on the Gransha Road roundabout in Bangor.

(AQW 35554/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Transport NI is currently investigating potential works at Gransha Roundabout to enhance pedestrian and traffic movements at this busy intersection.

A preliminary options study report has been received. This report is assisting officials in assessing potential improvements for pedestrians and establishing the best way forward for Gransha Road roundabout. It will take some time for the report to be fully considered and I have asked Mr Simon Richardson, Divisional Manager, Transport NI to apprise you of the outcome.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Regional Development whether, in developing the Belfast Rapid Transit ticketing system, he will ensure that passengers using the service will not be penalised if they break their journey to or from the city centre.

(AQW 35557/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The current ticketing system enables passengers to break their journeys through the use of a 'Metro Day Ticket' or a 'DayLink Travel Card', both of which incur an additional charge to that of a single fare. These tickets provide unlimited travel within the Metro area.

The new ticketing system that will be used for Belfast Rapid Transit has not yet been designed, but my Department will want to ensure that it is as flexible as possible in handling passengers' varied travel patterns and that fares are as attractive as possible to users. The cost of tickets for travelling on Belfast Rapid Transit will mirror those available on Metro services.

The options for a new ticketing system are currently being developed by Translink.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the return of Portavoe reservoir to its original state. (AQW 35587/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: NI Water's essential reservoir safety maintenance work at Portavoe Reservoir was completed in early August 2014, since then the reservoir has been refilling naturally.

Over 400 live swan mussels were successfully returned to the reservoir on 5 August 2014 and the reservoir is to be stocked with fish in the New Year, in advance of the 2015 angling season. NI Water will continue to work closely with the Department of Culture Arts and Leisure and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to monitor progress at the site.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his departmental budget for North Down in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 35590/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's budget, including that of its arm's-length bodies (Northern Ireland Water and Translink), is not allocated on the basis of council areas.

Estimated expenditure in the North Down Council area for the last three financial years is outlined below.

	2011-12 £'million	2012-13 £'million	2013-14 £'million	Total £'million
Department*	4.9	4.6	5.2	14.7
NI Water**	4.6	9.5	6.0	20.1
Translink**	55.1	3.2	5.0	***63.3
Total	64.6	17.3	16.2	98.1

* Capital and resource expenditure on roads maintenance activities is shown. Details of the works undertaken are available on the Department's website under publications.

** Resource expenditure is not available by council area therefore only capital expenditure is shown.

*** Capital investment by Translink includes £50.7 million in 2011-12 on new trains and over the three years a £7.5 million investment in the overhaul of trains. The trains can be used on a number of lines including the Bangor rail line. In 2013-14 Translink invested £1.5 million in new interurban buses operating in the area.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many new vehicles his Department has purchased in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 35593/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below shows the number of vehicles purchased by Transport NI in each of the last three financial years.

Financial Year	Number of vehicles purchased
2011/12	42
2012/13	14
2013/14	18

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of the new vehicles that his Department has purchased in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35594/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below shows the cost of vehicles purchased by Transport NI in each of the last three financial years.

Financial Year	Cost (£)
2011/12	2,628,137

Financial Year	Cost (£)
2012/13	1,040,888
2013/14	1,177,240

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Door-2-Door Transport journeys have been carried out in (i) Bangor; and (ii) the rest of North Down, in each of the last five years; and how many customers availed of the service over this period.

(AQW 35598/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below sets out the information requested, however please note that the Door-to-Door scheme ceased on 31 March 2013 and the Interim Disability Action Transport Scheme (DATS) operated by Disability Action started on 1 April 2013. Under the DATS service Bangor / Holywood / Newtownards is one operational area and figures in relation to the individual towns is not available.

Year	Bangor Operational Area		Holywood Operational Area	
	Individual Journeys	Active Users / Customers	Individual Journeys	Active Users / Customers
2009/2010	17,967	255	1,742	33
2010/2011	20,869	266	2,532	47
2011/2012	22,643	239	2,581	43
2012/2013	19,302	246	2,628	53
2013/2014	17,250	294		

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Door-2-Door Transport journeys have been carried out in each of the last five years; and how many customers were carried on the service over this period.

(AQW 35602/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The table below sets out the information requested, however please note that the Door-to-Door scheme ceased on 31 March 2013 and the Interim Disability Action Transport Scheme (DATS) operated by Disability Action started on 1 April 2013.

Year	Individual Journeys	Active Users / Customers
2009/2010	145,684	2,843
2010/2011	163,775	2,825
2011/2012	173,915	2,493
2012/2013	167,818	2,305
2013/2014	143,747	2,307

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 31293/11-15, how successful efforts have been to refund motorists who were incorrectly issued with Penalty Charge Notices in Florence Place, Belfast.

(AQW 35620/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: 216 refund letters were issued to customers on 23 April 2014 and the position as at 31 August 2014 is set out in the table below:

Status	Number of Cases
Penalty Charge refunded	116
Vehicle keeper details not held by DVA	8
No driver details (RoI case)	1
Letter undelivered	3
Still awaiting reply	88
Total	216

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development what provisions are going to be made for parking for local residents affected by work on a new sewage pumping station in vicinity of Clandeboye Primary School, Bangor.

(AQW 35624/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Construction work has not commenced at Clandeboye Primary School. At a public meeting with local residents held on 15 May 2014, NI Water agreed to examine the possibility of creating a stoned temporary parking area on land owned by North Down and Ards Borough Councils should this prove necessary during construction. Investigation into the possibility of constructing this temporary parking area is underway.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development for details of the bat survey which was conducted in relation to the new sewage pumping station planned for the vicinity of Clandeboye Primary School, Bangor; and what steps will be taken to ensure the habitats of bats in the area concerned are protected.

(AQW 35625/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A Bat Survey Report was completed on 28 August 2014. The survey found no evidence of bats roosting in the trees in the proposed location of the new sewerage pumping station.

As a precautionary measure however, NI Water contractors will carry out 'soft felling' for all trees where bats could potentially roost. This method involves trees being felled slowly, for example branch by branch, to minimise any potential harm. In addition, where possible, mature trees will be re-planted and grassland reseeded with native species. Artificial lighting during the construction phase will also be minimised to comply with the guidelines set down by the Bat Conservation Trust.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps will be taken over NI Water's communication with the public in relation to works on reservoirs in North Down; and in regards to work on a new sewage pumping station in the vicinity of Clandeboye Primary School, Bangor.

(AQW 35626/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Northern Ireland Water is constantly reviewing and improving its communications processes with the public and key stakeholders with regard to capital works projects.

It will continue to communicate with the local community in North Down by:

- Letter drops to customers (where relevant) before embarking upon major projects
- E-mail updates to elected representatives as necessary including the dedicated Elected Representative Hotline: 0845 3006461
- Signage at each site displaying its dedicated customer helpline: 08457 440088
- Updates available on the NI Water website at: <http://www.niwater.com/major-infrastructure-investments>
- Press releases at the start of each scheme, including releases on any key milestones or disruption to the public.

NI Water is more than happy to meet with any residents' group or elected representative who have any concerns about any NI Water projects in North Down and will inform all relevant parties as any new scheme gets underway.

NI Water will continue to liaise with the local school and community regarding Clandeboye Pumping Station, and has held several meetings to date regarding this work as detailed in the response to AQW 35528/11-15.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development, given the continuing works schemes on the A37 between Coleraine and Limavady over a protracted period of time, when motorists will be able to travel uninterrupted on the route.

(AQW 35636/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The large scale utility works to service Dunbeg and Dunmore wind farms are now complete. The ongoing works by Firmus Energy to install gas mains are also substantially complete, however, some testing and remedial works are still to be completed which are unlikely to cause disruption to traffic. This work is due to be completed by the end of September 2014.

There are no further planned utility works currently registered on the Street works notification system for the A37 Dunhill Road/Broad Road.

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development whether funding will be available for new councils to bring the off-street car parks up to an improved standard.

(AQW 35639/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In his statement to the Assembly on 22 April 2013, the then Department of the Environment Minister, Mr Alex Attwood MLA, outlined on behalf of the Executive that functions transferring to councils would be: "fit for purpose, sufficiently funded and cost neutral to the ratepayer at the point of transfer".

The Executive did not agree that assets would be brought up to an improved standard prior to transfer, nor are transferring Departments funded to improve the condition of assets that will be provided to councils. I can confirm the assets transferring are fit for purpose.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many people work at the departmental depot in Bangor.
(AQW 35658/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There are currently 33 Transport NI staff in post within the departmental depot in Bangor.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether plans are in place to prepare for gritting roads during the winter.
(AQW 35659/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Transport NI is well prepared for the coming winter. Staffing arrangements are being finalised, pre-season checks on winter service equipment are almost complete and salt stocks have been replenished. From the end of October, Transport NI will have approximately 300 personnel on standby ready to salt main roads. Contracts are also in place to enable contractors and farmers to help to clear roads during periods of prolonged snow.

In addition, my Department currently has arrangements with 25 of the 26 District Councils to salt city and town centre footways during times of prolonged ice and snow, and these councils will be contacted to ensure continuity of this service for the incoming winter season. My officials will be writing again to the remaining council to encourage it to come on board.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Regional Development whether improvements to the Northern Ireland Railways services, particularly developing rail corridors, will lead to increased ticket prices.
(AQW 35688/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Northern Ireland Railways receives an annual operating subsidy, Public Service Obligation, from the Department to ensure that rail fares are at a level which supports the Department's objectives of increasing the use of public transport and delivering a more sustainable economy. This will clearly be influenced by the overall budget available to my Department and the operating costs of NI Railways and its ability to generate fare income. Increased rail corridors may or may not increase ticket prices depending upon how they impact on the above.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many press officers are employed by his Department.
(AQW 35743/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Four Information Officers (Press Officers) are employed by my Department.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what additional measures are planned to increase awareness of the Cycle to Work scheme.
(AQW 35908/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Cycling Unit through its Travelwise initiative promotes cycling as a sustainable mode of travel to and from education, training and employment. Travelwise regularly promotes the Cycle to Work Scheme in its campaigns: including reference to the scheme in press and media releases highlighting cycling matters; in Workplace Travel Plans prepared by Travelwise for employers in all sectors; and at promotional events held in workplaces. More generally we also provide advice on the Cycle to Work Scheme to a range of employers in all sectors who contact the Department.

The Cycle to Work Scheme is a HMRC scheme for employing organisations.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the uptake of the Cycle to Work scheme.
(AQW 35909/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I refer the member to my reply to his previous question on this matter (AQW 35180/11-15).

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much Translink has spent on fuel in each of the last three financial years.
(AQW 35955/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The following schedule shows the gross operational fuel costs for Translink, i.e. fuel duty rebate has not been deducted.

Company	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000
Ulsterbus	20,759	22,241	22,517
Metro	6,967	7,179	6,915
NI Railways	6,722	7,728	8,066
Total £	34,448	37,148	37,498

Department for Social Development

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of (i) catholic; and (ii) protestant households (a) in housing stress; and (b) on the housing waiting list in each Housing Executive area of Belfast.

(AQW 34401/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): Table A attached provides details of the Waiting List for Social Housing at 31st March 2014 broken down by applicants with 30+ Points, by Religion and by Belfast Assembly Constituencies.

Table B attached provides details of the Waiting List for Social Housing at 31st March 2014 broken down by applicants with less than 30 Points, by Religion and by Belfast Assembly Constituencies.

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.

Table A: Waiting List for Social Housing as at 31st March 2014 broken down by Applicants 30+ Points, Religion & Belfast Assembly Constituencies

CLA – Common Landlord Area		30+ Pts 'Housing Stress'								
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total	
Belfast East										
NIHE Local Office	CLA									
Castlereagh	Ballybeen	0	0	<5	<5	94	0	10	109	
	Braniel	<5	0	<5	<5	45	<5	<5	57	
	Brooklands	0	0	0	<5	15	0	<5	18	
	Castlereagh	5	<5	<5	<5	22	0	5	36	
	Coronation Park	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	
	Downshire Park	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5	
	Galway Drive/ Mews	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	5	
	Geary Road	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	
	Moatview Park	0	0	<5	0	<5	0	0	5	
	Sunderland Road	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	
	Tullycarnet	0	0	0	<5	22	0	<5	24	
	East Belfast	Albertbridge Rd.	<5	0	0	0	22	0	<5	26
		Ardcarn	0	0	0	<5	12	0	<5	15
Ashfield		0	0	0	<5	10	0	0	11	
Ballyhackamore		5	0	<5	<5	46	<5	<5	61	
Bloomfield/ Ravenscroft		<5	<5	6	7	69	0	8	95	
Bridge End, Rotherdam Court		0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	<5	
Cherryvalley		0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	
Clarawood		0	0	0	<5	27	0	<5	31	
Dundela		0	0	<5	<5	12	0	<5	18	
Edenvale		<5	0	0	<5	24	0	<5	29	
Garnerville		0	0	0	0	6	0	0	6	
Inverary		0	0	<5	0	12	0	0	13	
Knocknagoney	0	0	<5	<5	11	0	0	15		

CLA – Common Landlord Area		30+ Pts ‘Housing Stress’							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast East									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
	Lwr Beersbridge/ The Mount	<5	0	<5	<5	26	0	0	35
	Newtownards Road	<5	<5	5	8	87	<5	5	108
	Orchard Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
	Short Strand	55	0	0	0	<5	0	5	61
	Summerhill	0	0	0	<5	7	0	<5	9
	Sydenham/ Sandbrook/ Lisavon	9	0	6	<5	58	0	7	84
	Wandsworth	0	<5	0	<5	12	0	<5	17
Belfast East Constituency Total 30+Pts		88	<5	31	51	656	<5	67	901

CLA – Common Landlord Area		30+ Pts ‘Housing Stress’							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast East/South									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Castlereagh	Cregagh Castlereagh	<5		<5	<5	86	0	8	106
East Belfast	Willowfield/ Upper Castlereagh Road	6	<5		5	101	0	6	119
Belfast East/South Constituency Total 30+Pts		10	<5	<5	9	187	0	14	225

CLA – Common Landlord Area		30+ Pts ‘Housing Stress’							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast North									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Newtownabbey 1	Abbey Glen	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	7
	Abbeyville	7	0	<5	<5	<5	0	0	14
	Bawnmore/Old Mill Drive	46	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	54
	Hightown	7	<5	0	<5	0	0	6	16
	Longlands	20	<5	<5	0	<5	0	<5	27
	Rathcoole	5	<5	8	5	185	<5	30	235
	Rathfern	0	0	<5	0	7	0	<5	9
	Rushpark	8	0	<5	<5	55	0	21	89

CLA – Common Landlord Area		30+ Pts ‘Housing Stress’							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast North									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Newtownabbey 2	Glenvarna/ Glengormley	20	<5	<5	8	48	<5	9	91
	Queens Park/ Queens Avenue	5	0	<5	<5	34	<5	<5	49
North Belfast	Alliance	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
	Ardoyne	101	0	<5	<5	<5	0	21	127
	Ballysillan	<5	0	<5	<5	33	0	<5	41
	Carlisle/New Lodge	140	0	<5	5	5	<5	22	176
	Carrick Hill/Unity Flats	19	0	<5	<5	<5	0	6	28
	Cavehill	110	<5	8	15	8	0	33	177
	Cliftondene	7	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	14
	Cliftonville	166	<5	11	13	7	<5	29	233
	Duncairn Gardens	13	0	<5	0	<5	0	<5	17
	Fairhill	<5	0	<5	<5	13	0	<5	19
	Gainsborough	0	0	<5	<5	13	0	<5	20
	Glandore & Dunmore	7	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	9
	Grove Area	<5	0	<5	0	19	0	<5	24
	Lower Ligoniel/ Glenbank	<5	<5	0	<5	7	0	<5	13
	Lower Oldpark	<5	0	<5	0	12	0	<5	15
	M/S Flats - Carlisle	27	0	<5	<5	0	0	5	36
	Mount Vernon Estate	0	0	0	<5	5	0	<5	7
	Newington/ Limestone	50	0	0	<5	<5	0	10	65
	Oldpark	49	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	11	65
	Rosewood/ Crumlin RDA	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
	Ross House Flats/ Mountvernon Flats	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5	<5	<5
	Shore Road	<5	0	<5	<5	18	0	<5	26
	Skegoneill/ Ashfield/ Fortwilliam	13	<5	<5	<5	16	<5	6	44
	Somerton Rd (Sheltered)	10	0	0	<5	16	0	6	34

CLA – Common Landlord Area		30+ Pts 'Housing Stress'							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast North									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
	Sunningdale	0	0	0	0	14	0	<5	16
	Torrens	24	<5	<5	0	<5	0	<5	33
	Upper & Lower Duncairn	<5	0	0	<5	8	0	<5	13
	Upper Ligoniel	48	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	53
	Westland	0	0	0	<5	6	0	0	7
	Wheatfield	0	0	0	<5	9	0	0	11
	Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairyknowe	65	<5	<5	<5	<5	0	17	93
	Whitewell/White City	<5	0	0	0	10	0	0	12
Shankill	Cambrai/Woodvale	<5		0	0	55	<5	5	63
	Mid Shankill	<5		<5	<5	81	0	8	94
	Tudor	0		0	<5	6	0	<5	9
Belfast North Constituency Total 30+Pts		992	17	70	100	716	12	288	2195

CLA – Common Landlord Area		30+ Pts 'Housing Stress'							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast South									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Castlereagh	Belvoir	<5	<5	5	7	82		8	107
	Bests Hill	0	0	<5	<5	<5		<5	7
	Milltown/Shaws Bridge	0	0	0	0	<5		0	<5
	Newtownbreda Village	16	<5	<5	6	14		6	46
East Belfast	Rosebery	27	<5	11	30	105	<5	7	183
South Belfast	Annadale	<5	0	<5	10	10	0	<5	31
	Cromac	48	0	<5	5	<5	0	<5	59
	Donegall Pass	<5	0	<5	11	29	0	<5	45
	Donegall Road	<5	<5	6	10	53	<5	12	84
	Finaghy	18	<5	<5	16	51	0	12	103
	Flush Park Belfast	8	<5	0	<5	6	0	<5	20
	Lower Ormeau	104	<5	8	34	9	<5	19	176
	Sandy Row	0	0	<5	<5	39	0	<5	46
	Stranmillis	6	<5	<5	5	0	0	<5	14

CLA – Common Landlord Area		30+ Pts ‘Housing Stress’							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast South									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
	Taughmonagh	<5	0	<5	<5	26	<5	<5	35
	Ulsterville	97	8	17	102	70	<5	96	394
	Upper Ormeau	105	<5	14	43	48	<5	25	240
Belfast South Constituency Total 30+Pts		439	23	82	286	548	10	203	1591

CLA – Common Landlord Area		30+ Pts ‘Housing Stress’							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast South/Strangford									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Castlereagh	Carryduff	11	<5	<5	<5	23	0	<5	42
Belfast South/Strangford Constituency Total 30+Pts		11	<5	<5	<5	23	0	<5	42

CLA – Common Landlord Area		30+ Pts ‘Housing Stress’							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast West									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Lisburn Antrim Street	Areema	48	0	<5	5	11	0	<5	67
	Beattie	12	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	17
Lisburn Dairy Farm	Twinbrook-Poleglass	463	<5	<5	6	<5	0	43	516
Shankill	Agnes Street	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
	Ballygomartin/West Circular	0	0	0	<5	17	0	<5	21
	Brown Square	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
	Dover	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
	Florence/Hopewell	0	0	<5	<5	14	0	<5	22
	Glencairn	0	0	<5	<5	30	0	<5	36
	Highfield	0	0	0	<5	12	0	0	13
	Lawnbrook	0	0	0	<5	19	0	0	20
	Springmartin	0	0	0	0	11	0	<5	13
	Upper Shankill	0	0	0	0	23	0	0	23
West Belfast	Andersonstown	992	<5	8	23	12	0	71	1107
	Ardmoulin	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
	Ballymurphy	15	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	18
	Beechmount	108	<5	0	<5	<5	0	8	122

CLA – Common Landlord Area		30+ Pts 'Housing Stress'							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast West									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
	Cavendish Street	12	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	15
	Dermotthill	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
	Divis Complex	11	<5	0	<5	0	0	<5	15
	Falls Court/ Clonard Cres	89	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	96
	Gransha/ Downfine	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
	Grosvenor Road	120	0	<5	<5	5	0	7	137
	Hamill St/John St	17	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	23
	Hannahstown	5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	6
	Lower Suffolk	5	<5	0	<5	<5	0	0	11
	Moyard	15	0	0	0	0	0	<5	16
	New Barnsley	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	38
	Rockmount	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
	Roden Street	12	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	16
	Springfield Park	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
	Springfield Road	86	0	<5	<5	<5	<5	6	97
	Springhill	29	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	31
	Springvale	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
	St James	74	0	0	<5	0	0	7	83
	Turf Lodge	54	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	59
	Westrock	15	0	0	0	0	0	<5	16
	Whiterock	37	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	40
Belfast West Constituency Total 30+Pts		2279	5	20	69	173	<5	176	2723

CLA – Common Landlord Area		30+ Pts 'Housing Stress'							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast West/North									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Shankill	Ainsworth	0	0	0	<5	19	0	<5	23
	Twaddell/Upper Woodvale	0	<5	0	0	34	0	<5	36
Belfast West/North Constituency Total 30+Pts		0	<5	0	<5	53	0	<5	59
Overall Constituency Totals 30+Pts		3819	52	210	519	2356	27	753	7736

Table B: Waiting List for Social Housing as at 31st March 2014 broken down by Applicants with less than 30 Points, Religion & Belfast Assembly Constituencies

CLA – Common Landlord Area		Less Than 30 Pts							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast East									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Castlereagh	Ballybeen	5	<5	6	<5	118	<5	14	147
	Braniel	7	<5	<5	<5	55	0	5	73
	Brooklands	0	0	0	0	9	0	<5	10
	Castlereagh	5	0	<5	<5	41	0	<5	52
	Downshire Park	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
	Galway Drive/ Mews	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
	Geary Road	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
	Mawhinney Park	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
	Moatview Park	0	0	0	<5	7	0	0	8
	Sunderland Road	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
	Tullycarnet	0	0	0	5	28	0	<5	34
	Vionville Rural	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
East Belfast	Albertbridge Rd.	<5	0	<5	<5	17	0	13	42
	Ardcarn	<5	0	<5	0	22	<5	<5	27
	Ashfield	<5	<5	<5	0	6	0	0	10
	Ballyhackamore	5	<5	6	<5	30	<5	<5	49
	Bloomfield/ Ravenscroft	12	<5	13	6	73	0	15	120
	Bridge End, Rotherdam Court	0	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5
	Cherryvalley	0	0	0	<5	<5	<5	0	5
	Clarawood	<5	0	<5	<5	24	0	<5	28
	Dundela	<5	<5	<5	0	15	0	<5	21
	Edenvale	<5	0	0	<5	15	0	<5	20
	Garnerville	0	<5	0	0	6	0	0	7
	Inverary	<5	0	0	<5	9	0	<5	15
	Knocknagoney	0	0	<5	<5	11	0	<5	19
	Lwr Beersbridge/ The Mount	7	0	<5	<5	24	0	<5	35
	Newtownards Road	11	0	11	15	112	<5	8	159
	Short Strand	28	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	31
	Summerhill	<5	0	0	0	5	0	0	6
	Sydenham/ Sandbrook/ Lisavon	9	<5	8	9	82	<5	5	117

CLA – Common Landlord Area		Less Than 30 Pts							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast East									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
	Wandsworth	<5	<5	<5	0	8	0	<5	12
Belfast East Constituency Total Less than 30Pts		107	11	61	62	730	9	80	1060

CLA – Common Landlord Area		Less Than 30 Pts							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast East/South									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Castlereagh	Cregagh Castlereagh	7	<5	6	9	94	<5	<5	121
East Belfast	Willowfield/ Upper Castlereagh Road	10	<5	8	5	81		7	115
Belfast East/South Constituency Total Less than 30Pts		17	5	14	14	175	<5	10	236

CLA – Common Landlord Area		Less Than 30 Pts							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast North									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Newtownabbey 1	Abbey Glen	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
	Abbeyville	7	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	12
	Bawnmore/Old Mill Drive	15	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	20
	Hightown	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
	Longlands	17	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	23
	Rathcoole	<5	0	11	7	155	0	23	199
	Rathfern	0	0	<5	0	8	0	<5	13
	Rushpark	<5	0	<5	<5	45	<5	12	64
Newtownabbey 2	Glenvarna/ Glengormley	8	<5	<5	<5	32	0	<5	49
	Queens Park/ Queens Avenue	<5	0	<5	0	25	0	0	27
North Belfast	Alliance	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
	Ardoyne	57	0	<5	<5	<5	<5	13	77
	Ballysillan	<5	0	5	<5	50	0	9	70
	Carlisle/New Lodge	62	<5	5	<5	<5	0	10	83
	Carrick Hill/Unity Flats	5	0	<5	0	0	0	<5	8

CLA – Common Landlord Area		Less Than 30 Pts							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast North									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
	Cavehill	64	0	5	7	<5	0	11	91
	Cliftondene	<5	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	6
	Cliftonville	82	<5	7	9	5	0	11	115
	Duncairn Gardens	<5	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	8
	Fairhill	0	<5	0	<5	9	0	0	11
	Gainsborough	<5	0	<5	<5	19	0	<5	30
	Glandore & Dunmore	<5	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	7
	Grove Area	0	0	<5	<5	10	<5	<5	17
	Lower Ligoniel/ Glenbank	<5	0	0	<5	7	<5	0	14
	Lower Oldpark	<5	0	<5	<5	14	0	0	21
	M/S Flats - Carlisle	16	0	0	<5	0	0	0	18
	Mount Vernon Estate	0	0	0	0	8	0	<5	10
	Newington/ Limestone	22	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	28
	Oldpark	22	0	0	<5	<5	0	5	33
	Rosewood/ Crumlin RDA	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
	Ross House Flats/ Mountvernon Flats	0	0	<5	<5	<5	<5	0	8
	Shore Road	0	0	<5	5	26	0	5	37
	Skegoneill/ Ashfield/ Fortwilliam	10	<5	5	7	20	0	7	50
	Somerton Rd (Sheltered)	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	10
	Sunningdale	<5	0	<5	0	17	0	<5	23
	Torrens	6	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	11
	Upper & Lower Duncairn	5	0	<5	<5	13	0	<5	24
	Upper Ligoniel	14	0	0	0	<5	<5	<5	20
	Westland	0	0	<5	0	5	0	0	6
	Wheatfield	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	14
	Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairkynowe	53	<5	<5	<5	5	0	5	70

CLA – Common Landlord Area		Less Than 30 Pts							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast North									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
	Whitewell/White City	0	<5	0	0	10	0	0	11
Shankill	Cambrai/Woodvale	0	0	<5	<5	69		11	84
	Mid Shankill	<5	<5	<5	5	87		13	109
	Tudor	0	0	0	<5	5		<5	7
Belfast North Constituency Total Less than 30Pts		500	10	70	93	687	6	182	1548

CLA – Common Landlord Area		Less Than 30 Pts							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast South									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Castlereagh	Belvoir	<5		<5	7	68	0	8	87
	Bests Hill	0		0	0	<5	0	0	<5
	Newtownbreda Village	17		<5	7	21	<5	6	53
East Belfast	Rosebery	37	<5	13	25	108	<5	16	202
South Belfast	Annadale	<5	<5	<5	5	10	0	<5	26
	Cromac	21	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	27
	Donegall Pass	<5	0	<5	<5	23	0	<5	31
	Donegall Road	12	<5	7	11	78	0	12	121
	Finaghy	14	<5	0	12	55	<5	11	96
	Flush Park Belfast	8	0	0	0	7	0	<5	19
	Lower Ormeau	62	0	<5	19	8	0	8	99
	Sandy Row	0	0	<5	<5	25	0	<5	32
	Stranmillis	7	<5	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	21
	Taughmonagh	<5	0	<5	0	27	0	<5	31
	Ulsterville	62	<5	18	67	45	<5	257	455
	Upper Ormeau	87	<5	11	26	25	<5	17	169
Belfast South Constituency Total Less than 30Pts		335	14	63	187	508	7	358	1472

CLA – Common Landlord Area		Less Than 30 Pts							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast South/Strangford									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Castlereagh	Carryduff	11	<5	0	<5	23	0	0	39
Belfast South/Strangford Constituency Total Less than 30Pts		11	<5	0	<5	23	0	0	39

CLA – Common Landlord Area		Less Than 30 Pts							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast West									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Lisburn Antrim Street	Areema	20	0	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	31
	Beattie	0	<5	0	0	<5	0	<5	6
Lisburn Dairy Farm	Twinbrook-Poleglass	128	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	16	151
Shankill	Agnes Street	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
	Ballygomartin/ West Circular	0	0	0	0	21	0	<5	23
	Brown Square	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	5
	Dover	0	0	0	0	7	0	<5	9
	Florence/ Hopewell	0	0	<5	<5	37	0	7	48
	Glencairn	<5	0	<5	<5	29	0	<5	35
	Highfield	0	0	0	0	27	0	5	32
	Lawnbrook	0	0	0	<5	13	0	0	14
	Springmartin	0	0	0	<5	13	0	<5	15
	Upper Shankill	0	0	0	<5	34	0	<5	39
West Belfast	Andersonstown	309	0	<5	10	0	0	40	362
	Ardmoulin	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
	Ballymurphy	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
	Beechmount	33	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	41
	Cavendish Street	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
	Divis Complex	7	0	0	0	0	0	<5	8
	Falls Court/ Clonard Cres	23	0	<5	0	<5	0	<5	28
	Gransha/ Downfine	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
	Grosvenor Road	62	0	<5	<5	0	0	5	75
	Hamill St/John St	5	0	<5	0	0	0	<5	9
	Hannahstown	<5	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	<5
	Lower Suffolk	7	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	10
	Moyard	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
	New Barnsley	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
	Rockmount	<5	0	<5	0	0	0	0	<5
Roden Street	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	
Springfield Park	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	
Springfield Road	33	0	<5	<5	0	0	0	35	
Springhill	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	

CLA – Common Landlord Area		Less Than 30 Pts							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast West									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
	Springvale	<5	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5
	St James	31	0	0	5	0	0	6	42
	Turf Lodge	26	0	0	0	0	0	<5	28
	Westrock	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
	Whiterock	9	0	0	0	0	0	<5	10
Belfast West Constituency Total Less than 30Pts		744	<5	20	38	197	<5	112	1115

CLA – Common Landlord Area		Less Than 30 Pts							
Assembly Constituency		Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	Total
Belfast West/North									
NIHE Local Office	CLA								
Shankill	Ainsworth	0	0	0	<5	15	0	<5	20
	Twaddell/Upper Woodvale	0	0	0	0	26	0	6	32
Belfast West/North Constituency Total Less than 30Pts		0	0	0	<5	41	0	10	52
Overall Constituency Totals Less than 30Pts		1714	45	228	398	2361	24	752	5522

The following caveats should be noted:-

- <5 are cases where numbers are less than 5.
- In relation to the parliamentary constituencies in Belfast a significant problem arises with the boundaries of the Belfast East, Belfast West, Belfast North, Belfast South and Strangford Constituencies. In these areas five CLA's cross over parliamentary constituencies. These are:
 - Carryduff which crosses Belfast South and Strangford
 - Ainsworth which crosses Belfast North and Belfast West
 - Twaddell which crosses Belfast North and Belfast West
 - Cregagh which crosses Belfast East and Belfast South
 - Willowfield which crosses Belfast East and Belfast South

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the average (i) points accrued; and (ii) waiting time for (a) catholic; and (b) protestant households on the housing waiting list for each Housing Executive area of Belfast, in each of the last three years; and the equivalent data for people who have been allocated a house.
(AQW 34402/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has provided the following information:-

- Tables A and B attached provides details of the Waiting List at 31st March 2013 and 31st March 2014 broken down by Mean and Median Average Points and Months and Religion by Belfast Assembly Constituencies.
- Tables C and D attached provides details of Allocations for one year to 31st March 2013, and for one year to 31st March 2014, by Mean and Median Average Points and Months on the Waiting List at the date of Allocation broken down by Religion and Belfast Assembly Constituencies.

The Housing Executive has advised that, due to a recording system change to their Housing Management System (HMS) in July 2011 information for the one year period from 1st April 2011 – 31st March 2012 is not available.

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.

Table A: Waiting List as at 31st March 2013 broken down by Mean & Median Average Points & Months & Religion by Belfast Assembly Constituency

				Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
Belfast East	Castlereagh	Ballybeen	Catholic	7	36.3	20.0	21.0	12.0
			Mixed	<5	24.0	24.0	8.0	8.0
			None	6	37.0	25.0	10.8	8.5
			Other	11	68.0	70.0	16.5	12.0
			Protestant	234	38.7	24.0	30.6	19.0
			Refused	<5	15.0	15.0	14.5	14.5
			Undisclosed	22	38.2	21.0	35.0	33.5
			Total	283	39.5	24.0	29.5	19.0
		Braniel	Catholic	10	32.0	5.0	30.3	23.0
			Mixed	<5	130.0	130.0	17.0	17.0
			None	<5	35.0	35.0	5.5	5.5
			Other	8	15.0	15.0	24.4	15.0
			Protestant	101	45.9	30.0	28.8	15.0
			Refused	<5	44.0	44.0	18.0	18.0
			Undisclosed	11	39.5	40.0	64.1	38.0
			Total	134	42.9	30.0	31.0	18.0
		Brooklands	Other	<5	86.5	86.5	40.0	40.0
			Protestant	28	51.4	36.0	58.5	31.5
			Undisclosed	<5	58.5	58.5	25.0	25.0
			Total	32	54.1	37.5	55.3	28.0
		Castlereagh	Catholic	6	47.0	24.0	21.5	17.5
			None	<5	100.0	100.0	8.0	8.0
			Other	6	90.7	101.0	34.5	16.0
			Protestant	64	40.5	20.5	33.3	14.5
			Undisclosed	10	59.9	80.0	29.2	21.5
			Total	87	47.3	26.0	31.8	16.0
		Coronation Park	Protestant	<5	53.0	53.0	38.5	38.5
			Undisclosed	<5	10.0	10.0	68.0	68.0
			Total	<5	38.7	10.0	48.3	58.0
Downshire Park	Protestant	<5	80.0	80.0	14.5	14.5		
	Undisclosed	<5	110.0	110.0	17.0	17.0		
	Total	<5	90.0	110.0	15.3	17.0		
Galway Drive/ Mews	Other	<5	0.0	0.0	5.0	5.0		
	Protestant	9	43.0	34.0	28.8	10.0		
	Undisclosed	<5	83.0	95.0	116.5	51.0		
	Total	14	51.4	43.0	52.1	15.0		
Geary Road	Protestant	<5	24.5	24.5	46.0	46.0		
	Total	<5	24.5	24.5	46.0	46.0		

				Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Mawhinney Park	Protestant	<5	60.0	60.0	8.5	8.5
			Total	<5	60.0	60.0	8.5	8.5
		Moatview Park	Other	<5	68.7	30.0	22.3	8.0
			Protestant	11	40.4	30.0	46.5	12.0
			Total	14	46.4	30.0	41.4	11.5
		Sunderland Road	Protestant	<5	33.0	32.0	103.3	81.0
			Total	<5	33.0	32.0	103.3	81.0
		Tullycarnet	Other	<5	20.0	20.0	7.0	7.0
			Protestant	68	30.5	25.0	22.3	12.0
			Undisclosed	<5	45.0	45.0	7.0	7.0
			Total	71	30.8	24.0	21.6	12.0
		Vionville Rural	Protestant	<5	0.0	0.0	5.0	5.0
			Total	<5	0.0	0.0	5.0	5.0
	East Belfast	Albertbridge Rd.	Catholic	6	21.7	11.0	21.5	19.0
			None	6	35.7	20.0	9.2	9.0
			Other	7	74.9	22.0	12.9	7.0
			Protestant	46	36.9	23.0	23.3	21.5
			Undisclosed	10	18.0	0.0	11.4	9.0
			Total	75	36.6	20.0	19.4	12.0
		Ardcarn	Catholic	6	30.7	30.0	18.7	18.0
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	13.5	13.5
			Other	<5	0.0	0.0	17.0	17.0
			Protestant	25	28.8	20.0	22.0	13.0
			Undisclosed	<5	15.0	15.0	18.5	18.5
			Total	37	25.2	20.0	20.5	14.0
		Ashfield	Catholic	<5	0.0	0.0	10.0	10.0
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	4.0	4.0
			Protestant	13	63.7	66.0	52.8	32.0
			Total	15	55.2	42.0	46.7	31.0
		Ballyhackamore	Catholic	6	71.8	69.0	32.0	10.0
			Mixed	<5	82.0	82.0	17.5	17.5
			None	6	43.7	46.0	11.5	8.5
			Other	8	25.1	13.0	40.5	39.0
			Protestant	78	60.3	41.5	50.3	38.0
			Refused	<5	70.0	70.0	8.0	8.0
			Undisclosed	8	43.0	24.0	67.8	31.0
			Total	109	56.7	41.0	46.7	29.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Bloomfield/ Ravenscroft	Catholic	14	19.9	0.0	23.1	14.5
			Mixed	<5	20.0	20.0	17.0	17.0
			None	<5	17.3	16.0	6.7	7.0
			Other	10	12.6	6.0	18.3	16.5
			Protestant	140	39.2	29.0	44.8	26.0
			Undisclosed	18	21.9	6.0	33.8	26.5
			Total		187	34.1	24.0	39.8
		Bridge End, Rotherdam Court	Other	<5	30.0	30.0	2.0	2.0
			Protestant	<5	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0
			Undisclosed	<5	30.0	30.0	17.0	17.0
			Total		<5	24.0	30.0	10.3
		Cherryvalley	Other	<5	10.0	10.0	8.0	8.0
			Protestant	<5	61.5	55.0	28.0	24.5
			Total		5	51.2	10.0	24.0
		Clarawood	Catholic	<5	86.0	86.0	25.0	25.0
			None	<5	33.3	10.0	11.3	12.0
			Other	7	37.4	30.0	29.1	17.0
			Protestant	61	37.4	30.0	28.5	12.0
			Undisclosed	6	59.0	52.0	35.0	32.0
			Total		78	39.5	30.0	28.4
		Dundela	Catholic	<5	27.0	27.0	30.0	30.0
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	21.0	21.0
			Other	<5	17.0	17.0	22.0	22.0
			Protestant	25	38.0	26.0	27.3	22.0
			Undisclosed	<5	42.7	48.0	23.0	21.0
			Total		33	35.3	20.0	26.5
		Edenvale	Catholic	<5	20.0	20.0	47.0	47.0
			None	<5	54.0	54.0	35.0	35.0
			Other	<5	39.0	39.0	45.5	45.5
			Protestant	43	47.8	30.0	58.6	46.0
			Undisclosed	<5	54.8	50.0	88.3	21.0
			Total		53	47.2	28.0	59.0
		Garnerville	Mixed	<5	10.0	10.0	8.0	8.0
			Other	<5	24.0	24.0	38.0	38.0
			Protestant	16	30.0	20.0	21.7	10.0
			Undisclosed	<5	31.5	13.0	30.3	33.0
			Total		22	29.1	18.0	23.4

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Inverary	Catholic	<5	10.0	10.0	14.0	14.0
			Other	<5	154.7	120.0	22.3	15.0
			Protestant	23	54.9	36.0	57.6	24.0
			Undisclosed	<5	0.0	0.0	24.0	24.0
			Total		28	62.0	33.0	51.0
		Knocknagoney	Catholic	<5	20.0	20.0	24.0	24.0
			None	<5	100.0	100.0	3.0	3.0
			Other	6	27.3	15.0	12.0	6.5
			Protestant	28	38.6	21.0	28.7	19.5
			Undisclosed	7	53.3	22.0	30.1	20.0
			Total		43	40.4	20.0	25.9
		Lwr Beersbridge/ The Mount	Catholic	12	48.7	33.0	21.6	16.5
			None	<5	45.0	45.0	7.0	7.0
			Other	7	42.9	34.0	33.3	24.0
			Protestant	55	41.5	24.0	29.5	20.0
			Refused	<5	30.0	30.0	14.0	14.0
			Undisclosed	6	20.3	10.0	23.5	17.5
			Total		83	41.1	30.0	27.5
		Newtownards Road	Catholic	15	14.5	10.0	12.4	6.0
			Mixed	<5	20.0	20.0	17.0	17.0
			None	8	28.8	20.0	10.9	10.5
			Other	21	26.1	14.0	22.6	12.0
			Protestant	231	30.6	20.0	24.4	12.0
			Refused	<5	10.0	10.0	12.0	12.0
			Undisclosed	23	42.4	22.0	25.9	20.0
			Total		300	30.3	20.0	23.4
		Orchard Park	Protestant	<5	102.0	102.0	2.0	2.0
			Undisclosed	<5	34.0	34.0	45.0	45.0
			Total		<5	68.0	68.0	23.5
		Short Strand	Catholic	98	59.1	33.0	27.5	15.5
			Other	<5	51.3	50.0	15.7	7.0
			Protestant	<5	81.0	81.0	19.5	19.5
			Undisclosed	6	58.0	32.0	100.8	64.5
			Total		109	59.3	34.0	31.1

				Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Summerhill	Catholic	<5	30.0	30.0	7.0	6.0
			Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	15.0	15.0
			None	<5	30.0	30.0	11.0	11.0
			Other	<5	40.0	40.0	87.0	87.0
			Protestant	9	42.9	20.0	23.8	20.0
			Undisclosed	<5	46.0	46.0	189.0	189.0
			Total		16	37.0	30.0	33.6
		Sydenham/ Sandbrook/ Lisavon	Catholic	15	41.0	12.0	25.9	14.0
			None	7	17.7	0.0	5.4	4.0
			Other	15	51.2	22.0	21.8	18.0
			Protestant	131	35.7	20.0	29.7	15.0
			Refused	<5	15.0	15.0	11.5	11.5
			Undisclosed	15	21.3	20.0	26.7	17.0
			Total		185	35.3	20.0	27.4
		Wandsworth	Catholic	<5	10.0	10.0	9.0	9.0
			Other	<5	107.0	107.0	35.5	35.5
			Protestant	14	58.6	41.0	55.4	21.0
			Undisclosed	<5	34.3	27.0	154.3	100.0
			Total		20	57.4	41.0	65.9
	Belfast East Constituency Total	Catholic		207	45.4	24.0	24.7	15.0
		Mixed		9	43.1	24.0	14.9	17.0
		None		52	32.7	20.0	10.3	8.5
		Other		131	43.9	24.0	24.0	15.0
		Protestant		1473	39.7	26.0	33.2	18.0
		Refused		8	26.8	20.0	13.0	14.0
		Undisclosed		172	38.7	22.0	41.5	25.0
		Total			2052	40.2	26.0	31.7
Belfast East/ South	Castlereagh	Cregagh Castlereagh	Catholic	12	49.8	16.0	23.0	21.0
			Mixed	<5	20.0	20.0	3.0	3.0
			None	10	27.2	11.0	10.7	10.5
			Other	17	61.6	74.0	24.2	17.0
			Protestant	193	44.9	30.0	36.6	19.0
			Undisclosed	19	45.2	30.0	67.7	24.0
			Total		252	45.5	30.0	36.3
	East Belfast	Willowfield/ Upper Castlereagh Road	Catholic	18	28.6	16.0	14.9	13.5
			Mixed	<5	24.0	24.0	9.0	9.0
			None	5	22.0	10.0	10.0	7.0

				Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
			Other	11	93.1	72.0	21.4	21.0
			Protestant	201	52.0	36.0	58.3	29.0
			Refused	<5	110.0	110.0	17.0	17.0
			Undisclosed	20	50.2	33.0	54.3	19.5
			Total	257	51.5	36.0	52.1	24.0
	Belfast East/South Constituency Total		Catholic	30	37.1	16.0	18.2	16.0
			Mixed	<5	22.0	22.0	6.0	6.0
			None	15	25.5	10.0	10.5	10.0
			Other	28	74.0	73.0	23.1	19.0
			Protestant	394	48.5	32.0	47.6	23.5
			Refused	<5	110.0	110.0	17.0	17.0
			Undisclosed	39	47.7	30.0	60.8	21.0
			Total	509	48.5	30.0	44.2	21.0
Belfast North	Newtown- abbey 1	Abbey Glen	Catholic	6	72.0	35.0	33.7	28.0
			Other	<5	104.0	104.0	39.0	39.0
			Protestant	<5	27.0	29.0	45.0	17.5
			Undisclosed	<5	54.0	61.0	46.8	32.5
			Total	15	57.3	30.0	40.5	27.0
		Abbeyville	Catholic	12	61.5	68.0	22.9	13.0
			Mixed	<5	170.0	170.0	11.0	11.0
			None	5	50.0	30.0	8.6	10.0
			Other	<5	34.0	34.0	39.0	39.0
			Protestant	5	81.2	72.0	19.8	20.0
			Undisclosed	7	41.7	20.0	39.6	25.0
			Total	31	61.0	62.0	24.0	13.0
		Bawnmore/Old Mill Drive	Catholic	49	54.6	38.0	27.9	12.0
			None	<5	40.0	40.0	6.0	6.0
			Other	<5	174.0	110.0	23.0	23.0
			Protestant	<5	0.0	0.0	77.0	77.0
			Undisclosed	9	74.0	30.0	16.2	16.0
			Total	63	62.0	38.0	26.4	12.0
		Hightown	Catholic	9	48.4	30.0	41.8	35.0
			Mixed	<5	80.0	80.0	11.0	11.0
			None	<5	120.0	120.0	8.0	8.0
			Other	<5	0.0	0.0	104.0	104.0
			Protestant	<5	290.0	290.0	15.0	15.0
			Undisclosed	8	57.0	52.0	20.5	13.0
			Total	21	65.8	34.0	32.3	15.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Longlands	Catholic	32	47.6	30.0	27.1	19.5
			None	<5	125.0	125.0	7.0	7.0
			Protestant	<5	6.7	0.0	10.0	11.0
			Undisclosed	5	42.4	26.0	25.2	23.0
			Total	42	47.7	30.0	24.7	18.5
		Rathcoole	Catholic	8	31.0	27.0	19.9	16.0
			Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	11.0	11.0
			None	17	41.6	30.0	7.1	6.0
			Other	17	47.9	28.0	23.4	18.0
			Protestant	331	48.1	30.0	29.0	14.0
			Refused	<5	20.0	20.0	17.0	17.0
			Undisclosed	89	47.4	34.0	24.2	24.0
			Total	464	47.3	30.0	26.9	15.0
		Rathfern	None	<5	40.0	40.0	8.0	8.0
			Other	<5	5.0	5.0	6.0	6.0
			Protestant	24	59.4	22.0	31.5	15.5
			Undisclosed	8	77.8	24.0	32.5	29.0
			Total	36	59.4	20.0	29.0	19.0
		Rushpark	Catholic	12	72.8	66.0	35.8	17.0
			None	<5	28.5	25.0	6.3	7.0
			Other	5	52.4	22.0	49.6	54.0
			Protestant	95	60.5	44.0	47.3	26.0
			Refused	<5	10.0	10.0	17.0	17.0
			Undisclosed	30	58.8	44.0	71.0	26.5
			Total	147	59.6	42.0	50.0	26.0
	Newtown- abbey 2	Glenvarna/ Glengormley	Catholic	25	85.5	90.0	31.0	19.0
			Mixed	<5	43.3	30.0	14.7	18.0
			None	6	36.7	20.0	23.3	19.0
			Other	8	87.4	99.0	55.5	33.5
			Protestant	78	62.5	47.0	39.7	22.5
			Undisclosed	13	106.8	110.0	27.2	27.0
			Total	133	71.1	80.0	36.5	21.0
		Queens Park/ Queens Avenue	Catholic	<5	108.0	122.0	19.5	20.5
			None	<5	21.0	21.0	7.5	7.5
			Other	<5	59.5	47.0	29.5	33.0
			Protestant	66	64.0	40.0	31.0	14.5
			Undisclosed	6	86.7	94.0	28.8	24.5
			Total	82	66.5	68.0	29.7	15.5

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
	North Belfast	Alliance	Catholic	<5	72.0	72.0	76.5	76.5
			Other	<5	16.0	16.0	60.0	60.0
			Protestant	9	33.8	20.0	49.9	25.0
			Undisclosed	<5	0.0	0.0	67.0	67.0
			Total	13	35.7	20.0	56.1	55.0
		Ardoyne	Catholic	170	58.6	49.0	28.0	13.0
			None	<5	45.0	45.0	7.5	7.5
			Other	<5	30.0	5.0	13.5	12.5
			Undisclosed	42	63.3	69.0	28.9	28.5
			Total	218	58.9	49.0	27.7	15.0
		Ballysillan	Catholic	<5	70.0	70.0	9.5	9.5
			None	5	29.6	10.0	5.8	3.0
			Other	9	12.7	20.0	15.3	19.0
			Protestant	83	37.8	20.0	23.5	13.0
			Undisclosed	22	35.4	25.0	28.2	28.5
			Total	121	35.7	20.0	22.8	14.0
		Carlisle/New Lodge	Catholic	182	66.9	56.0	29.3	15.0
			Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	15.0	15.0
			None	7	62.9	20.0	7.9	6.0
			Other	9	59.8	70.0	36.1	25.0
			Protestant	5	126.4	92.0	13.0	12.0
			Undisclosed	39	59.8	40.0	24.4	22.0
			Total	243	66.3	52.0	27.8	17.0
		Carrick Hill/Unity Flats	Catholic	27	96.3	94.0	50.1	25.0
			Other	<5	40.7	30.0	18.0	14.0
			Protestant	<5	46.7	70.0	40.0	14.0
			Undisclosed	8	75.8	80.0	34.5	28.5
			Total	41	84.6	70.0	44.0	22.0
		Cavehill	Catholic	180	62.6	35.0	32.1	18.5
			Mixed	<5	110.0	110.0	9.0	9.0
			None	6	52.3	47.0	8.3	8.0
			Other	27	83.4	92.0	27.3	26.0
			Protestant	19	51.7	40.0	20.1	8.0
			Refused	<5	50.0	50.0	9.0	9.0
			Undisclosed	53	56.7	40.0	40.0	34.0
			Total	288	62.8	40.0	31.6	21.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Cliftondene	Catholic	5	64.8	30.0	16.2	13.0
			Other	<5	67.3	40.0	62.3	25.0
			Protestant	<5	100.0	100.0	9.5	9.5
			Undisclosed	<5	40.0	0.0	28.3	20.0
			Total		13	65.1	40.0	28.6
		Cliftonville	Catholic	235	71.7	60.0	26.1	13.0
			Mixed	<5	103.3	90.0	12.3	10.0
			None	13	60.8	50.0	10.3	8.0
			Other	26	81.2	100.0	24.9	19.5
			Protestant	17	75.1	90.0	37.4	34.0
			Refused	<5	92.0	86.0	21.3	4.0
			Undisclosed	55	63.3	60.0	22.6	18.0
			Total		352	71.3	70.0	25.2
		Duncairn Gardens	Catholic	20	50.5	34.0	24.7	14.0
			None	<5	45.0	45.0	3.5	3.5
			Other	<5	30.0	0.0	16.7	23.0
			Protestant	<5	68.0	72.0	34.3	27.0
			Undisclosed	<5	41.3	24.0	30.3	27.0
			Total		31	49.0	36.0	24.0
		Fairhill	Catholic	<5	101.0	101.0	31.5	31.5
			None	<5	38.0	38.0	2.0	2.0
			Other	<5	69.5	77.0	28.0	26.5
			Protestant	25	53.0	30.0	31.8	15.0
			Undisclosed	<5	41.0	41.0	22.0	22.0
			Total		34	56.6	41.0	29.9
		Gainsborough	Catholic	6	37.0	20.0	13.0	11.0
			None	<5	20.0	20.0	1.0	1.0
			Other	5	20.8	20.0	28.2	11.0
			Protestant	52	34.5	20.0	30.7	16.5
			Undisclosed	10	33.2	21.0	23.1	14.5
			Total		74	33.4	20.0	27.6
		Glandore & Dunmore	Catholic	19	55.3	30.0	19.5	11.0
			Other	<5	16.5	20.0	26.3	24.5
			Protestant	<5	96.0	104.0	29.0	38.0
			Undisclosed	<5	60.0	60.0	113.5	113.5
			Total		28	54.4	28.0	28.2

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Grove Area	Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	3.0	3.0
			None	8	55.0	70.0	4.9	2.5
			Other	<5	66.0	66.0	13.0	13.0
			Protestant	33	48.4	40.0	37.3	15.0
			Refused	<5	88.0	88.0	6.0	6.0
			Undisclosed	<5	45.0	35.0	33.8	37.0
			Total		49	49.8	50.0	29.4
		Lower Ligoniel/ Glenbank	Catholic	<5	23.3	20.0	7.7	8.0
			None	<5	15.0	15.0	9.5	9.5
			Other	7	41.7	26.0	17.9	4.0
			Protestant	19	51.5	30.0	18.3	11.0
			Undisclosed	5	26.0	20.0	25.2	20.0
			Total		36	41.7	23.0	17.8
		Lower Oldpark	Catholic	<5	52.0	56.0	21.7	15.0
			None	<5	30.0	30.0	9.0	9.0
			Other	<5	10.0	10.0	22.0	22.0
			Protestant	24	24.0	20.0	11.0	8.0
			Undisclosed	<5	122.7	30.0	35.3	24.0
			Total		33	34.8	20.0	14.8
		M/S Flats - Carlisle	Catholic	46	47.0	30.0	19.7	11.5
			None	<5	25.0	25.0	11.5	11.5
			Other	5	44.8	32.0	24.6	27.0
			Protestant	<5	75.0	75.0	7.5	7.5
			Undisclosed	8	54.8	45.0	22.1	21.0
			Total		63	48.0	30.0	19.8
		Mount Vernon Estate	Catholic	<5	5.0	5.0	15.0	15.0
			Protestant	11	35.5	20.0	24.3	14.0
			Undisclosed	<5	10.0	5.0	58.5	17.5
			Total		17	25.9	10.0	31.2
		Newington/ Limestone	Catholic	64	69.7	65.0	22.9	13.5
			None	<5	125.0	125.0	13.0	13.0
			Other	<5	0.0	0.0	13.7	14.0
			Protestant	<5	120.0	120.0	4.0	4.0
			Undisclosed	7	74.0	70.0	18.1	12.0
			Total		77	69.4	70.0	21.6

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Oldpark	Catholic	60	74.5	51.0	24.8	15.5
			Mixed	<5	40.0	40.0	11.0	11.0
			None	<5	73.3	50.0	16.0	15.0
			Other	<5	14.0	10.0	22.3	26.0
			Protestant	<5	40.0	15.0	22.5	19.5
			Undisclosed	15	53.1	50.0	35.5	30.0
			Total		86	66.6	50.0	26.0
		Rosewood/ Crumlin RDA	Protestant	<5	55.0	55.0	11.0	11.0
			Total		<5	55.0	55.0	11.0
		Ross House Flats/ Mountvernon Flats	Other	<5	5.3	6.0	17.0	15.0
			Protestant	8	31.5	25.0	10.8	7.5
			Refused	<5	85.0	85.0	9.0	9.0
			Undisclosed	5	18.4	20.0	14.4	13.0
			Total		17	26.2	20.0	12.8
		Shore Road	Catholic	5	12.0	0.0	102.2	19.0
			None	<5	12.5	10.0	5.8	4.0
			Other	7	19.1	12.0	20.9	25.0
			Protestant	56	34.6	20.0	14.9	9.5
			Undisclosed	11	41.5	28.0	40.5	39.0
			Total		83	31.8	20.0	23.7
		Skegoneill/ Ashfield/ Fortwilliam	Catholic	16	58.9	37.0	26.8	16.0
			Mixed	<5	30.0	30.0	14.0	14.0
			None	6	32.0	10.0	8.8	9.0
			Other	11	40.0	20.0	37.1	28.0
			Protestant	33	52.5	40.0	42.2	25.0
			Refused	<5	42.0	42.0	8.0	8.0
			Undisclosed	16	25.3	13.0	45.7	25.5
		Total		84	45.0	22.0	36.1	21.0
		Somerton Rd (Sheltered)	Catholic	7	45.4	42.0	57.9	56.0
			Other	<5	45.0	26.0	16.5	17.0
			Protestant	16	77.6	73.0	67.2	66.5
			Undisclosed	11	61.7	44.0	80.0	49.0
			Total		38	63.6	43.0	63.8
		Sunningdale	Catholic	<5	0.0	0.0	2.0	2.0
			None	<5	46.7	20.0	8.3	10.0
			Other	<5	116.0	132.0	59.3	74.0
			Protestant	38	68.8	45.0	26.6	11.0
			Undisclosed	<5	36.0	36.0	23.0	23.0
			Total		47	67.5	40.0	26.8

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Torrens	Catholic	30	84.5	97.0	41.7	33.5
			Mixed	<5	120.0	120.0	13.0	13.0
			None	<5	20.0	20.0	9.5	9.5
			Other	<5	12.0	12.0	29.0	29.0
			Protestant	<5	61.0	61.0	55.0	55.0
			Undisclosed	9	59.6	52.0	76.2	42.0
			Total		45	74.8	90.0	46.9
		Upper & Lower Duncairn	Catholic	<5	23.0	10.0	9.3	7.5
			None	5	54.4	30.0	7.6	9.0
			Other	<5	20.0	20.0	10.5	10.5
			Protestant	27	33.9	30.0	9.9	8.0
			Undisclosed	6	38.0	30.0	11.3	11.0
			Total		44	35.2	30.0	9.8
		Upper Ligoniel	Catholic	85	75.6	70.0	28.0	18.0
			Mixed	<5	160.0	160.0	10.0	10.0
			None	<5	144.0	144.0	29.0	29.0
			Other	5	84.0	72.0	26.2	26.0
			Protestant	<5	57.0	57.0	31.5	31.5
			Undisclosed	11	66.2	34.0	32.0	31.0
			Total		105	76.1	70.0	28.2
		Westland	Catholic	<5	70.0	70.0	3.0	3.0
			Protestant	9	61.1	38.0	21.6	8.0
			Undisclosed	<5	47.0	47.0	29.5	29.5
			Total		12	59.5	54.0	21.3
		Wheatfield	Catholic	<5	0.0	0.0	10.0	9.0
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	10.0	10.0
			Protestant	21	36.6	20.0	11.5	11.0
			Undisclosed	<5	72.5	90.0	27.0	25.0
			Total		29	36.5	20.0	13.4
		Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairyknowe	Catholic	107	62.3	50.0	25.9	15.0
			Mixed	<5	30.0	25.0	8.0	7.5
			None	<5	5.0	5.0	2.0	2.0
			Other	6	65.3	45.0	23.3	14.0
			Protestant	8	59.5	45.0	30.5	28.5
			Undisclosed	21	72.5	92.0	44.3	30.0
			Total		148	62.1	50.0	27.8

				Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Whitewell/White City	Catholic	<5	0.0	0.0	19.5	19.5
			Mixed	<5	12.0	12.0	3.0	3.0
			None	<5	45.0	45.0	4.0	4.0
			Other	<5	85.0	85.0	4.5	4.5
			Protestant	13	22.9	20.0	26.6	14.0
			Undisclosed	5	35.6	24.0	22.0	11.0
			Total		25	29.9	20.0	20.6
	Shankill	Cambrai/Woodvale	Catholic	<5	144.0	144.0	21.0	21.0
			Other	<5	20.0	20.0	15.0	15.0
			Protestant	138	44.8	30.0	44.7	22.0
			Undisclosed	18	27.1	20.0	22.6	19.5
			Total		158	43.2	30.0	41.8
		Mid Shankill	Catholic	<5	70.0	70.0	14.0	14.0
			Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	14.0	14.0
			None	<5	120.0	120.0	8.0	8.0
			Other	<5	5.0	0.0	19.3	14.5
			Protestant	157	38.5	20.0	24.3	14.0
			Undisclosed	19	46.9	20.0	20.5	18.0
			Total		183	39.0	20.0	23.6
		Tudor	Other	<5	61.0	61.0	17.0	17.0
			Protestant	21	50.3	20.0	26.9	13.0
			Undisclosed	6	79.0	16.0	27.5	21.5
			Total		29	57.0	20.0	26.3
	Belfast North Constituency Total		Catholic	1448	65.0	50.0	28.3	15.0
			Mixed	23	60.5	50.0	10.7	11.0
			None	122	47.8	30.0	8.7	7.0
			Other	213	55.0	32.0	27.3	24.0
			Protestant	1474	48.6	30.0	30.7	14.5
			Refused	9	63.4	80.0	14.4	9.0
			Undisclosed	611	55.0	36.0	32.8	25.0
			Total	3900	56.1	36.0	29.1	16.0
Belfast South	Castlereagh	Belvoir	Catholic	10	55.8	50.0	21.1	9.5
			Mixed	<5	30.0	30.0	6.0	6.0
			None	7	48.9	40.0	9.9	9.0
			Other	19	48.4	40.0	29.9	22.0
			Protestant	156	47.7	30.0	35.0	24.0
			Undisclosed	20	28.9	20.0	40.1	27.0
			Total		213	46.3	30.0	33.4

				Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Bests Hill	Catholic	<5	150.0	150.0	6.0	6.0
			None	<5	60.0	60.0	6.0	6.0
			Other	<5	80.0	80.0	67.0	67.0
			Protestant	7	81.7	86.0	38.4	27.0
			Undisclosed	<5	65.0	65.0	91.0	91.0
			Total		14	80.9	92.0	43.1
		Milltown/Grays Park	Protestant	<5	110.0	110.0	11.0	11.0
			Total		<5	110.0	110.0	11.0
		Milltown/Shaws Bridge	Protestant	<5	83.0	35.0	24.7	12.0
			Total		<5	83.0	35.0	24.7
		Newtownbreda Village	Catholic	28	48.0	25.0	28.1	21.5
			None	<5	84.8	107.5	6.5	4.5
			Other	12	45.2	26.0	27.2	27.5
			Protestant	49	71.8	41.0	63.5	39.0
			Undisclosed	12	51.3	25.0	73.4	51.5
			Total		105	60.5	32.0	48.9
	East Belfast	Rosebery	Catholic	53	43.1	18.0	20.8	18.0
			Mixed	<5	5.5	1.0	7.0	2.5
			None	21	49.6	20.0	13.3	12.0
			Other	39	43.2	26.0	24.7	20.0
			Protestant	185	51.0	30.0	22.9	12.0
			Refused	<5	35.0	35.0	16.5	16.5
			Undisclosed	43	37.6	20.0	17.2	12.0
			Total		347	46.6	24.0	21.2
	South Belfast	Annadale	Catholic	8	39.0	31.0	23.0	6.5
			None	<5	30.0	30.0	17.0	17.0
			Other	18	74.1	58.0	38.8	33.5
			Protestant	22	37.0	18.0	26.1	15.0
			Refused	<5	50.0	50.0	10.0	10.0
			Undisclosed	14	54.2	30.0	22.5	16.5
			Total		64	51.6	40.0	28.1
		Cromac	Catholic	71	56.5	40.0	33.9	24.0
			None	<5	45.0	45.0	8.5	8.5
			Other	<5	31.0	23.0	31.3	36.0
			Protestant	<5	88.7	116.0	30.7	24.0
			Undisclosed	5	67.0	60.0	96.2	71.0
			Total		85	56.8	40.0	36.7

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Donegall Pass	Catholic	6	25.0	15.0	13.2	11.0
			Mixed	<5	30.0	30.0	6.0	6.0
			None	8	35.5	25.0	10.5	7.5
			Other	15	58.5	70.0	17.9	15.0
			Protestant	43	46.4	30.0	23.7	12.0
			Undisclosed	8	34.0	20.0	13.9	11.5
			Total		81	44.6	30.0	19.4
		Donegall Road	Catholic	8	9.3	6.0	6.9	2.0
			Mixed	<5	10.0	10.0	9.0	9.0
			None	8	32.5	20.0	6.9	6.5
			Other	24	38.1	24.0	26.0	24.5
			Protestant	155	31.2	20.0	20.2	10.0
			Undisclosed	18	51.7	37.0	37.4	11.5
			Total		214	32.8	20.0	21.2
		Finaghy	Catholic	33	40.2	10.0	23.2	21.0
			Mixed	6	27.3	6.0	21.2	11.0
			None	<5	52.7	20.0	8.0	2.0
			Other	30	53.7	42.0	31.8	29.0
			Protestant	109	39.0	30.0	36.3	21.0
			Refused	<5	60.0	60.0	11.5	11.5
			Undisclosed	20	33.5	20.0	24.5	14.0
			Total		203	40.9	22.0	31.2
		Flush Park Belfast	Catholic	19	51.4	34.0	33.8	17.0
			Mixed	<5	64.0	64.0	8.0	8.0
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	3.0	3.0
			Other	<5	74.0	74.0	57.5	57.5
			Protestant	15	75.3	50.0	53.6	33.0
			Undisclosed	8	26.6	17.5	71.1	24.5
			Total		46	55.0	41.0	46.5
		Lower Ormeau	Catholic	186	73.0	70.0	29.6	22.0
			None	12	64.2	25.0	8.2	7.5
			Other	54	56.5	50.0	24.1	18.5
			Protestant	17	77.6	92.0	41.5	29.0
			Refused	<5	0.0	0.0	7.0	7.0
			Undisclosed	41	78.8	70.0	20.0	17.0
			Total		312	70.4	70.0	27.1

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Sandy Row	Catholic	<5	82.0	82.0	26.0	26.0
			None	<5	30.0	30.0	4.0	4.0
			Other	<5	57.0	57.0	26.0	26.0
			Protestant	60	45.3	30.0	27.3	13.5
			Undisclosed	8	39.5	20.0	11.1	8.5
			Total		72	45.2	30.0	25.1
		Stranmillis	Catholic	7	48.9	20.0	25.1	20.0
			Mixed	<5	75.0	75.0	12.0	12.0
			None	<5	10.0	10.0	12.0	12.0
			Other	8	71.0	80.0	17.9	10.5
			Protestant	<5	26.0	25.0	38.8	30.0
			Undisclosed	6	44.7	32.0	24.5	18.5
			Total		29	50.1	24.0	23.1
		Taughmonagh	Catholic	<5	15.0	15.0	88.5	88.5
			Other	<5	56.0	52.0	37.0	52.0
			Protestant	31	43.5	40.0	25.8	19.0
			Undisclosed	10	42.8	37.0	23.2	14.5
			Total		46	42.9	39.0	28.7
		Ulsterville	Catholic	176	68.2	50.0	27.6	17.0
			Mixed	9	78.0	90.0	8.6	5.0
			None	44	41.0	25.0	8.6	6.5
			Other	165	60.7	70.0	23.4	19.0
			Protestant	128	51.7	30.0	28.4	13.0
			Refused	6	56.7	60.0	8.7	8.0
			Undisclosed	284	30.7	0.0	17.8	10.0
			Total		812	49.5	22.0	22.1
		Upper Ormeau	Catholic	177	56.0	30.0	40.3	21.0
			Mixed	<5	33.3	20.0	8.7	7.0
			None	23	49.0	30.0	12.8	9.0
			Other	55	54.4	36.0	32.3	29.0
			Protestant	76	81.9	54.0	25.2	14.5
			Refused	<5	16.0	16.0	6.5	6.5
			Undisclosed	45	71.7	84.0	46.3	18.0
			Total		381	62.0	34.0	34.8

				Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
	Belfast South Constituency Total		Catholic	786	60.0	36.0	30.7	20.0
			Mixed	28	45.4	21.0	11.1	7.0
			None	139	46.2	20.0	10.0	7.0
			Other	452	55.8	40.0	26.6	23.0
			Protestant	1064	49.8	30.0	29.7	15.0
			Refused	15	40.8	30.0	9.7	8.0
			Undisclosed	544	41.0	20.0	25.1	12.0
			Total	3028	51.5	30.0	27.5	15.0
Belfast South/ Strangford	Castlereagh	Carryduff	Catholic	17	69.6	30.0	21.2	16.0
			Mixed	<5	400.0	400.0	13.0	13.0
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	17.0	17.0
			Other	7	40.9	20.0	23.9	22.0
			Protestant	29	66.5	50.0	26.6	23.0
			Undisclosed	<5	35.3	30.0	62.3	68.0
			Total	58	67.3	45.0	26.2	21.5
	Belfast South/Strangford Constituency Total		Catholic	17	69.6	30.0	21.2	16.0
			Mixed	<5	400.0	400.0	13.0	13.0
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	17.0	17.0
			Other	7	40.9	20.0	23.9	22.0
			Protestant	29	66.5	50.0	26.6	23.0
			Undisclosed	<5	35.3	30.0	62.3	68.0
			Total	58	67.3	45.0	26.2	21.5
Belfast West	Lisburn Antrim Street	Areema	Catholic	69	85.6	70.0	24.0	19.0
			Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	15.5	15.5
			None	<5	45.0	45.0	11.0	11.0
			Other	6	55.0	51.0	22.2	26.0
			Protestant	13	65.1	60.0	41.5	31.0
			Undisclosed	5	124.0	128.0	34.2	21.0
			Total	97	80.3	60.0	26.3	21.0
		Beattie	Catholic	<5	0.0	0.0	9.5	9.5
			None	<5	90.0	90.0	10.0	10.0
			Other	<5	0.0	0.0	14.0	14.0
			Protestant	5	70.8	56.0	39.0	24.0
			Undisclosed	<5	0.0	0.0	22.0	22.0
			Total	10	44.4	30.0	26.0	13.5

				Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
	Lisburn Dairy Farm	Twinbrook-Poleglass	Catholic	530	86.7	95.0	28.3	22.0
			Mixed	<5	150.0	150.0	10.5	10.5
			None	<5	50.0	50.0	8.0	7.0
			Other	9	128.9	120.0	32.4	33.0
			Protestant	<5	82.0	80.0	28.5	19.0
			Undisclosed	50	69.0	70.0	15.6	12.0
			Total		598	85.9	92.0	27.1
	Shankill	Agnes Street	Protestant	<5	46.0	24.0	29.0	38.0
			Undisclosed	<5	0.0	0.0	8.0	8.0
			Total	<5	34.5	12.0	23.8	24.5
		Ballygomartin/ West Circular	Other	<5	136.0	136.0	51.0	51.0
			Protestant	40	37.4	26.0	41.7	25.0
			Undisclosed	5	60.0	70.0	8.2	9.0
			Total	46	42.0	28.0	38.3	19.0
		Brown Square	Protestant	<5	19.3	0.0	60.7	29.0
			Total	<5	19.3	0.0	60.7	29.0
		Dover	Protestant	8	47.1	20.0	9.1	9.0
			Undisclosed	<5	10.0	10.0	5.5	5.5
			Total	10	39.7	20.0	8.4	7.5
		Florence/ Hopewell	None	<5	33.3	20.0	3.7	2.0
			Other	<5	10.7	0.0	43.0	30.0
			Protestant	58	23.3	16.0	13.5	10.0
			Undisclosed	6	22.3	18.0	7.3	2.0
			Total	70	23.1	16.0	13.8	10.0
		Glencairn	Catholic	<5	56.7	60.0	10.7	5.0
			None	<5	60.0	60.0	10.5	10.5
			Other	7	25.3	20.0	13.9	10.0
			Protestant	71	42.6	30.0	22.7	13.0
			Undisclosed	6	13.3	10.0	8.7	9.0
			Total	89	40.1	22.0	20.4	11.0
		Highfield	Other	<5	70.0	70.0	14.0	14.0
			Protestant	37	30.4	20.0	13.3	11.0
			Undisclosed	5	14.0	10.0	12.8	13.0
			Total	43	29.4	20.0	13.3	11.0
		Lawnbrook	Other	<5	0.0	0.0	8.5	8.5
			Protestant	27	30.3	20.0	32.1	25.0
			Undisclosed	<5	100.0	100.0	13.0	13.0
			Total	30	30.6	19.0	29.9	24.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		RDA Agnes/ Crumlin	Other	<5	32.0	32.0	30.0	30.0
			Protestant	<5	20.0	20.0	2.0	2.0
			Total	<5	26.0	26.0	16.0	16.0
		Springmartin	Other	<5	20.0	20.0	1.0	1.0
			Protestant	23	33.4	20.0	25.3	14.0
			Undisclosed	<5	15.0	15.0	10.5	10.5
			Total	26	31.5	20.0	23.3	13.5
		Upper Shankill	Protestant	61	38.0	30.0	22.0	12.0
			Undisclosed	6	11.7	0.0	9.8	9.0
			Total	67	35.6	22.0	20.9	12.0
	West Belfast	Andersonstown	Catholic	1302	83.0	80.0	37.6	26.0
			Mixed	<5	62.0	62.0	25.0	25.0
			None	10	73.6	44.0	8.2	5.5
			Other	38	70.2	70.0	25.6	18.0
			Protestant	12	76.3	66.0	20.6	9.5
			Undisclosed	139	68.4	60.0	24.9	16.0
			Total	1502	81.2	76.0	35.8	24.0
		Ardmoulin	Catholic	<5	20.0	20.0	2.5	2.5
			Other	<5	72.0	72.0	32.0	32.0
			Undisclosed	<5	57.0	22.0	33.7	31.0
			Total	6	47.2	31.0	23.0	20.5
		Ballymurphy	Catholic	14	86.3	95.0	47.1	34.0
			Other	<5	100.0	100.0	21.0	21.0
			Total	15	87.2	100.0	45.3	33.0
		Beechmount	Catholic	167	86.3	90.0	41.2	30.0
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	5.0	5.0
			Other	9	83.3	90.0	20.3	23.0
			Protestant	<5	89.0	89.0	33.5	33.5
			Undisclosed	7	87.7	70.0	112.3	21.0
			Total	186	85.8	88.0	42.6	27.0
		Cavendish Street	Catholic	22	103.1	115.0	42.0	37.5
			None	<5	82.0	82.0	6.0	6.0
			Other	<5	70.0	70.0	4.0	4.0
			Undisclosed	<5	70.0	70.0	8.0	8.0
			Total	25	99.6	82.0	37.7	35.0
		Dermotthill	Catholic	<5	120.0	120.0	103.0	103.0
			Total	<5	120.0	120.0	103.0	103.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Divis Complex	Catholic	25	74.1	42.0	40.5	29.0
			Mixed	<5	36.0	36.0	6.0	6.0
			Other	<5	85.0	85.0	38.5	38.5
			Undisclosed	<5	70.0	70.0	20.0	20.0
			Total		29	73.4	60.0	38.5
		Falls Court/ Clonard Cres	Catholic	117	88.0	100.0	36.8	24.0
			Other	7	72.9	100.0	62.6	26.0
			Protestant	<5	54.0	54.0	29.0	29.0
			Undisclosed	5	48.4	12.0	13.6	12.0
			Total		131	85.1	100.0	37.2
		Gransha/ Downfine	Catholic	<5	95.0	119.0	25.8	25.5
			Total		<5	95.0	119.0	25.8
		Grosvenor Road	Catholic	190	77.2	61.0	30.4	20.0
			None	<5	10.0	10.0	6.0	6.0
			Other	<5	65.0	68.0	31.3	32.5
			Protestant	<5	30.0	30.0	11.0	11.0
			Undisclosed	19	58.4	50.0	22.9	17.0
			Total		215	74.7	60.0	29.6
		Hamill St/John St	Catholic	31	83.0	100.0	32.5	12.0
			None	<5	40.0	20.0	2.7	3.0
			Other	<5	140.0	100.0	37.7	11.0
			Protestant	<5	12.0	12.0	28.0	28.0
			Undisclosed	<5	49.3	18.0	29.0	20.0
			Total		41	79.9	100.0	30.4
		Hannahstown	Catholic	<5	54.7	54.0	8.7	8.0
			Protestant	<5	20.0	20.0	10.0	10.0
			Total		<5	46.0	37.0	9.0
		Lower Suffolk	Catholic	5	74.8	60.0	35.0	32.0
			None	<5	20.0	20.0	9.0	9.0
			Other	<5	53.3	20.0	12.7	10.0
			Protestant	18	31.4	20.0	21.4	10.0
			Undisclosed	<5	20.0	20.0	16.3	19.0
			Total		30	39.3	21.0	21.9
		Moyard	Catholic	19	96.0	118.0	41.4	29.0
			Undisclosed	<5	80.0	80.0	10.0	10.0
			Total		20	95.2	103.0	39.9
		New Barnsley	Catholic	52	96.2	103.0	33.1	17.5
			Total		52	96.2	103.0	33.1

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Rockmount	Catholic	6	32.7	13.0	22.7	17.0
			None	<5	10.0	10.0	4.0	4.0
			Total	7	29.4	10.0	20.0	11.0
		Roden Street	Catholic	24	96.4	81.0	44.7	32.5
			Other	<5	73.0	73.0	32.5	32.5
			Undisclosed	<5	25.0	25.0	13.5	13.5
			Total	28	89.6	71.0	41.6	27.0
		Springfield Park	Catholic	13	101.5	130.0	48.7	50.0
			Total	13	101.5	130.0	48.7	50.0
		Springfield Road	Catholic	110	86.1	100.0	37.6	29.0
			Mixed	<5	106.0	106.0	85.0	85.0
			None	<5	22.0	22.0	26.0	26.0
			Other	<5	20.0	20.0	6.0	6.0
			Protestant	<5	100.0	130.0	40.3	24.0
			Refused	<5	90.0	90.0	20.0	20.0
			Undisclosed	15	75.1	90.0	43.9	20.0
			Total	132	84.4	95.0	38.3	26.5
		Springhill	Catholic	40	113.8	149.0	45.0	46.5
			Undisclosed	<5	0.0	0.0	13.0	13.0
			Total	41	111.0	148.0	44.2	46.0
		Springvale	Catholic	11	80.2	60.0	55.5	55.0
			Total	11	80.2	60.0	55.5	55.0
		St James	Catholic	113	86.2	94.0	41.8	30.0
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	18.0	18.0
			Other	8	38.5	18.0	20.4	17.0
			Undisclosed	14	60.1	22.0	38.5	25.0
			Total	136	80.1	88.0	40.1	26.0
		Turf Lodge	Catholic	76	86.7	99.0	42.5	32.0
			Undisclosed	<5	87.5	87.0	52.3	36.5
			Total	80	86.8	99.0	43.0	32.0
		Westrock	Catholic	16	106.8	122.0	35.6	27.5
			Undisclosed	<5	45.0	45.0	12.0	12.0
			Total	18	99.9	92.0	33.0	25.5
		Whiterock	Catholic	47	89.3	100.0	35.7	24.0
			Other	<5	94.0	94.0	47.0	47.0
			Protestant	<5	55.0	55.0	9.0	9.0
			Undisclosed	<5	20.0	20.0	15.0	15.0
			Total	51	86.7	94.0	34.5	22.0

				Waiting List as at 31st March 2013				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
	Belfast West Constituency Total		Catholic	3014	85.0	90.0	35.7	25.0
			Mixed	7	72.0	62.0	24.0	17.0
			None	31	50.0	20.0	8.1	6.0
			Other	113	68.2	70.0	27.1	21.0
			Protestant	396	38.5	20.0	24.0	12.0
			Refused	<5	90.0	90.0	20.0	20.0
			Undisclosed	311	62.5	46.0	25.1	15.0
			Total		3873	77.6	70.0	33.2
Belfast West/ North	Shankill	Ainsworth	Other	<5	0.0	0.0	3.0	3.0
			Protestant	29	49.2	20.0	41.3	13.0
			Undisclosed	7	31.4	0.0	9.7	3.0
			Total	37	44.5	18.0	34.3	10.0
		Twaddell/Upper Woodvale	Mixed	<5	82.0	82.0	14.0	14.0
	Protestant		56	48.3	40.0	50.9	23.0	
	Undisclosed		6	11.3	10.0	37.5	12.5	
	Total		63	45.3	30.0	49.0	19.0	
	Belfast West/North Constituency Total		Mixed	<5	82.0	82.0	14.0	14.0
		Other	<5	0.0	0.0	3.0	3.0	
		Protestant	85	48.6	38.0	47.6	21.0	
		Undisclosed	13	22.2	0.0	22.5	8.0	
		Total	100	45.0	28.0	43.6	15.0	

Table B: Waiting List as at 31st March 2014 broken down by Mean & Median Average Points & Months & Religion by Belfast Assembly Constituencies

				Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
Belfast East	Castlereagh	Ballybeen	Catholic	5	7.2	0.0	30.6	24.0
			Mixed	<5	20.0	20.0	2.0	2.0
			None	8	13.8	15.0	10.4	8.0
			Other	5	20.8	30.0	24.0	12.0
			Protestant	212	34.1	24.0	34.0	20.0
			Refused	<5	22.0	22.0	27.0	27.0
			Undisclosed	24	28.0	22.0	42.8	39.0
			Total	256	32.0	22.0	33.7	20.5

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Braniel	Catholic	9	19.1	10.0	30.6	28.0
			Mixed	<5	20.0	20.0	12.0	12.0
			None	<5	46.7	70.0	14.7	13.0
			Other	6	19.0	13.0	27.5	10.0
			Protestant	100	38.0	22.0	33.1	15.0
			Refused	<5	63.0	63.0	22.0	22.0
			Undisclosed	9	31.8	24.0	76.8	47.0
			Total		130	35.8	22.0	34.9
		Brooklands	Other	<5	88.5	88.5	52.0	52.0
			Protestant	24	58.3	37.5	76.4	53.0
			Undisclosed	<5	60.5	60.5	37.0	37.0
			Total		28	60.6	39.0	71.9
		Castlereagh	Catholic	10	33.4	29.0	25.1	12.5
			Mixed	<5	90.0	90.0	21.0	21.0
			None	<5	40.0	40.0	9.0	9.0
			Other	<5	40.5	22.0	62.8	41.0
			Protestant	63	30.9	10.0	38.1	20.0
			Undisclosed	8	59.4	76.0	27.4	30.5
			Total		88	35.1	20.0	35.9
		Coronation Park	Protestant	<5	280.0	280.0	6.0	6.0
			Undisclosed	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
			Total		<5	280.0	280.0	6.0
		Downshire Park	Protestant	<5	54.0	10.0	21.3	22.0
			Undisclosed	<5	112.0	112.0	29.0	29.0
			Total		<5	68.5	61.0	23.3
		Galway Drive/ Mews	Catholic	<5	0.0	0.0	2.0	2.0
			Protestant	6	25.3	27.0	38.7	24.5
			Undisclosed	<5	98.0	98.0	63.0	63.0
			Total		9	38.7	34.0	40.0
		Geary Road	Protestant	<5	24.5	24.5	58.0	58.0
			Total		<5	24.5	24.5	58.0
		Mawhinney Park	Protestant	<5	10.0	10.0	18.0	18.0
			Total		<5	10.0	10.0	18.0
		Moatview Park	None	<5	110.0	110.0	13.0	13.0
			Other	<5	0.0	0.0	17.0	17.0
			Protestant	11	28.4	20.0	24.8	19.0
			Total		13	32.5	20.0	23.3

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Sunderland Road	Catholic	<5	25.0	25.0	11.0	11.0
			Protestant	<5	33.0	32.0	115.3	93.0
			Total	<5	31.0	28.5	89.3	55.0
		Tullycarnet	Other	6	18.7	20.0	20.3	4.0
			Protestant	50	28.8	24.0	25.5	13.0
			Undisclosed	<5	24.5	24.5	30.5	30.5
			Total	58	27.6	22.0	25.2	13.0
		Vionville Rural	Protestant	<5	0.0	0.0	9.5	9.5
			Total	<5	0.0	0.0	9.5	9.5
	East Belfast	Albertbridge Rd.	Catholic	6	34.3	13.0	17.2	10.0
			None	<5	17.3	17.0	13.3	12.5
			Other	<5	12.5	15.0	9.5	6.5
			Protestant	39	41.5	30.0	20.3	16.0
			Undisclosed	15	12.5	0.0	15.7	12.0
			Total	68	31.4	20.0	18.0	12.0
		Ardcarn	Catholic	<5	0.0	0.0	11.0	11.0
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	25.5	25.5
			Other	<5	51.0	51.0	17.5	17.5
			Protestant	34	34.1	21.0	17.2	12.0
			Refused	<5	10.0	10.0	9.0	9.0
			Undisclosed	<5	33.0	33.0	60.5	60.5
			Total	42	31.8	21.0	19.4	12.5
		Ashfield	Catholic	<5	5.0	5.0	14.0	14.0
			Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	29.0	29.0
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	16.0	16.0
			Other	<5	100.0	100.0	6.0	6.0
			Protestant	16	61.0	70.0	53.2	29.0
			Total	21	51.7	30.0	44.3	26.0
		Ballyhackamore	Catholic	10	48.6	42.0	22.7	9.0
			Mixed	<5	10.0	10.0	6.5	6.5
			None	10	42.9	17.0	23.1	19.0
			Other	7	23.9	20.0	49.0	46.0
			Protestant	76	53.0	40.0	64.0	38.5
			Refused	<5	40.0	40.0	15.5	15.5
			Undisclosed	<5	53.3	42.0	140.3	77.0
			Total	110	48.8	37.0	55.7	25.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Bloomfield/ Ravenscroft	Catholic	16	14.0	0.0	31.3	22.5
			Mixed	<5	36.0	36.0	9.0	9.0
			None	19	32.5	14.0	8.9	8.0
			Other	13	41.5	30.0	17.3	13.0
			Protestant	142	37.7	28.0	45.8	23.0
			Undisclosed	23	25.6	0.0	30.8	25.0
			Total	215	34.4	20.0	37.8	19.0
		Bridge End, Rotherdam Court	Mixed	<5	20.0	20.0	2.0	2.0
			Other	<5	130.0	130.0	16.0	16.0
			Undisclosed	<5	32.0	32.0	29.0	29.0
			Total	<5	60.7	32.0	15.7	16.0
		Cherryvalley	Other	<5	10.0	10.0	20.0	20.0
			Protestant	7	54.9	36.0	54.4	14.0
			Refused	<5	0.0	0.0	11.0	11.0
			Total	9	43.8	20.0	45.8	14.0
		Clarawood	Catholic	<5	0.0	0.0	7.0	7.0
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	21.0	21.0
			Other	<5	34.7	30.0	34.0	37.0
			Protestant	51	34.3	30.0	33.2	17.0
			Undisclosed	<5	45.3	50.0	59.0	70.0
			Total	59	33.7	30.0	33.9	20.0
		Dundela	Catholic	<5	16.0	16.0	20.0	20.0
			Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	11.0	11.0
			None	<5	50.0	20.0	6.7	6.0
			Other	<5	122.0	122.0	11.0	11.0
			Protestant	27	38.6	22.0	27.5	12.0
			Undisclosed	5	60.4	82.0	38.2	33.0
			Total	39	42.2	22.0	26.1	12.0
		Edenvale	Catholic	<5	14.7	14.0	39.7	39.0
			Other	<5	41.0	41.0	57.5	57.5
			Protestant	39	55.7	44.0	74.9	48.0
			Undisclosed	5	71.8	102.0	94.6	31.0
			Total	49	54.2	42.0	74.0	47.0
		Garnerville	Mixed	<5	10.0	10.0	20.0	20.0
			Protestant	12	33.5	20.0	18.8	12.5
			Total	13	31.7	10.0	18.9	13.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Inverary	Catholic	<5	11.0	11.0	17.0	17.0
			None	<5	40.0	40.0	13.0	13.0
			Other	<5	16.0	16.0	60.0	60.0
			Protestant	21	50.7	30.0	69.9	29.0
			Undisclosed	<5	0.0	0.0	15.0	7.0
			Total	28	40.8	25.0	57.8	27.5
		Knocknagoney	None	<5	32.0	16.0	6.3	5.0
			Other	6	58.3	50.0	14.5	14.0
			Protestant	22	43.3	29.0	30.1	15.0
			Undisclosed	<5	14.7	20.0	63.7	38.0
			Total	34	42.4	25.5	28.2	14.5
		Lwr Beersbridge/ The Mount	Catholic	11	38.7	20.0	22.0	16.0
			None	<5	15.0	15.0	8.5	8.5
			Other	6	40.7	34.0	28.5	23.5
			Protestant	50	39.8	30.0	27.5	16.5
			Undisclosed	<5	26.0	26.0	54.0	54.0
			Total	70	38.8	28.0	26.5	15.5
		Newtownards Road	Catholic	12	23.8	11.0	9.1	7.5
			Mixed	<5	70.0	70.0	5.0	5.0
			None	16	30.0	20.0	9.1	8.5
			Other	23	29.5	20.0	15.3	11.0
			Protestant	199	34.6	20.0	26.0	14.0
			Refused	<5	14.0	10.0	20.7	24.0
			Undisclosed	13	30.8	10.0	32.3	26.0
			Total	267	33.1	20.0	23.5	12.0
		Orchard Park	Undisclosed	<5	36.0	36.0	57.0	57.0
			Total	<5	36.0	36.0	57.0	57.0
		Short Strand	Catholic	83	72.2	42.0	34.4	24.0
			None	<5	10.0	10.0	13.0	13.0
			Other	<5	0.0	0.0	13.0	13.0
			Protestant	<5	144.0	144.0	42.0	42.0
			Undisclosed	6	53.0	33.0	105.2	65.0
			Total	92	70.3	41.0	38.7	24.0
		Summerhill	Catholic	<5	0.0	0.0	18.0	18.0
			Other	<5	40.0	40.0	99.0	99.0
			Protestant	12	50.7	55.0	29.0	21.0
			Undisclosed	<5	46.0	46.0	201.0	201.0
			Total	15	46.3	46.0	44.4	24.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Sydenham/ Sandbrook/ Lisavon	Catholic	18	80.2	35.0	29.7	18.0
			Mixed	<5	24.0	24.0	8.0	8.0
			None	14	43.9	20.0	11.4	9.5
			Other	13	44.6	20.0	21.9	25.0
			Protestant	140	35.1	20.0	31.8	18.5
			Refused	<5	17.3	20.0	16.3	19.0
			Undisclosed	12	37.3	30.0	35.7	25.0
			Total		201	40.2	20.0	29.4
		Wandsworth	Catholic	<5	10.0	10.0	21.0	21.0
			Mixed	<5	15.0	15.0	8.5	8.5
			None	<5	0.0	0.0	11.0	11.0
			Other	<5	63.7	48.0	101.0	70.0
			Protestant	20	45.7	32.0	48.1	19.0
			Undisclosed	<5	38.0	38.0	231.0	231.0
			Total		29	42.1	32.0	61.2
	Belfast East Constituency Total	Catholic		195	50.0	22.0	28.4	20.0
		Mixed		15	25.1	20.0	10.5	8.0
		None		92	32.3	18.0	11.9	9.0
		Other		113	37.0	20.0	27.1	15.0
		Protestant		1386	38.4	24.0	36.9	19.0
		Refused		13	25.5	20.0	17.9	19.0
		Undisclosed		147	34.9	24.0	48.1	33.0
		Total			1961	38.7	24.0	34.8
Belfast East/ South	Castlereagh	Cregagh Castlereagh	Catholic	11	39.6	10.0	29.0	18.0
			Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	5.0	5.0
			None	10	31.4	20.0	13.7	9.0
			Other	13	37.7	20.0	27.2	20.0
			Protestant	180	37.6	26.0	40.1	19.0
			Refused	<5	0.0	0.0	13.0	13.0
			Undisclosed	11	70.7	48.0	76.8	25.0
			Total		227	38.7	26.0	39.2
	East Belfast	Willowfield/ Upper Castlereagh Road	Catholic	16	29.6	15.0	17.7	15.0
			Mixed	5	21.2	0.0	17.6	21.0
			None	8	6.5	0.0	15.5	10.5
			Other	10	54.8	34.0	29.0	31.0
			Protestant	182	47.0	30.5	60.0	34.5
			Undisclosed	13	45.7	28.0	75.7	30.0
			Total		234	44.1	30.0	54.2

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
	Belfast East/South Constituency Total		Catholic	27	33.7	10.0	22.3	15.0
		Mixed	6	17.7	0.0	15.5	13.0	
		None	18	20.3	11.0	14.5	9.0	
		Other	23	45.1	20.0	28.0	23.0	
		Protestant	362	42.3	30.0	50.1	25.0	
		Refused	<5	0.0	0.0	13.0	13.0	
		Undisclosed	24	57.2	38.0	76.2	28.0	
		Total	461		41.5	28.0	46.8	23.0
Belfast North	Newtown-abbey 1	Abbey Glen	Catholic	5	29.6	30.0	50.4	50.0
			Other	<5	106.0	106.0	51.0	51.0
			Protestant	<5	26.0	26.0	10.5	10.5
			Undisclosed	<5	41.3	32.0	61.3	38.0
			Total	11	39.1	32.0	46.2	38.0
		Abbeyville	Catholic	14	49.4	31.0	24.9	21.5
			None	<5	50.0	50.0	13.5	13.5
			Other	<5	20.0	20.0	40.0	40.0
			Protestant	5	69.6	72.0	45.6	32.0
			Undisclosed	<5	8.0	0.0	66.3	37.0
		Total	26	46.3	31.0	33.9	23.0	
		Bawnmore/Old Mill Drive	Catholic	61	66.3	44.0	30.0	13.0
			None	<5	202.0	202.0	17.0	17.0
			Other	5	68.4	104.0	29.2	22.0
			Protestant	<5	0.0	0.0	89.0	89.0
			Undisclosed	5	50.4	32.0	25.8	29.0
		Total	74	68.1	42.0	30.1	15.5	
		Hightown	Catholic	8	60.5	50.0	37.8	32.0
			Mixed	<5	80.0	80.0	23.0	23.0
			Other	<5	105.0	105.0	64.5	64.5
	Undisclosed		6	117.0	115.0	43.2	46.5	
	Total		17	86.8	94.0	41.9	43.0	
	Longlands	Catholic	37	42.3	30.0	26.5	17.0	
		Mixed	<5	86.0	86.0	18.0	18.0	
		None	<5	100.0	100.0	20.0	20.0	
		Protestant	<5	34.0	12.0	31.0	31.0	
		Undisclosed	7	60.1	42.0	31.3	33.0	
	Total	50	46.1	30.0	27.2	21.5		

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Rathcoole	Catholic	8	22.8	30.0	20.6	10.5
			Mixed	<5	40.0	40.0	5.0	5.0
			None	19	29.1	20.0	11.2	11.0
			Other	12	40.3	24.0	42.8	43.0
			Protestant	340	47.2	30.0	28.3	13.0
			Refused	<5	40.0	40.0	3.0	3.0
			Undisclosed	53	43.2	32.0	34.6	35.0
			Total	434	45.2	30.0	28.5	16.0
		Rathfern	None	<5	26.7	0.0	14.0	17.0
			Protestant	15	38.4	26.0	50.7	52.0
			Undisclosed	<5	12.5	10.0	40.5	32.5
			Total	22	32.1	20.0	43.8	35.5
		Rushpark	Catholic	10	60.8	48.0	52.5	38.5
			None	<5	38.5	42.0	18.0	19.0
			Other	5	43.2	20.0	41.6	43.0
			Protestant	100	50.9	34.0	52.5	33.5
			Refused	<5	12.0	12.0	29.0	29.0
			Undisclosed	33	61.6	54.0	77.3	39.0
			Total	153	53.0	40.0	56.5	35.0
	Newtown-abbey 2	Glenvarna/ Glengormley	Catholic	28	91.5	95.0	33.1	20.0
			Mixed	<5	38.0	12.0	24.3	30.0
			None	7	46.0	30.0	28.9	31.0
			Other	11	86.1	100.0	51.5	30.0
			Protestant	80	64.0	40.0	45.2	25.0
			Refused	<5	30.0	30.0	10.0	10.0
			Undisclosed	10	119.2	108.0	33.0	36.0
			Total	140	73.5	70.0	40.9	25.5
		Queens Park/ Queens Avenue	Catholic	6	133.3	127.0	19.2	12.5
			None	<5	67.3	42.0	13.3	13.0
			Other	<5	110.7	110.0	43.0	44.0
			Protestant	59	53.9	32.0	33.5	17.0
			Refused	<5	105.0	105.0	6.0	6.0
			Undisclosed	<5	75.3	90.0	38.0	44.0
			Total	76	65.2	41.0	31.4	18.5
	North Belfast	Alliance	Catholic	<5	30.0	30.0	153.0	153.0
			Protestant	6	32.0	26.0	58.2	23.0
			Undisclosed	<5	0.0	0.0	79.0	79.0
			Total	8	27.8	25.0	72.6	51.5

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Ardoyne	Catholic	158	61.0	59.0	28.9	14.0
			None	<5	47.5	45.0	10.3	9.5
			Other	<5	40.7	10.0	27.3	29.0
			Protestant	<5	15.0	15.0	6.0	6.0
			Refused	<5	20.0	20.0	11.0	11.0
			Undisclosed	34	56.8	51.0	41.3	30.5
			Total		204	58.6	50.0	30.0
		Ballysillan	Catholic	6	34.7	26.0	31.2	20.0
			None	7	32.9	20.0	12.3	14.0
			Other	<5	26.5	25.0	29.0	34.0
			Protestant	83	41.1	20.0	24.6	15.0
			Undisclosed	11	26.9	18.0	41.5	50.0
			Total		111	38.3	22.0	26.0
		Carlisle/New Lodge	Catholic	202	72.5	70.0	28.4	16.0
			Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	27.0	27.0
			None	8	35.0	20.0	12.6	9.5
			Other	8	61.3	67.0	21.8	20.0
			Protestant	7	60.6	30.0	14.9	11.0
			Refused	<5	90.0	90.0	15.0	15.0
			Undisclosed	32	60.6	55.0	35.1	32.5
			Total		259	69.0	70.0	28.1
		Carrick Hill/Unity Flats	Catholic	24	77.9	57.0	44.0	25.0
			None	<5	45.0	45.0	14.5	14.5
			Other	<5	102.0	102.0	26.0	26.0
			Protestant	<5	70.0	70.0	113.0	113.0
			Undisclosed	8	65.3	66.0	43.4	32.0
			Total		36	73.7	67.0	43.7
		Cavehill	Catholic	174	62.2	40.0	34.8	19.0
			Mixed	<5	124.0	130.0	17.7	15.0
			None	13	64.2	88.0	6.4	5.0
			Other	22	69.1	93.0	30.7	36.5
			Protestant	12	67.3	65.0	29.3	14.0
			Undisclosed	44	71.5	74.0	47.5	44.5
			Total		268	65.3	61.0	34.7
		Cliftondene	Catholic	9	90.2	132.0	18.2	13.0
			Other	<5	78.5	82.0	56.3	26.0
			Protestant	<5	195.0	195.0	16.0	16.0
			Undisclosed	5	58.4	20.0	23.4	12.0
			Total		20	90.4	106.0	26.9

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Cliftonville	Catholic	248	64.7	60.0	28.4	14.0
			Mixed	5	89.6	110.0	16.4	21.0
			None	18	54.3	52.0	14.7	11.5
			Other	22	53.5	38.0	27.3	19.0
			Protestant	12	53.4	35.5	47.3	33.0
			Refused	<5	103.3	110.0	29.3	16.0
			Undisclosed	40	67.6	71.0	31.4	31.5
			Total	348	64.1	60.0	28.5	16.0
		Duncairn Gardens	Catholic	17	82.4	84.0	38.2	30.0
			None	<5	63.0	63.0	7.5	7.5
			Other	<5	0.0	0.0	35.0	35.0
			Protestant	<5	86.0	86.0	50.5	50.5
			Undisclosed	<5	42.7	26.0	42.3	39.0
			Total	25	73.0	74.0	37.1	35.0
		Fairhill	Catholic	<5	113.0	113.0	43.5	43.5
			Mixed	<5	10.0	10.0	11.0	11.0
			None	<5	30.0	30.0	10.0	10.0
			Other	<5	29.0	29.0	41.5	41.5
			Protestant	22	52.5	30.0	37.1	14.0
			Undisclosed	<5	42.0	42.0	34.0	34.0
			Total	30	52.1	34.0	35.9	21.0
		Gainsborough	Catholic	<5	18.0	20.0	14.7	15.0
			None	<5	52.5	50.0	6.5	6.0
			Other	<5	21.3	20.0	48.3	37.0
			Protestant	32	35.1	24.0	39.0	22.5
			Undisclosed	8	45.5	32.0	40.6	34.5
			Total	50	36.3	20.0	35.8	22.5
		Glandore & Dunmore	Catholic	11	80.9	70.0	21.8	23.0
			None	<5	10.0	10.0	8.0	8.0
			Other	<5	28.0	28.0	66.0	66.0
			Protestant	<5	106.0	106.0	57.0	57.0
			Undisclosed	<5	35.0	35.0	123.5	123.5
			Total	16	69.0	70.0	38.6	23.5

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Grove Area	Catholic	<5	30.0	30.0	71.0	86.0
			None	<5	77.5	10.0	13.8	16.5
			Other	<5	12.0	12.0	33.0	33.0
			Protestant	29	49.9	32.0	37.4	15.0
			Refused	<5	0.0	0.0	4.0	4.0
			Undisclosed	<5	37.3	0.0	42.7	44.0
			Total		41	48.0	30.0	37.0
		Lower Ligoniel/ Glenbank	Catholic	<5	28.0	16.0	16.5	16.0
			Mixed	<5	70.0	70.0	3.0	3.0
			Other	6	39.0	29.0	35.5	35.5
			Protestant	14	39.1	25.0	23.7	13.5
			Refused	<5	0.0	0.0	4.0	4.0
			Undisclosed	<5	92.0	92.0	32.0	32.0
			Total		27	39.1	28.0	24.1
		Lower Oldpark	Catholic	<5	19.3	0.0	33.7	27.0
			None	<5	16.7	20.0	4.7	4.0
			Other	<5	14.0	20.0	23.7	31.0
			Protestant	26	32.6	24.0	16.5	12.5
			Undisclosed	<5	30.0	30.0	9.0	9.0
			Total		36	28.6	22.0	17.3
		M/S Flats - Carlisle	Catholic	43	59.3	60.0	20.4	13.0
			None	<5	30.0	30.0	20.0	20.0
			Other	5	40.4	34.0	33.4	39.0
			Undisclosed	5	81.6	92.0	29.2	26.0
			Total		54	59.1	60.0	22.4
		Mount Vernon Estate	Other	<5	78.0	78.0	41.0	41.0
			Protestant	13	27.7	20.0	15.5	10.0
			Undisclosed	<5	16.7	20.0	83.0	38.0
			Total		17	28.7	20.0	28.9
		Newington/ Limestone	Catholic	72	69.9	76.0	25.3	17.0
			None	<5	5.0	5.0	2.0	2.0
			Other	5	72.4	20.0	17.2	12.0
			Protestant	<5	94.7	100.0	14.0	9.0
			Undisclosed	11	104.2	110.0	45.2	29.0
			Total		93	73.5	80.0	26.4

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Oldpark	Catholic	71	73.3	54.0	19.4	13.0
			Mixed	<5	106.0	106.0	6.0	6.0
			None	<5	60.0	60.0	24.0	24.0
			Other	5	44.4	10.0	21.2	24.0
			Protestant	<5	6.7	0.0	16.0	14.0
			Refused	<5	120.0	120.0	8.0	8.0
			Undisclosed	16	57.0	49.0	37.6	28.5
			Total		98	67.8	50.0	22.1
		Rosewood/ Crumlin RDA	Catholic	<5	82.0	82.0	30.0	30.0
			Protestant	<5	58.0	58.0	8.0	8.0
			Total		<5	66.0	82.0	15.3
		Ross House Flats/ Mountvernon Flats	None	<5	30.0	30.0	6.5	6.5
			Other	<5	16.7	20.0	10.3	10.0
			Protestant	<5	18.0	20.0	13.0	6.5
			Refused	<5	25.0	25.0	3.5	3.5
			Undisclosed	<5	32.0	32.0	25.0	25.0
			Total		12	22.0	20.0	10.7
		Shore Road	Catholic	<5	42.0	42.0	31.0	31.0
			None	<5	46.0	46.0	18.0	18.0
			Other	9	20.0	14.0	23.2	31.0
			Protestant	44	30.6	20.0	18.1	9.5
			Undisclosed	7	22.9	24.0	40.1	45.0
			Total		63	28.9	20.0	21.5
		Skegoneill/ Ashfield/ Fortwilliam	Catholic	23	74.3	80.0	22.9	10.0
			Mixed	<5	21.0	21.0	17.0	17.0
			None	9	53.3	22.0	11.2	9.0
			Other	10	30.1	16.0	36.3	23.0
			Protestant	36	45.5	20.0	34.5	13.0
			Refused	<5	42.0	42.0	20.0	20.0
			Undisclosed	13	47.2	28.0	57.8	42.0
			Total		94	51.3	23.0	32.3
		Somerton Rd (Sheltered)	Catholic	12	90.9	88.5	53.3	56.0
			Other	<5	46.0	27.0	28.5	29.0
			Protestant	19	92.3	100.0	74.8	80.0
			Undisclosed	9	62.0	46.0	101.3	71.0
			Total		44	81.5	88.5	70.1

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Sunningdale	Catholic	<5	6.0	6.0	19.5	19.5
			None	<5	10.0	10.0	9.0	9.0
			Protestant	31	44.1	20.0	30.7	15.0
			Undisclosed	5	30.8	20.0	12.4	4.0
			Total	39	39.6	20.0	27.2	14.0
		Torrens	Catholic	30	106.1	118.0	37.5	33.5
			Mixed	<5	122.0	122.0	25.0	25.0
			None	<5	74.0	60.0	20.3	18.0
			Other	<5	14.0	14.0	41.0	41.0
			Protestant	<5	109.0	109.0	71.0	71.0
			Undisclosed	7	58.0	54.0	94.7	51.0
			Total	44	94.7	105.0	46.8	37.5
		Upper & Lower Duncairn	Catholic	8	40.5	20.0	14.8	15.5
			None	<5	20.0	20.0	10.0	10.0
			Other	<5	30.0	20.0	14.5	15.0
			Protestant	21	35.8	20.0	11.2	9.0
			Undisclosed	<5	48.7	24.0	30.7	30.0
			Total	37	36.8	20.0	13.9	11.0
		Upper Ligoniel	Catholic	62	69.8	70.0	32.2	23.0
			Other	<5	63.0	63.0	36.0	36.0
			Protestant	<5	14.0	14.0	39.0	39.0
			Refused	<5	16.0	16.0	3.0	3.0
			Undisclosed	7	44.9	0.0	40.1	43.0
			Total	73	65.8	68.0	32.8	25.0
		Westland	None	<5	0.0	0.0	6.0	6.0
			Other	<5	50.0	50.0	11.0	11.0
			Protestant	11	56.4	30.0	10.2	9.0
			Total	13	51.5	30.0	9.9	9.0
		Wheatfield	Other	<5	30.0	30.0	14.5	14.5
			Protestant	23	47.0	20.0	14.2	13.0
			Total	25	45.6	20.0	14.2	13.0
		Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairyknowe	Catholic	118	56.8	40.0	26.1	17.0
			Mixed	<5	30.5	26.0	20.0	19.5
			None	5	82.4	10.0	12.6	14.0
			Other	6	54.7	65.0	13.8	10.5
			Protestant	8	39.3	17.0	23.1	7.5
			Undisclosed	22	86.9	92.0	45.5	30.0
			Total	163	60.1	48.0	27.6	17.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Whitewell/White City	Catholic	<5	95.0	95.0	15.0	15.0
			Mixed	<5	12.0	12.0	15.0	15.0
			Protestant	20	40.3	26.0	21.4	10.5
			Total	23	43.8	30.0	20.6	12.0
	Shankill	Cambrai/Woodvale	Catholic	<5	130.5	130.5	17.5	17.5
			None	<5	20.0	20.0	2.0	2.0
			Other	<5	10.7	10.0	13.3	12.0
			Protestant	124	38.5	22.0	46.6	22.0
			Refused	<5	120.0	120.0	3.0	3.0
			Undisclosed	16	27.0	16.0	24.1	22.0
			Total	147	38.4	20.0	42.5	21.0
		Mid Shankill	Catholic	<5	47.3	70.0	11.7	6.0
			Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	26.0	26.0
			None	<5	40.0	0.0	11.7	12.0
			Other	7	17.4	0.0	17.6	6.0
			Protestant	168	42.2	26.0	24.7	12.0
			Undisclosed	21	30.8	20.0	12.2	6.0
			Total	203	40.0	22.0	22.8	11.0
		Tudor	Other	<5	94.7	114.0	20.0	15.0
			Protestant	11	59.6	30.0	34.9	23.0
			Undisclosed	<5	169.0	169.0	60.5	60.5
			Total	16	79.9	67.0	35.3	29.0
	Belfast North Constituency Total	Catholic	1492	66.3	60.0	29.2	17.0	
		Mixed	27	60.1	70.0	17.8	18.0	
		None	140	48.5	28.0	12.6	11.0	
		Other	193	50.1	30.0	31.1	26.0	
		Protestant	1403	46.5	30.0	32.7	15.0	
		Refused	18	58.9	41.0	12.1	6.0	
		Undisclosed	470	58.0	42.0	42.8	34.0	
		Total	3743	56.2	36.0	31.5	18.0	
Belfast South	Castlereagh	Belvoir	Catholic	6	62.3	68.0	32.3	30.5
			Mixed	<5	40.0	40.0	12.0	12.0
			None	7	72.0	90.0	18.6	17.0
			Other	14	44.0	28.0	28.9	14.5
			Protestant	150	47.6	30.0	38.8	27.0
			Undisclosed	16	32.9	27.0	55.6	42.5
			Total	194	47.5	30.0	38.4	27.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Bests Hill	None	<5	320.0	320.0	15.0	15.0
			Other	<5	80.0	80.0	79.0	79.0
			Protestant	6	43.3	26.0	27.7	23.0
			Undisclosed	<5	102.0	102.0	28.0	28.0
			Total	10	84.2	69.0	36.7	24.5
		Milltown/Shaws Bridge	Protestant	<5	34.0	34.0	68.0	68.0
			Total	<5	34.0	34.0	68.0	68.0
		Newtownbreda Village	Catholic	33	58.9	24.0	30.8	24.0
			Mixed	<5	75.0	75.0	10.5	10.5
			None	<5	62.3	70.0	14.0	11.0
			Other	13	43.8	24.0	35.2	37.0
			Protestant	35	29.9	22.0	73.1	43.0
			Refused	<5	0.0	0.0	10.0	10.0
			Undisclosed	12	52.7	27.0	50.7	43.0
			Total	99	45.7	24.0	47.6	28.0
	East Belfast	Rosebery	Catholic	64	42.2	20.0	24.4	21.0
			Mixed	<5	33.0	21.0	11.0	14.0
			None	24	59.4	21.0	15.1	11.0
			Other	55	50.7	34.0	26.9	21.0
			Protestant	213	46.1	26.0	24.5	15.0
			Refused	<5	46.0	46.0	20.5	20.5
			Undisclosed	23	29.4	10.0	24.7	23.0
			Total	385	45.8	24.0	24.1	15.0
	South Belfast	Annadale	Catholic	6	44.0	32.0	27.5	16.5
			Mixed	<5	20.0	20.0	5.0	5.0
			None	7	74.6	32.0	18.7	14.0
			Other	15	57.3	40.0	28.5	13.0
			Protestant	20	46.4	25.0	25.8	12.5
			Undisclosed	8	41.0	26.0	29.9	27.0
			Total	57	51.2	30.0	26.0	14.0
		Cromac	Catholic	69	65.1	50.0	43.7	31.0
			None	<5	70.0	70.0	24.0	24.0
			Other	6	61.0	56.0	52.5	53.5
			Protestant	<5	69.0	69.0	36.8	41.5
			Undisclosed	6	28.3	20.0	76.5	25.5
			Total	86	62.5	50.0	46.0	34.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Donegall Pass	Catholic	<5	36.7	20.0	7.7	9.0
			None	5	65.2	96.0	13.8	4.0
			Other	13	83.0	100.0	29.7	27.0
			Protestant	52	50.3	30.0	20.6	13.0
			Undisclosed	<5	30.7	20.0	18.3	15.0
			Total	76	55.5	37.0	21.1	14.0
			Donegall Road	Catholic	13	15.8	10.0	14.4
		Mixed		<5	68.0	68.0	54.5	54.5
		None		13	38.2	20.0	12.2	9.0
		Other		21	42.4	24.0	27.3	14.0
		Protestant		131	34.6	20.0	24.8	17.0
		Refused		<5	70.0	70.0	4.0	4.0
		Undisclosed		24	48.7	31.0	49.6	21.0
		Total		205	36.6	20.0	26.7	15.0
		Finaghy	Catholic	32	53.5	36.0	35.0	25.0
			Mixed	5	61.6	34.0	37.4	31.0
			None	<5	64.7	50.0	13.3	12.0
			Other	28	56.0	65.0	36.1	34.5
			Protestant	106	37.8	23.0	40.4	20.5
			Refused	<5	18.0	18.0	13.0	13.0
			Undisclosed	23	47.5	30.0	32.2	25.0
			Total	199	44.8	30.0	37.2	24.0
		Flush Park Belfast	Catholic	16	55.4	28.0	40.9	22.5
			Mixed	<5	64.0	64.0	20.0	20.0
			Other	<5	75.0	75.0	69.5	69.5
			Protestant	13	38.3	24.0	55.2	31.0
			Undisclosed	7	30.1	27.0	91.3	37.0
			Total	39	46.4	32.0	55.6	34.0
		Lower Ormeau	Catholic	166	66.5	44.0	31.2	22.0
			Mixed	<5	110.0	110.0	12.0	12.0
			None	10	71.4	45.0	14.4	14.0
			Other	53	65.8	80.0	28.4	25.0
			Protestant	17	48.5	30.0	44.7	31.0
			Refused	<5	70.0	70.0	3.0	3.0
			Undisclosed	27	71.4	90.0	30.4	27.0
			Total	275	66.1	54.0	30.6	23.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Sandy Row	None	6	42.3	37.0	15.3	12.0
			Other	<5	58.0	58.0	28.5	28.5
			Protestant	64	49.5	32.0	25.4	11.0
			Undisclosed	6	49.7	21.0	16.8	17.5
			Total	78	49.2	30.0	24.0	12.0
		Stranmillis	Catholic	13	74.5	20.0	28.2	22.0
			Mixed	<5	57.3	20.0	17.7	16.0
			None	<5	50.0	50.0	9.5	9.5
			Other	9	55.8	40.0	20.4	19.0
			Protestant	<5	7.3	0.0	43.3	25.0
			Undisclosed	5	37.6	20.0	27.4	24.0
			Total	35	55.8	20.0	25.4	19.0
		Taughmonagh	Catholic	<5	15.0	15.0	100.5	100.5
			None	<5	91.3	130.0	5.0	3.0
			Other	<5	59.0	59.0	40.5	40.5
			Protestant	53	34.8	28.0	23.6	12.0
			Refused	<5	120.0	120.0	6.0	6.0
			Undisclosed	5	40.8	30.0	30.6	24.0
			Total	66	39.2	30.0	25.9	12.0
		Ulsterville	Catholic	159	71.9	48.0	37.2	25.0
			Mixed	12	61.0	65.0	13.3	16.5
			None	35	45.9	20.0	13.6	13.0
			Other	169	61.5	70.0	27.9	21.0
			Protestant	115	66.4	40.0	35.5	16.0
			Refused	6	57.0	60.0	15.5	16.0
			Undisclosed	353	25.2	0.0	19.3	11.0
			Total	849	48.3	20.0	26.2	14.0
		Upper Ormeau	Catholic	192	53.9	30.0	43.0	24.5
			Mixed	5	54.0	50.0	12.8	13.0
			None	25	42.6	34.0	15.4	13.0
			Other	69	69.8	70.0	31.7	19.0
			Protestant	73	76.8	50.0	29.4	19.0
			Refused	<5	48.0	32.0	18.3	19.0
			Undisclosed	42	67.0	62.0	53.6	29.5
			Total	409	61.3	40.0	37.5	22.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014					
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months	
	Belfast South Constituency Total		Catholic	774	60.1	36.0	36.0	23.0	
			Mixed	37	57.7	50.0	18.6	15.0	
			None	145	55.6	34.0	14.5	12.0	
			Other	473	60.2	56.0	29.8	22.0	
			Protestant	1056	47.6	30.0	32.0	18.0	
			Refused	17	51.4	32.0	14.0	13.0	
			Undisclosed	561	34.5	0.0	28.0	14.0	
			Total	3063	50.8	30.0	30.8	18.0	
Belfast South/ Strangford	Castlereagh	Carryduff	Catholic	22	60.8	31.5	24.0	19.0	
			Mixed	<5	134.0	0.0	13.3	12.0	
			None	<5	60.0	40.0	3.7	2.0	
			Other	6	51.3	46.0	37.5	34.5	
			Protestant	46	50.6	27.0	24.6	12.5	
			Undisclosed	<5	58.0	58.0	80.0	80.0	
			Total	81	57.0	30.0	24.9	13.0	
				Belfast South/Strangford Constituency Total		Catholic	22	60.8	31.5
Mixed	<5	134.0				0.0	13.3	12.0	
None	<5	60.0				40.0	3.7	2.0	
Other	6	51.3				46.0	37.5	34.5	
Protestant	46	50.6				27.0	24.6	12.5	
Undisclosed	<5	58.0				58.0	80.0	80.0	
Total	81	57.0				30.0	24.9	13.0	
Belfast West	Lisburn Antrim Street	Areema				Catholic	68	89.3	74.0
			None	<5	103.3	130.0	19.3	22.0	
			Other	9	57.8	82.0	28.2	33.0	
			Protestant	15	65.7	70.0	34.7	18.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	30.0	20.0	5.7	7.0	
			Total	98	81.4	72.0	29.0	19.0	
			Beattie	Catholic	12	174.0	145.0	24.6	9.5
				Mixed	<5	12.0	12.0	3.0	3.0
				Protestant	<5	63.3	40.0	51.0	36.0
				Undisclosed	7	41.4	20.0	10.1	7.0
Total	23	112.2	80.0	22.7	7.0				

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
	Lisburn Dairy Farm	Twinbrook-Poleglass	Catholic	591	84.2	88.0	30.0	22.0
			Mixed	<5	71.0	71.0	19.5	19.5
			None	<5	25.0	25.0	7.5	7.5
			Other	7	102.6	120.0	32.0	33.0
			Protestant	5	34.8	0.0	20.2	26.0
			Refused	<5	20.0	20.0	12.0	12.0
			Undisclosed	59	73.2	60.0	17.7	18.0
			Total	667	82.8	84.0	28.8	22.0
	Shankill	Agnes Street	Protestant	<5	36.0	26.0	47.7	50.0
			Undisclosed	<5	48.0	48.0	72.0	72.0
			Total	<5	39.0	37.0	53.8	61.0
	Ballygomartin/ West Circular		Other	<5	134.0	134.0	33.0	33.0
			Protestant	38	34.2	27.0	43.9	13.0
			Undisclosed	<5	53.0	41.0	14.3	13.0
			Total	44	40.5	28.0	40.7	13.0
	Brown Square		Other	<5	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.5
			Protestant	<5	22.0	15.0	46.3	11.0
			Total	6	14.7	5.0	31.3	9.0
	Dover		Protestant	10	37.4	20.0	17.2	12.0
			Undisclosed	<5	10.0	10.0	17.5	17.5
			Total	12	32.8	20.0	17.3	14.0
	Florence/ Hopewell		None	5	32.0	30.0	10.0	10.0
			Other	5	50.4	30.0	27.6	5.0
			Protestant	51	26.4	20.0	13.6	10.0
			Undisclosed	9	21.8	20.0	11.9	12.0
			Total	70	27.9	20.0	14.1	10.0
	Glencairn		Catholic	<5	0.0	0.0	5.0	5.0
			None	<5	50.0	50.0	9.5	9.5
			Other	6	54.5	32.5	15.3	14.0
			Protestant	59	40.2	30.0	24.8	14.0
			Undisclosed	<5	55.3	30.0	16.0	14.0
			Total	71	41.8	30.0	23.0	14.0
	Highfield		Other	<5	90.0	90.0	2.0	2.0
			Protestant	39	28.1	20.0	18.3	11.0
			Undisclosed	5	12.0	20.0	14.0	12.0
			Total	45	27.7	20.0	17.4	11.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Lawnbrook	Other	<5	15.0	15.0	18.5	18.5
			Protestant	32	42.7	30.0	30.9	15.0
			Total	34	41.1	30.0	30.1	15.0
		Springmartin	Other	<5	20.0	20.0	13.0	13.0
			Protestant	24	35.2	22.0	24.1	10.0
			Undisclosed	<5	40.7	40.0	17.7	20.0
			Total	28	35.2	23.0	23.0	11.5
		Upper Shankill	Other	<5	0.0	0.0	12.0	12.0
			Protestant	57	35.2	20.0	25.9	18.0
			Undisclosed	<5	5.0	5.0	23.0	23.0
			Total	62	32.6	16.0	25.5	18.5
	West Belfast	Andersonstown	Catholic	1301	83.7	80.0	40.7	29.0
			Mixed	<5	64.0	64.0	37.0	37.0
			None	11	65.1	50.0	14.7	14.0
			Other	33	75.7	72.0	35.7	30.0
			Protestant	12	135.8	125.0	26.5	14.0
			Undisclosed	111	66.8	50.0	34.6	27.0
			Total	1469	82.5	80.0	39.8	27.0
		Ardmoulin	Catholic	<5	40.0	40.0	16.0	16.0
			Undisclosed	<5	48.8	22.0	36.0	32.5
			Total	5	47.0	24.0	32.0	22.0
		Ballymurphy	Catholic	22	96.3	116.0	41.5	25.0
			None	<5	70.0	70.0	5.0	5.0
			Other	<5	100.0	100.0	21.0	21.0
			Undisclosed	<5	158.0	158.0	71.0	71.0
			Total	25	97.8	110.0	40.4	24.0
		Beechmount	Catholic	141	89.9	94.0	45.3	37.0
			Mixed	<5	140.0	140.0	4.0	4.0
			None	<5	6.7	10.0	11.0	10.0
			Other	6	75.0	92.0	20.2	11.5
			Protestant	<5	110.0	110.0	78.0	78.0
			Undisclosed	11	73.6	70.0	76.7	10.0
			Total	163	87.1	90.0	45.8	34.0
		Cavendish Street	Catholic	13	74.6	62.0	57.2	55.0
			Other	<5	80.0	80.0	14.0	14.0
			Undisclosed	<5	70.0	70.0	20.0	20.0
			Total	16	75.0	70.0	49.5	42.0
		Dermotthill	Catholic	<5	120.0	120.0	115.0	115.0
			Total	<5	120.0	120.0	115.0	115.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		Divis Complex	Catholic	18	65.7	35.0	45.4	48.0
			Mixed	<5	36.0	36.0	18.0	18.0
			Other	<5	111.0	111.0	58.0	58.0
			Undisclosed	<5	41.0	41.0	20.5	20.5
			Total		23	66.2	36.0	43.1
		Falls Court/ Clonard Cres	Catholic	112	86.6	100.0	45.9	33.5
			None	<5	20.0	20.0	11.0	11.0
			Other	<5	113.3	118.0	105.3	71.0
			Protestant	<5	15.0	15.0	37.5	37.5
			Undisclosed	6	56.0	52.0	23.5	22.5
			Total		124	84.1	100.0	45.9
		Gransha/ Downfine	Catholic	5	95.2	122.0	35.2	27.0
			Total		5	95.2	122.0	35.2
		Grosvenor Road	Catholic	182	66.8	50.0	30.4	19.0
			None	6	28.3	5.0	7.5	5.5
			Other	7	54.0	20.0	23.7	22.0
			Protestant	5	86.2	90.0	16.6	12.0
			Undisclosed	12	48.7	41.0	41.6	30.5
			Total		212	64.7	50.0	29.8
		Hamill St/John St	Catholic	22	90.4	100.0	43.1	21.0
			None	<5	66.7	20.0	8.7	9.0
			Other	<5	200.0	200.0	63.0	63.0
			Undisclosed	5	77.8	90.0	28.8	20.0
			Total		32	93.0	100.0	38.9
		Hannahstown	Catholic	7	96.6	120.0	14.6	18.0
			Other	<5	20.0	20.0	7.0	7.0
			Protestant	<5	40.0	40.0	22.0	22.0
			Undisclosed	<5	0.0	0.0	8.0	8.0
			Total		10	73.6	48.0	13.9
		Lower Suffolk	Catholic	12	37.2	22.0	10.5	8.5
			Mixed	<5	50.0	50.0	89.0	89.0
			Other	<5	100.0	100.0	19.0	19.0
			Protestant	6	70.7	62.0	31.2	19.0
			Undisclosed	<5	0.0	0.0	8.0	8.0
			Total		21	48.6	30.0	20.4
		Moyard	Catholic	18	99.6	117.0	42.3	30.0
			Undisclosed	<5	80.0	80.0	22.0	22.0
			Total		19	98.5	114.0	41.3

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months
		New Barnsley	Catholic	51	95.7	122.0	38.7	25.0
			Total	51	95.7	122.0	38.7	25.0
		Rockmount	Catholic	<5	73.5	66.0	23.0	23.0
			None	<5	20.0	20.0	5.0	5.0
			Total	5	62.8	20.0	19.4	13.0
		Rodan Street	Catholic	16	82.0	67.0	34.0	27.5
			Other	<5	125.0	125.0	44.5	44.5
			Undisclosed	<5	41.0	41.0	25.5	25.5
			Total	20	82.2	67.0	34.2	27.0
		Springfield Park	Catholic	9	101.8	126.0	59.7	62.0
			Total	9	101.8	126.0	59.7	62.0
		Springfield Road	Catholic	119	82.4	90.0	36.1	23.0
			None	<5	55.0	55.0	11.5	11.5
			Other	<5	45.0	45.0	8.0	8.0
			Protestant	<5	90.0	90.0	12.0	12.0
			Refused	<5	110.0	110.0	7.0	7.0
			Undisclosed	6	91.7	91.0	70.0	25.5
			Total	132	82.2	90.0	36.2	23.0
		Springhill	Catholic	38	100.9	112.0	38.9	35.0
			Protestant	<5	152.0	152.0	27.0	27.0
			Undisclosed	<5	72.0	72.0	25.0	25.0
			Total	40	101.5	112.0	38.3	30.5
		Springvale	Catholic	9	86.9	58.0	57.8	66.0
			Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	7.0	7.0
			Total	10	78.2	54.0	52.7	44.5
		St James	Catholic	105	81.3	90.0	48.0	35.0
			Other	7	19.1	0.0	23.3	26.0
			Undisclosed	13	62.2	30.0	48.2	34.0
			Total	125	75.8	74.0	46.6	33.0
		Turf Lodge	Catholic	80	76.3	68.0	40.2	30.0
			Other	<5	114.0	114.0	40.0	40.0
			Undisclosed	6	62.3	60.0	44.3	22.0
			Total	87	75.8	70.0	40.5	29.0
		Westrock	Catholic	19	98.1	110.0	42.8	35.0
			Undisclosed	<5	32.0	32.0	29.0	29.0
			Total	20	94.8	91.0	42.2	34.5

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Waiting List as at 31st March 2014					
				Number	Mean av Points	Median av Points	Mean av Months	Median av Months	
		Whiterock	Catholic	46	93.6	115.0	34.8	25.5	
			Other	<5	96.0	96.0	59.0	59.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	125.3	120.0	25.3	27.0	
			Total	50	95.6	115.0	34.7	26.5	
	Belfast West Constituency Total		Catholic	3023	84.0	82.0	38.0	26.0	
			Mixed	8	55.5	43.0	24.6	14.0	
			None	40	48.7	25.0	11.3	9.5	
			Other	107	70.8	86.0	30.9	26.0	
			Protestant	370	41.2	23.0	26.2	14.0	
			Refused	<5	65.0	65.0	9.5	9.5	
			Undisclosed	288	62.4	48.0	31.0	24.0	
			Total	3838	77.4	70.0	35.8	24.0	
Belfast West/ North	Shankill	Ainsworth	Other	<5	45.0	45.0	8.5	8.5	
				Protestant	34	56.9	49.0	41.0	17.0
				Undisclosed	7	35.1	20.0	19.4	13.0
				Total	43	52.8	46.0	36.0	15.0
		Twaddell/Upper Woodvale	Mixed	<5	92.0	92.0	26.0	26.0	
			Protestant	60	59.6	68.0	52.6	28.0	
			Undisclosed	7	9.7	0.0	39.1	15.0	
			Total	68	54.9	40.0	50.8	27.0	
	Belfast West/North Constituency Total		Mixed	<5	92.0	92.0	26.0	26.0	
			Other	<5	45.0	45.0	8.5	8.5	
			Protestant	94	58.6	63.0	48.4	19.5	
			Undisclosed	14	22.4	10.0	29.3	13.5	
			Total	111	54.1	46.0	45.1	18.0	

Table C: Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013 by Mean & Median Average Points & Months on the Waiting List at the date of Allocation broken down by Religion and Belfast Assembly Constituencies

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
Belfast East	Castlereagh	Ballybeen	Catholic	<5	120.0	120.0	7.0	7.0
			Other	<5	90.0	90.0	3.0	3.0
			Protestant	60	101.0	105.5	23.2	15.5
			Refused	<5	140.0	140.0	2.0	2.0
			Undisclosed	<5	91.3	90.0	46.3	42.0
			Total	66	101.3	102.0	23.4	14.5

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Branial	Catholic	<5	0.0	0.0	14.0	14.0
			Other	<5	120.0	120.0	12.0	12.0
			Protestant	29	126.3	120.0	14.9	11.0
			Undisclosed	<5	122.7	102.0	34.7	31.0
			Total	34	122.1	120.0	16.5	12.0
		Brooklands	Protestant	<5	130.3	133.5	10.5	7.0
			Undisclosed	<5	142.0	142.0	3.0	3.0
			Total	5	132.6	137.0	9.0	3.0
		Castlereagh	Catholic	<5	102.0	102.0	10.0	10.0
			None	<5	112.0	112.0	2.0	2.0
			Protestant	10	96.6	104.0	37.0	26.5
			Undisclosed	<5	100.0	100.0	20.0	20.0
			Total	13	98.5	102.0	30.9	20.0
		Coronation Park	Protestant	<5	22.0	22.0	27.0	27.0
			Total	<5	22.0	22.0	27.0	27.0
		Downshire Park	Undisclosed	<5	170.0	170.0	23.0	23.0
			Total	<5	170.0	170.0	23.0	23.0
		Galway Drive/ Mews	None	<5	70.0	70.0	2.0	2.0
			Protestant	<5	90.7	100.0	6.3	6.0
			Undisclosed	<5	108.5	108.5	35.0	35.0
			Total	6	93.2	94.5	15.2	4.0
		Mawhinney Park	Protestant	<5	140.0	140.0	5.0	5.0
			Total	<5	140.0	140.0	5.0	5.0
		Moatview Park	Other	<5	135.0	135.0	14.5	14.5
			Protestant	6	157.0	131.0	20.3	12.5
			Total	8	151.5	131.0	18.9	14.0
		Sunderland Road	Other	<5	50.0	50.0	7.0	7.0
			Total	<5	50.0	50.0	7.0	7.0
		Tullycarnet	None	<5	120.0	120.0	8.0	8.0
			Protestant	21	103.8	90.0	7.7	6.0
			Undisclosed	<5	115.0	115.0	18.0	18.0
			Total	24	105.4	95.0	8.6	7.0
		Vionville Rural	Protestant	<5	80.0	80.0	14.0	14.0
			Total	<5	80.0	80.0	14.0	14.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
	East Belfast	Albertbridge Rd.	Catholic	<5	20.0	20.0	10.0	10.0
			None	<5	50.0	50.0	11.0	11.0
			Other	<5	118.0	118.0	35.0	35.0
			Protestant	26	112.6	95.0	17.8	12.0
			Undisclosed	<5	102.0	90.0	17.0	19.0
			Total	33	107.3	94.0	18.3	13.0
		Ardcarn	Protestant	9	114.2	120.0	39.9	16.0
			Undisclosed	<5	86.0	86.0	22.5	22.5
			Total	11	109.1	118.0	36.7	17.0
		Ashfield	Protestant	<5	110.0	110.0	25.5	25.5
			Total	<5	110.0	110.0	25.5	25.5
		Ballyhackamore	Other	<5	100.0	100.0	8.0	8.0
			Protestant	13	99.1	94.0	17.1	5.0
			Undisclosed	<5	74.0	74.0	12.0	12.0
			Total	15	97.5	94.0	16.1	6.0
		Bloomfield/ Ravenscroft	Other	6	78.3	75.0	32.8	15.0
			Protestant	31	106.0	120.0	21.2	8.0
			Undisclosed	<5	110.0	110.0	11.0	11.0
			Total	38	101.7	120.0	22.7	9.0
		Clarawood	None	<5	90.0	90.0	3.0	3.0
			Protestant	17	96.0	92.0	23.9	20.0
			Total	18	95.7	91.0	22.7	17.5
		Dundela	None	<5	80.0	80.0	8.0	8.0
			Other	<5	96.0	102.0	27.0	26.0
			Protestant	8	75.0	70.0	62.4	30.0
			Undisclosed	<5	134.0	134.0	19.0	19.0
			Total	13	84.8	80.0	46.7	26.0
		Edenvale	Protestant	<5	214.5	214.5	2.0	2.0
			Total	<5	214.5	214.5	2.0	2.0
		Garnerville	Protestant	6	95.0	114.0	14.5	11.5
			Total	6	95.0	114.0	14.5	11.5
		Inverary	Catholic	<5	96.0	96.0	20.0	20.0
			None	<5	80.0	80.0	10.0	10.0
			Protestant	6	103.0	115.0	14.7	9.0
			Undisclosed	<5	220.0	220.0	11.0	11.0
			Total	11	120.9	110.0	14.5	12.0
		Knocknagoney	Protestant	9	78.1	99.0	19.8	13.0
			Total	9	78.1	99.0	19.8	13.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Lwr Beersbridge/ The Mount	Catholic	<5	110.0	110.0	13.0	13.0
			Mixed	<5	100.0	100.0	6.0	6.0
			Other	<5	82.0	82.0	31.0	31.0
			Protestant	22	115.5	100.0	17.5	14.0
			Undisclosed	<5	90.0	90.0	22.0	22.0
			Total		26	112.5	100.0	17.5
		Newtownards Road	Catholic	<5	63.5	60.0	10.0	5.0
			Mixed	<5	30.0	30.0	7.0	7.0
			None	<5	140.0	140.0	8.0	8.0
			Other	<5	167.3	130.0	20.0	20.0
			Protestant	72	112.8	110.0	14.2	9.0
			Undisclosed	11	120.7	102.0	19.6	9.0
			Total		92	112.8	108.0	14.7
		Short Strand	Catholic	17	171.5	162.0	38.1	23.0
			Other	<5	131.0	131.0	25.5	25.5
			Protestant	<5	170.0	170.0	12.0	12.0
			Undisclosed	<5	142.0	142.0	24.0	24.0
			Total		21	166.2	160.0	35.0
		Summerhill	Protestant	<5	80.0	80.0	5.0	5.0
			Total		<5	80.0	80.0	5.0
		Sydenham/ Sandbrook/ Lisavon	Catholic	<5	10.0	10.0	14.0	14.0
			Mixed	<5	116.0	116.0	6.0	6.0
			None	5	98.0	100.0	6.6	5.0
			Other	<5	94.0	94.0	6.0	6.0
			Protestant	32	124.1	119.0	14.3	8.0
			Undisclosed	6	131.7	111.0	23.3	18.5
			Total		46	118.9	113.0	14.3
		Wandsworth	None	<5	120.0	120.0	11.0	11.0
			Other	<5	67.0	67.0	17.0	17.0
			Protestant	<5	93.5	93.5	2.0	2.0
			Undisclosed	<5	123.0	123.0	1.0	1.0
			Total		6	94.0	121.5	8.3

				Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
	Belfast East Constituency Total		Catholic	29	128.4	120.0	27.4	15.0
		Mixed	<5	82.0	100.0	6.3	6.0	
		None	14	96.6	95.0	6.9	8.0	
		Other	26	103.8	104.0	22.7	14.5	
		Protestant	395	109.4	110.0	18.9	11.0	
		Refused	<5	140.0	140.0	2.0	2.0	
		Undisclosed	43	121.2	102.0	22.3	19.0	
		Total	511	110.7	110.0	19.5	11.0	
Belfast West	Lisburn Antrim Street	Areema	Catholic	7	247.4	290.0	11.3	9.0
			Mixed	<5	110.0	110.0	1.0	1.0
			Protestant	<5	178.0	178.0	1.5	1.5
			Undisclosed	<5	212.0	212.0	12.5	12.5
			Total	12	218.5	230.0	9.0	7.5
		Beattie	Catholic	<5	111.5	111.5	8.5	8.5
			Protestant	<5	103.0	106.0	10.3	6.0
			Total	6	105.8	108.0	9.7	7.0
	Lisburn Dairy Farm	Twinbrook- Poleglass	Catholic	107	180.4	182.0	27.6	23.0
			Other	<5	162.7	180.0	56.3	57.0
			Undisclosed	5	166.8	180.0	9.2	9.0
			Total	115	179.4	180.0	27.5	23.0
	Shankill	Agnes Street	Protestant	<5	70.0	70.0	2.0	2.0
			Undisclosed	<5	100.0	100.0	7.0	7.0
			Total	<5	90.0	80.0	5.3	5.0
		Ballygomartin/ West Circular	Protestant	7	118.6	120.0	31.7	16.0
			Total	7	118.6	120.0	31.7	16.0
		Brown Square	Protestant	5	64.8	80.0	19.0	12.0
			Total	5	64.8	80.0	19.0	12.0
		Dover	Catholic	<5	142.0	142.0	28.0	28.0
			Other	<5	134.0	134.0	34.0	34.0
			Protestant	5	78.0	88.0	17.8	13.0
			Undisclosed	<5	110.0	110.0	3.0	3.0
			Total	9	98.4	100.0	17.4	13.0
		Florence/ Hopewell	Other	<5	10.0	10.0	1.0	1.0
			Protestant	26	76.7	50.0	14.2	9.5
			Undisclosed	5	58.0	50.0	10.0	7.0
			Total	32	71.7	50.0	13.2	8.5

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Glencairn	Other	<5	116.0	116.0	23.0	23.0
			Protestant	31	83.4	90.0	10.3	9.0
			Refused	<5	90.0	90.0	11.0	11.0
			Undisclosed	6	78.3	90.0	11.7	10.0
			Total	40	84.5	90.0	11.2	9.0
		Highfield	Other	<5	0.0	0.0	14.0	14.0
			Protestant	26	89.3	102.0	15.0	8.5
			Undisclosed	<5	75.0	75.0	15.0	15.0
			Total	29	85.2	100.0	15.0	11.0
		Lawnbrook	Other	<5	114.0	114.0	52.0	52.0
			Protestant	<5	119.0	118.0	19.8	18.0
			Undisclosed	<5	90.0	90.0	12.0	12.0
			Total	6	113.3	113.0	23.8	18.0
		Springmartin	Protestant	8	82.5	89.0	26.4	16.0
			Undisclosed	<5	290.0	290.0	5.0	5.0
			Total	9	105.6	102.0	24.0	12.0
		Upper Shankill	Other	<5	25.0	25.0	17.5	17.5
			Protestant	8	87.8	90.0	10.5	7.0
			Total	10	75.2	80.0	11.9	11.0
	West Belfast	Andersonstown	Catholic	194	180.6	182.0	37.7	29.0
			Mixed	<5	182.0	182.0	29.0	29.0
			Other	9	172.0	180.0	24.0	27.0
			Protestant	<5	300.0	300.0	9.0	9.0
			Undisclosed	11	191.5	186.0	20.5	13.0
			Total	216	181.3	182.0	36.1	28.0
		Ardmoulin	Catholic	<5	194.0	194.0	45.0	45.0
			Total	<5	194.0	194.0	45.0	45.0
		Ballymurphy	Catholic	<5	172.7	180.0	31.0	16.0
			Mixed	<5	194.0	194.0	39.0	39.0
			Total	<5	178.0	184.0	33.0	27.5
		Beechmount	Catholic	18	184.1	176.0	41.0	35.5
			Protestant	<5	122.0	122.0	26.5	26.5
			Undisclosed	<5	200.0	200.0	8.0	8.0
			Total	21	179.0	174.0	38.0	35.0
		Divis Complex	Catholic	16	160.3	163.0	31.2	32.0
			Undisclosed	<5	332.0	332.0	22.0	22.0
			Total	17	170.4	174.0	30.6	30.0
		Falls Court/ Clonard Cres	Catholic	17	166.9	170.0	32.7	32.0
			Total	17	166.9	170.0	32.7	32.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Gransha/ Downfine	Catholic	<5	132.0	132.0	18.0	18.0
			Total	<5	132.0	132.0	18.0	18.0
		Grosvenor Road	Catholic	12	150.1	147.0	25.4	21.5
			Other	<5	126.0	126.0	52.0	52.0
			Undisclosed	<5	110.0	110.0	9.0	9.0
			Total	14	145.5	141.0	26.1	21.5
		Hamill St/John St	Catholic	8	200.3	183.0	19.3	11.5
			Protestant	<5	311.3	310.0	6.7	5.0
			Undisclosed	<5	138.0	120.0	45.0	39.0
			Total	14	210.7	189.0	22.1	12.0
		Lower Suffolk	Catholic	<5	93.0	93.0	8.5	8.5
			Mixed	<5	90.0	90.0	6.0	6.0
			None	<5	150.0	150.0	11.0	11.0
			Protestant	8	104.5	108.0	15.0	8.5
			Undisclosed	<5	90.0	90.0	2.0	2.0
			Total	13	104.0	106.0	12.0	7.0
		Moyard	Catholic	<5	195.3	190.0	51.0	58.0
			Total	<5	195.3	190.0	51.0	58.0
		New Barnsley	Catholic	<5	201.0	201.0	48.0	48.0
			Total	<5	201.0	201.0	48.0	48.0
		Roden Street	Catholic	<5	176.0	176.0	62.0	62.0
			Total	<5	176.0	176.0	62.0	62.0
		Springfield Road	Catholic	16	167.6	159.0	37.4	32.5
			Protestant	<5	320.0	320.0	9.0	9.0
			Undisclosed	<5	118.0	118.0	4.0	4.0
			Total	19	170.4	158.0	32.4	29.0
		Springhill	Catholic	9	190.0	198.0	49.0	49.0
			Total	9	190.0	198.0	49.0	49.0
		Springvale	Catholic	<5	172.5	170.0	65.3	71.0
			Total	<5	172.5	170.0	65.3	71.0
		St James	Catholic	29	175.2	174.0	49.8	46.0
			None	<5	110.0	110.0	22.0	22.0
			Other	<5	176.0	176.0	18.0	18.0
			Undisclosed	<5	230.3	205.0	38.3	3.0
			Total	35	178.1	180.0	46.2	35.0
		Turf Lodge	Catholic	11	176.9	180.0	45.2	39.0
			Total	11	176.9	180.0	45.2	39.0
		Westrock	Catholic	5	100.8	100.0	21.4	4.0
			Total	5	100.8	100.0	21.4	4.0

				Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013					
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths	
		Whiterock	Catholic	<5	221.0	192.0	21.8	20.0	
			None	<5	140.0	140.0	10.0	10.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	199.0	199.0	37.0	37.0	
			Total		7	203.1	194.0	24.4	14.0
	Belfast West Constituency Total		Catholic	473	178.1	180.0	35.0	29.0	
			Mixed	<5	144.0	146.0	18.8	17.5	
			None	<5	133.3	140.0	14.3	11.0	
			Other	23	132.8	140.0	28.5	25.0	
			Protestant	142	96.9	100.0	14.9	10.0	
			Refused	<5	90.0	90.0	11.0	11.0	
			Undisclosed	51	147.9	126.0	16.8	9.0	
			Total		697	157.3	170.0	29.2	22.0
Belfast East/South	Castlereagh	Cregagh Castlereagh	Catholic	<5	137.0	137.0	63.0	63.0	
			None	<5	85.0	85.0	4.0	4.0	
			Other	<5	66.7	80.0	24.0	20.0	
			Protestant	34	120.0	120.0	20.4	13.5	
			Undisclosed	7	155.1	90.0	31.6	31.0	
			Total	46	121.5	111.0	22.9	14.0	
	East Belfast	Willowfield/Upper Castlereagh Road	Catholic	<5	95.0	95.0	9.0	9.0	
			None	<5	88.0	82.0	4.0	4.0	
			Other	<5	100.0	100.0	3.0	3.0	
			Protestant	19	130.8	110.0	18.2	14.0	
			Undisclosed	5	108.8	108.0	38.6	47.0	
			Total	30	119.5	109.0	19.0	13.5	
	Belfast East/South Constituency Total		Catholic	<5	109.0	100.0	27.0	14.0	
			None	<5	87.3	83.5	4.0	4.0	
			Other	<5	75.0	85.0	18.8	11.5	
			Protestant	53	123.9	116.0	19.6	14.0	
			Undisclosed	12	135.8	104.0	34.5	32.5	
			Total	76	120.7	110.0	21.4	14.0	
Belfast North	Newtown-abbey 1	Abbey Glen	Other	<5	114.0	114.0	41.0	41.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	140.0	140.0	15.0	15.0	
			Total	<5	127.0	127.0	28.0	28.0	
			Abbeyville	Catholic	<5	135.0	140.0	39.3	17.5
				Other	<5	144.5	144.5	5.5	5.5
				Protestant	<5	132.0	118.0	29.7	15.0
				Undisclosed	<5	148.0	140.0	20.3	14.0
				Total	12	139.1	140.0	26.5	14.5

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013					
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths	
		Bawnmore/Old Mill Drive	Catholic	25	122.2	126.0	25.6	21.0	
			Protestant	<5	161.3	160.0	20.7	13.0	
			Undisclosed	6	133.3	138.0	11.5	10.0	
			Total	34	127.6	132.0	22.6	13.0	
		Longlands	Catholic	5	127.2	122.0	18.4	18.0	
			None	<5	44.0	44.0	4.0	4.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	140.0	140.0	7.0	7.0	
			Total	8	120.0	131.0	13.8	7.0	
		Rathcoole	Mixed	<5	160.0	160.0	13.0	13.0	
			None	5	103.6	110.0	9.6	10.0	
			Other	<5	112.5	110.0	8.3	7.5	
			Protestant	84	128.1	122.0	20.9	11.0	
			Undisclosed	22	113.5	115.0	9.8	9.5	
			Total	116	124.0	121.0	17.8	10.0	
		Rathfern	Protestant	<5	141.0	141.0	12.5	12.5	
			Total	<5	141.0	141.0	12.5	12.5	
		Rushpark	Catholic	<5	116.0	116.0	58.0	58.0	
			Protestant	<5	111.0	106.0	9.8	3.5	
			Undisclosed	<5	94.0	124.0	18.0	18.0	
			Total	8	105.3	114.0	18.9	11.5	
		Total	Catholic	35	124.2	126.0	27.0	19.0	
			Mixed	<5	160.0	160.0	13.0	13.0	
			None	6	93.7	100.0	8.7	8.5	
			Other	7	121.9	114.0	12.1	7.0	
			Protestant	96	128.8	123.0	20.5	11.0	
			Undisclosed	37	120.1	130.0	11.6	10.0	
			Total	182	124.9	126.5	19.2	11.0	
	Newtown-abbey 2	Glenvarna/Glengormley	Catholic	<5	315.0	315.0	5.5	5.5	
				Protestant	11	141.4	142.0	16.1	6.0
				Undisclosed	<5	152.0	152.0	9.0	9.0
				Total	14	166.9	147.5	14.1	7.0
	Queens Park/Queens Avenue		Catholic	<5	114.0	114.0	4.0	4.0	
				Other	<5	131.5	123.0	7.3	8.0
				Protestant	10	111.8	116.0	23.6	10.5
				Undisclosed	<5	172.0	172.0	24.0	24.0
				Total	16	120.6	118.0	18.3	9.0
	North Belfast	Alliance	Protestant	<5	112.0	124.0	5.5	4.5	
				Undisclosed	<5	100.0	100.0	11.0	11.0
				Total	5	109.6	120.0	6.6	6.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Ardoyne	Catholic	44	137.6	143.0	20.0	15.0
			None	<5	152.0	152.0	25.0	25.0
			Other	<5	132.0	132.0	33.0	33.0
			Protestant	<5	130.0	130.0	1.0	1.0
			Undisclosed	11	122.4	132.0	22.5	17.0
			Total		58	134.8	137.0	20.5
		Ballysillan	Catholic	<5	162.0	162.0	25.0	25.0
			None	<5	53.3	70.0	6.7	5.0
			Other	<5	10.0	10.0	13.0	13.0
			Protestant	28	98.1	90.0	13.5	10.0
			Undisclosed	<5	115.0	115.0	10.5	10.5
			Total		35	94.5	90.0	13.1
		Carlisle/New Lodge	Catholic	44	141.5	140.0	16.4	14.5
			Other	<5	110.0	100.0	17.0	16.0
			Protestant	<5	206.0	206.0	15.5	15.5
			Refused	<5	0.0	0.0	4.0	4.0
			Undisclosed	5	122.0	122.0	30.6	27.0
			Total		55	137.8	132.0	17.5
		Carrick Hill/Unity Flats	Catholic	9	183.1	160.0	24.4	18.0
			Undisclosed	<5	122.0	122.0	30.0	30.0
			Total		11	172.0	160.0	25.5
		Cavehill	Catholic	28	150.3	140.0	26.2	17.5
			None	<5	100.0	100.0	9.5	9.5
			Protestant	<5	124.0	124.0	124.0	124.0
			Undisclosed	<5	175.0	155.0	9.5	6.0
			Total		35	149.5	140.0	26.1
		Cliftondene	Catholic	<5	115.0	125.0	38.3	17.5
			Total		<5	115.0	125.0	38.3
		Cliftonville	Catholic	51	151.7	144.0	21.0	14.0
			None	<5	25.0	25.0	3.0	3.0
			Other	<5	220.5	221.0	14.8	13.5
			Protestant	<5	115.0	115.0	11.0	11.0
			Undisclosed	12	142.0	138.5	15.6	14.5
			Total		72	150.1	140.0	18.9
		Duncairn Gardens	Catholic	<5	122.0	122.0	19.5	19.5
			Other	<5	114.0	114.0	37.0	37.0
			Protestant	<5	130.0	130.0	9.0	9.0
			Total		<5	122.0	122.0	21.3

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Fairhill	Catholic	<5	170.0	170.0	5.0	5.0
			Other	<5	142.0	142.0	26.0	26.0
			Protestant	7	142.0	120.0	15.6	10.0
			Undisclosed	<5	112.0	102.0	27.7	30.0
			Total	12	136.8	125.0	18.6	19.0
		Gainsborough	Catholic	<5	119.0	119.0	5.0	5.0
			None	<5	66.0	66.0	4.5	4.5
			Other	<5	120.0	120.0	17.0	17.0
			Protestant	21	108.0	110.0	8.1	5.0
			Undisclosed	6	103.3	103.0	13.5	7.0
			Total	32	105.6	110.0	9.0	5.0
		Glandore & Dunmore	Undisclosed	<5	119.0	119.0	13.0	13.0
			Total	<5	119.0	119.0	13.0	13.0
		Grove Area	Catholic	<5	120.0	120.0	5.5	5.5
			None	<5	152.0	152.0	8.0	8.0
			Protestant	19	105.1	120.0	17.5	11.0
			Undisclosed	5	130.8	124.0	20.4	11.0
			Total	27	112.7	120.0	16.8	10.0
		Lower Ligoniel/ Glenbank	Catholic	<5	30.0	30.0	4.0	4.0
			Other	<5	16.0	16.0	2.0	2.0
			Protestant	10	116.5	121.0	18.2	10.0
			Undisclosed	<5	70.0	70.0	3.0	3.0
			Total	13	98.5	118.0	14.7	6.0
		Lower Oldpark	None	<5	110.0	110.0	22.0	22.0
			Protestant	12	96.0	95.0	13.8	11.5
			Total	13	97.1	110.0	14.4	14.0
		M/S Flats - Carlisle	Catholic	14	129.4	118.0	19.7	11.0
			None	<5	110.0	110.0	5.0	5.0
			Other	<5	122.0	122.0	25.0	25.0
			Protestant	<5	120.0	120.0	14.0	14.0
			Undisclosed	<5	90.0	90.0	49.0	49.0
			Total	18	125.2	115.0	20.5	13.0
		Mount Vernon Estate	Other	<5	215.0	215.0	9.0	9.0
			Protestant	9	81.9	50.0	11.0	5.0
			Undisclosed	<5	132.0	132.0	42.0	42.0
			Total	12	108.3	90.0	13.3	5.5

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Newington/ Limestone	Catholic	7	132.0	130.0	15.1	11.0
			None	<5	150.0	150.0	11.0	11.0
			Undisclosed	<5	174.0	122.0	13.3	13.0
			Total	11	145.1	130.0	14.3	11.0
		Oldpark	Catholic	18	153.7	155.0	19.6	15.0
			Protestant	<5	240.0	240.0	17.0	17.0
			Undisclosed	<5	160.0	160.0	43.0	43.0
			Total	22	162.1	159.0	21.5	15.0
		Rosewood/ Crumlin RDA	Protestant	<5	140.0	140.0	12.0	12.0
			Total	<5	140.0	140.0	12.0	12.0
		Ross House Flats/ Mountvernon Flats	Other	<5	80.0	80.0	5.0	5.0
			Protestant	14	53.7	35.0	7.5	4.0
			Undisclosed	<5	33.3	30.0	9.0	9.0
			Total	18	51.8	35.0	7.6	4.5
		Shore Road	Catholic	<5	150.0	150.0	11.0	11.0
			None	<5	80.0	80.0	2.5	2.5
			Other	<5	47.0	47.0	30.5	30.5
			Protestant	20	113.3	110.0	8.3	4.5
			Undisclosed	5	97.2	110.0	28.8	23.0
			Total	30	105.2	109.0	12.9	5.5
		Skegoneill/ Ashfield/ Fortwilliam	Catholic	<5	105.0	105.0	3.0	3.0
			None	<5	111.0	111.0	4.0	4.0
			Other	<5	166.7	98.0	22.7	18.0
			Protestant	14	70.4	61.0	9.7	7.5
			Undisclosed	<5	73.5	90.0	10.3	10.0
			Total	25	88.5	90.0	10.4	7.0
		Somerton Rd (Sheltered)	Catholic	<5	167.3	172.0	57.0	61.0
			Protestant	<5	118.0	118.0	8.0	8.0
			Total	<5	155.0	160.0	44.8	52.5
		Sunningdale	Mixed	<5	160.0	160.0	8.0	8.0
			Protestant	<5	120.0	120.0	10.5	12.0
			Undisclosed	<5	109.0	109.0	46.0	46.0
			Total	7	122.6	112.0	20.3	12.0
		Torrens	Catholic	7	163.4	140.0	16.4	23.0
			Undisclosed	<5	188.7	156.0	30.3	20.0
			Total	10	171.0	148.0	20.6	21.5

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Upper & Lower Duncairn	None	<5	115.0	115.0	4.0	4.0
			Other	6	85.0	90.0	12.7	15.5
			Protestant	19	69.2	80.0	9.5	7.0
			Undisclosed	<5	110.0	110.0	7.0	7.0
			Total	28	77.3	90.0	9.7	7.0
		Upper Ligoniel	Catholic	18	138.2	128.0	18.0	11.5
			Mixed	<5	152.0	152.0	12.0	12.0
			None	<5	150.0	150.0	11.0	11.0
			Other	<5	147.5	149.0	35.5	24.0
			Protestant	<5	102.0	102.0	33.0	33.0
			Undisclosed	<5	139.5	136.0	19.3	18.0
			Total	29	139.3	130.0	20.7	14.0
		Westland	None	<5	100.0	100.0	5.0	5.0
			Protestant	10	83.8	99.0	10.2	7.5
			Total	11	85.3	100.0	9.7	7.0
		Wheatfield	None	<5	60.0	60.0	3.0	3.0
			Protestant	10	67.4	55.0	4.6	4.0
			Undisclosed	<5	62.5	70.0	13.3	13.5
			Total	15	65.6	60.0	6.8	5.0
		Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairyknowe	Catholic	18	153.7	138.0	33.9	13.5
			Protestant	5	133.6	140.0	26.8	17.0
			Undisclosed	<5	187.5	141.0	14.3	6.5
			Total	27	155.0	140.0	29.7	13.0
		Whitewell/White City	Other	<5	70.0	70.0	15.0	15.0
			Protestant	8	105.8	105.0	21.3	9.5
			Undisclosed	<5	140.0	140.0	20.0	20.0
			Total	11	102.4	100.0	20.0	11.0
	Shankill	Cambrai/Woodvale	Other	<5	120.0	130.0	2.7	3.0
			Protestant	31	106.9	110.0	16.5	9.0
			Undisclosed	7	118.4	110.0	8.7	9.0
			Total	41	109.8	110.0	14.1	9.0
		Mid Shankill	None	<5	118.0	118.0	8.0	8.0
			Protestant	59	117.8	120.0	12.6	8.0
			Undisclosed	7	97.7	96.0	18.3	8.0
			Total	68	115.8	120.0	13.1	8.0
		Tudor	Protestant	9	164.2	134.0	32.3	19.0
			Total	9	164.2	134.0	32.3	19.0

				Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Total	None	<5	118.0	118.0	8.0	8.0
			Other	<5	120.0	130.0	2.7	3.0
			Protestant	99	118.6	120.0	15.6	9.0
			Undisclosed	14	108.1	103.0	13.5	8.5
			Total		118	117.4	120.0	14.9
	Belfast North Constituency Total		Catholic	315	143.7	140.0	21.6	15.0
			Mixed	<5	157.3	160.0	11.0	12.0
			None	30	97.0	96.0	7.7	5.0
			Other	48	124.0	115.0	16.4	14.5
			Protestant	445	110.9	112.0	15.2	9.0
			Refused	<5	0.0	0.0	4.0	4.0
			Undisclosed	145	121.9	120.0	17.2	13.0
			Total		987	123.2	122.0	17.4
Belfast South	Castlereagh	Belvoir	Catholic	<5	140.0	140.0	8.0	8.0
			None	<5	140.0	140.0	5.0	5.0
			Other	<5	116.0	116.0	22.0	22.0
			Protestant	45	119.5	110.0	13.8	10.0
			Undisclosed	11	146.5	120.0	21.3	16.0
			Total		59	125.2	120.0	15.1
		Bests Hill	Mixed	<5	130.0	130.0	7.0	7.0
			Other	<5	160.0	160.0	19.0	19.0
			Protestant	<5	28.0	28.0	1.0	1.0
			Total		<5	106.0	130.0	9.0
		Milltown/Grays Park	Protestant	<5	140.0	140.0	24.5	24.5
			Total		<5	140.0	140.0	24.5
		Milltown/Shaws Bridge	Catholic	<5	50.0	50.0	1.0	1.0
			Total		<5	50.0	50.0	1.0
		Newtownbreda Village	Catholic	<5	140.0	140.0	24.0	24.0
			Other	<5	210.7	170.0	23.3	20.0
			Protestant	<5	122.8	105.0	38.3	42.0
			Total		8	157.9	155.0	30.9
	South Belfast	Annadale	Catholic	6	125.0	121.0	28.2	23.0
			None	<5	120.0	120.0	9.0	9.0
			Other	5	102.8	100.0	16.8	19.0
			Protestant	6	114.7	106.0	19.3	15.5
			Undisclosed	<5	124.0	124.0	10.5	10.5
			Total		20	116.0	120.0	20.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Cromac	Catholic	6	170.5	142.0	30.2	22.5
			Other	<5	219.0	219.0	39.5	39.5
			Undisclosed	<5	73.0	66.0	7.0	8.0
			Total		12	146.1	125.0	24.0
		Donegall Pass	None	<5	116.0	116.0	15.0	15.0
			Other	5	111.6	102.0	24.2	27.0
			Protestant	12	174.2	136.0	20.5	13.0
			Undisclosed	<5	160.0	120.0	8.8	9.0
			Total		23	153.0	122.0	18.8
		Donegall Road	Catholic	<5	91.0	91.0	15.5	15.5
			Other	<5	74.3	77.5	18.5	18.5
			Protestant	28	94.2	98.0	18.8	10.0
			Undisclosed	<5	120.0	95.0	7.8	9.0
			Total		38	94.7	93.0	17.4
		Finaghy	Catholic	<5	80.0	90.0	50.7	22.0
			Other	11	126.0	120.0	37.5	28.0
			Protestant	20	110.8	100.0	19.3	7.0
			Undisclosed	<5	100.0	100.0	17.0	17.0
			Total		35	112.6	112.0	27.6
		Flush Park Belfast	Catholic	<5	120.5	120.5	7.5	7.5
			Protestant	<5	32.0	32.0	113.0	113.0
			Undisclosed	<5	160.0	160.0	15.0	15.0
			Total		<5	108.3	120.5	35.8
		Lower Ormeau	Catholic	28	182.8	160.0	26.1	19.0
			Other	9	150.9	140.0	20.7	20.0
			Protestant	<5	150.0	150.0	9.0	9.0
			Undisclosed	<5	175.0	145.0	24.5	9.0
			Total		42	174.4	152.0	24.4
		Rosebery	Catholic	10	138.8	116.0	16.7	11.5
			None	<5	15.0	15.0	3.5	3.5
			Other	5	91.2	90.0	23.2	25.0
			Protestant	34	123.9	120.0	17.5	8.0
			Undisclosed	9	107.1	122.0	17.7	10.0
			Total		60	117.5	117.0	17.4
		Sandy Row	None	<5	80.0	80.0	5.0	5.0
			Other	<5	70.0	70.0	23.0	23.0
			Protestant	21	124.2	124.0	20.0	11.0
			Undisclosed	<5	86.0	102.0	9.8	7.5
			Total		28	113.6	115.0	17.5

				Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013					
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths	
		Stranmillis	Catholic	<5	125.0	94.0	28.3	17.0	
			Protestant	<5	350.0	350.0	4.0	4.0	
			Total		5	170.0	118.0	23.4	9.0
		Taughmonagh	Other	<5	48.0	38.0	51.0	43.0	
			Protestant	13	96.5	120.0	18.8	14.0	
			Undisclosed	6	103.3	110.0	6.0	5.5	
			Total		22	91.7	104.0	19.7	12.0
		Ulsterville	Catholic	16	164.5	139.0	29.1	22.5	
			Mixed	<5	290.0	290.0	14.0	14.0	
			None	<5	80.0	80.0	7.0	7.0	
			Other	9	120.0	110.0	16.8	10.0	
			Protestant	15	186.3	160.0	22.1	16.0	
			Undisclosed	14	173.3	140.0	11.6	10.5	
			Total		56	166.1	136.0	20.2	12.0
		Upper Ormeau	Catholic	22	167.3	132.0	21.3	16.5	
			Other	7	134.6	130.0	20.6	14.0	
			Protestant	22	146.7	121.0	18.6	10.5	
			Undisclosed	13	160.9	140.0	19.3	6.0	
			Total		64	155.3	130.0	19.9	12.5
	Belfast South Constituency Total		Catholic	102	157.7	132.0	24.8	18.0	
			Mixed	<5	210.0	210.0	10.5	10.5	
			None	9	84.7	90.0	7.6	5.0	
			Other	66	123.5	113.0	25.1	22.5	
			Protestant	226	125.8	120.0	18.7	11.0	
			Undisclosed	77	138.7	120.0	14.6	10.0	
			Total		482	133.9	120.0	20.0	12.0
Belfast South/ Strangford	Castlereagh	Carryduff	Catholic	<5	66.0	66.0	16.0	16.0	
				Protestant	5	88.4	90.0	11.4	7.0
				Undisclosed	<5	110.0	110.0	16.0	16.0
				Total		8	85.5	91.0	13.1
	Belfast South/Strangford Constituency Total		Catholic	<5	66.0	66.0	16.0	16.0	
			Protestant	5	88.4	90.0	11.4	7.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	110.0	110.0	16.0	16.0	
			Total		8	85.5	91.0	13.1	7.5
Belfast West/ North	Shankill	Ainsworth	Protestant	<5	80.0	100.0	9.7	11.0	
				Undisclosed	<5	18.0	18.0	66.0	66.0
				Total		<5	64.5	59.0	23.8

				Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2013				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Twaddell/Upper Woodvale	Protestant	6	92.0	101.0	17.7	13.0
			Total	6	92.0	101.0	17.7	13.0
	Belfast West/North Constituency Total		Protestant	9	88.0	100.0	15.0	11.0
			Undisclosed	<5	18.0	18.0	66.0	66.0
			Total	10	81.0	97.0	20.1	11.5

Table D: Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014 by Mean & Median Average Points & Months on the Waiting List at the date of Allocation broken down by Religion & Belfast Assembly Constituencies

				Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014					
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths	
Belfast East	Castlereagh	Ballybeen	None	<5	140.0	140.0	16.0	16.0	
				Other	<5	24.0	24.0	3.0	3.0
				Protestant	53	112.6	120.0	15.4	8.0
				Undisclosed	<5	125.0	125.0	44.0	44.0
				Total	57	112.0	120.0	16.2	8.0
		Braniel	Catholic	<5	115.0	115.0	11.0	11.0	
				None	<5	100.0	100.0	3.0	3.0
				Protestant	40	105.2	100.0	26.4	16.5
				Undisclosed	<5	34.0	34.0	47.0	47.0
				Total	43	103.6	100.0	26.0	16.0
		Brooklands	Protestant	<5	110.5	133.0	14.0	8.0	
				Total	<5	110.5	133.0	14.0	8.0
		Castlereagh	Protestant	<5	122.0	122.0	32.0	32.0	
				Total	<5	122.0	122.0	32.0	32.0
		Coronation Park	Protestant	<5	80.0	80.0	79.0	79.0	
				Total	<5	80.0	80.0	79.0	79.0
		Downshire Park	Other	<5	360.0	360.0	11.0	11.0	
				Protestant	<5	130.0	130.0	20.0	20.0
				Undisclosed	<5	154.0	154.0	48.0	48.0
				Total	<5	214.7	154.0	26.3	20.0
		Galway Drive/Mews	Protestant	7	55.1	58.0	16.6	6.0	
				Total	7	55.1	58.0	16.6	6.0
		Moatview Park	Other	<5	143.0	143.0	32.0	32.0	
				Protestant	<5	60.0	60.0	1.0	1.0
				Total	<5	115.3	110.0	21.7	8.0
		Sunderland Road	Protestant	<5	134.0	134.0	7.0	7.0	
				Total	<5	134.0	134.0	7.0	7.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Tullycarnet	None	<5	40.0	40.0	7.0	7.0
			Other	<5	100.0	100.0	7.0	7.0
			Protestant	38	93.7	95.0	13.0	10.5
			Refused	<5	40.0	40.0	20.0	20.0
			Undisclosed	<5	80.0	80.0	4.0	4.0
			Total		42	91.0	90.0	12.7
		Vionville Rural	Protestant	<5	140.0	140.0	14.0	14.0
			Total		<5	140.0	140.0	14.0
	East Belfast	Albertbridge Rd.	Catholic	5	48.0	40.0	9.2	6.0
			None	<5	50.0	50.0	14.0	14.0
			Other	7	109.4	100.0	10.1	7.0
			Protestant	40	73.7	70.0	20.8	11.5
			Undisclosed	<5	76.7	70.0	8.7	8.0
			Total		56	75.6	70.0	17.6
		Ardcarn	Catholic	<5	140.0	140.0	12.0	12.0
			Protestant	10	103.2	94.0	37.3	8.5
			Undisclosed	<5	310.0	310.0	23.0	23.0
			Total		12	123.5	99.0	34.0
		Ashfield	Other	<5	116.0	116.0	7.0	7.0
			Protestant	<5	140.0	140.0	17.0	17.0
			Total		<5	128.0	128.0	12.0
		Ballyhackamore	Protestant	9	108.7	104.0	15.8	6.0
			Total		9	108.7	104.0	15.8
		Bloomfield/ Ravenscroft	Catholic	<5	100.0	100.0	9.0	9.0
			None	<5	103.3	90.0	4.7	6.0
			Other	<5	164.5	130.0	32.5	37.0
			Protestant	30	76.8	87.0	15.3	11.0
			Undisclosed	5	132.8	120.0	14.8	10.0
			Total		43	93.8	90.0	16.0
		Bridge End, Rotherdam Court	Protestant	<5	110.0	110.0	21.0	21.0
			Total		<5	110.0	110.0	21.0
		Clarawood	Protestant	17	106.8	106.0	16.4	8.0
			Undisclosed	<5	94.0	94.0	47.0	47.0
			Total		18	106.1	103.0	18.1
		Dundela	Catholic	<5	10.0	10.0	22.0	22.0
			Other	<5	120.0	120.0	3.0	3.0
			Protestant	10	98.0	83.0	16.3	8.5
			Total		12	92.5	83.0	15.7

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Edenvale	None	<5	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
			Protestant	<5	74.0	70.5	48.5	42.5
			Total	5	59.6	60.0	39.2	10.0
		Garnerville	None	<5	90.0	90.0	5.0	5.0
			Other	<5	26.0	26.0	49.0	49.0
			Protestant	8	91.5	105.0	22.4	18.5
			Refused	<5	20.0	20.0	14.0	14.0
			Undisclosed	<5	107.0	107.0	29.0	29.0
			Total	13	83.2	100.0	23.5	21.0
		Inverary	Catholic	<5	110.0	130.0	9.0	6.0
			Other	<5	131.0	131.0	24.0	24.0
			Protestant	21	111.8	118.0	22.1	13.0
			Undisclosed	<5	80.0	80.0	14.0	14.0
			Total	28	110.7	115.0	20.3	11.5
		Knocknagoney	None	<5	120.0	120.0	11.0	11.0
			Protestant	5	90.0	104.0	26.8	25.0
			Total	6	95.0	104.0	24.2	25.0
		Lwr Beersbridge/ The Mount	Catholic	<5	116.0	120.0	21.3	18.5
			Mixed	<5	50.0	50.0	20.0	20.0
			None	<5	90.0	90.0	2.0	2.0
			Other	7	128.9	100.0	16.3	16.0
			Protestant	30	105.6	104.0	16.8	12.0
			Refused	<5	110.0	110.0	8.0	8.0
			Undisclosed	<5	108.0	108.0	36.0	36.0
			Total	46	108.7	103.0	17.5	15.0
		Newtownards Road	Catholic	5	76.4	70.0	13.4	9.0
			Mixed	<5	80.0	80.0	6.0	6.0
			None	<5	100.0	90.0	22.0	21.0
			Other	6	152.3	131.0	18.2	17.0
			Protestant	86	95.1	100.0	19.8	12.0
			Undisclosed	9	102.9	110.0	15.1	16.0
			Total	110	98.0	100.0	19.0	13.0
		Short Strand	Catholic	18	182.3	172.0	25.1	23.5
			Undisclosed	<5	171.0	171.0	32.0	32.0
			Total	20	181.2	172.0	25.8	23.5
		Summerhill	Protestant	<5	140.0	140.0	12.0	12.0
			Total	<5	140.0	140.0	12.0	12.0

				Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Sydenham/ Sandbrook/ Lisavon	Catholic	<5	67.3	60.0	13.0	13.0
			None	<5	22.0	22.0	2.0	2.0
			Other	6	93.0	115.0	16.0	4.5
			Protestant	12	116.2	117.0	28.3	11.5
			Undisclosed	<5	92.0	92.0	25.0	25.0
			Total		23	98.6	110.0	21.8
		Wandsworth	None	<5	12.0	12.0	7.0	7.0
			Protestant	<5	144.7	143.0	43.0	21.0
			Total		<5	111.5	137.0	34.0
	Belfast East Constituency Total		Catholic	42	125.4	130.0	18.3	14.5
			Mixed	<5	65.0	65.0	13.0	13.0
			None	16	79.8	90.0	9.3	6.5
			Other	40	127.3	110.0	17.8	11.0
			Protestant	437	98.0	100.0	19.8	11.0
			Refused	<5	56.7	40.0	14.0	14.0
			Undisclosed	33	114.1	110.0	22.4	23.0
			Total	573	102.1	100.0	19.3	12.0
Belfast West	Lisburn Antrim Street	Areema	Catholic	5	153.6	144.0	16.6	9.0
			Other	<5	124.0	124.0	37.0	37.0
			Protestant	<5	123.0	96.0	2.0	2.0
			Undisclosed	5	106.0	128.0	30.4	24.0
			Total	15	127.6	124.0	18.7	9.0
		Beattie	Catholic	<5	142.0	142.0	21.5	21.5
			Undisclosed	<5	118.0	118.0	15.5	15.5
			Total		<5	130.0	142.0	18.5
	Lisburn Dairy Farm	Twinbrook- Poleglass	Catholic	126	181.6	172.0	32.3	26.0
			Mixed	<5	160.0	160.0	6.0	6.0
			None	<5	164.0	164.0	11.0	11.0
			Other	<5	196.0	174.0	43.0	37.5
			Undisclosed	8	163.8	152.0	17.9	11.5
			Total	140	180.7	170.0	31.5	24.0
	Shankill	Agnes Street	Protestant	9	114.0	110.0	35.2	19.0
			Undisclosed	<5	90.0	90.0	25.0	25.0
			Total	10	111.6	110.0	34.2	19.0
		Ballygomartin/ West Circular	Other	<5	20.0	20.0	4.0	4.0
			Protestant	<5	97.0	100.0	42.3	40.0
			Undisclosed	<5	110.0	110.0	24.0	24.0
			Total		6	86.3	100.0	32.8

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014					
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths	
		Brown Square	Protestant	<5	122.0	122.0	2.0	2.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	70.0	70.0	5.0	5.0	
			Total		<5	96.0	96.0	3.5	3.5
		Dover	None	<5	60.0	60.0	2.0	2.0	
			Protestant	13	74.8	80.0	25.2	18.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	110.0	110.0	4.0	4.0	
			Total		15	76.1	80.0	22.3	15.0
		Florence/ Hopewell	None	<5	85.0	85.0	3.5	3.5	
			Other	<5	139.3	110.0	27.0	8.0	
			Protestant	25	78.2	70.0	11.7	9.0	
			Refused	<5	60.0	60.0	2.0	2.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	154.0	154.0	44.0	44.0	
			Total		32	86.2	72.0	13.3	8.5
		Glencairn	Protestant	35	69.7	70.0	14.4	11.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	45.0	45.0	5.0	5.0	
			Total		37	68.4	70.0	13.9	10.0
		Highfield	None	<5	110.0	110.0	8.0	8.0	
			Protestant	22	81.8	95.0	9.6	5.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	64.7	40.0	8.7	4.0	
			Total		26	80.9	95.0	9.4	5.0
		Lawnbrook	Protestant	5	108.4	80.0	7.0	6.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	105.0	105.0	16.0	16.0	
			Total		7	107.4	100.0	9.6	8.0
		Springmartin	Protestant	10	115.0	95.0	16.6	8.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	30.0	30.0	3.0	3.0	
			Total		11	107.3	90.0	15.4	7.0
		Upper Shankill	Protestant	13	103.8	120.0	14.3	9.0	
			Total		13	103.8	120.0	14.3	9.0
	West Belfast	Andersonstown	Catholic	113	176.8	170.0	34.9	23.0	
				None	<5	252.0	300.0	7.0	3.0
				Other	<5	214.0	190.0	15.7	17.0
				Protestant	<5	108.0	108.0	13.0	13.0
				Undisclosed	9	171.0	150.0	20.4	17.0
				Total		129	178.5	170.0	32.6
		Ballymurphy	Catholic	<5	190.0	190.0	55.5	55.5	
			Other	<5	180.0	180.0	6.0	6.0	
			Total		<5	186.7	190.0	39.0	21.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Beechmount	Catholic	10	170.3	138.0	20.6	13.0
			None	<5	82.0	82.0	16.0	16.0
			Undisclosed	<5	0.0	0.0	20.0	20.0
			Total	12	148.8	119.5	20.2	16.0
		Cavendish Street	Catholic	10	204.4	190.0	63.2	59.5
			Total	10	204.4	190.0	63.2	59.5
		Divis Complex	Catholic	8	163.8	170.0	24.8	15.0
			Undisclosed	<5	161.0	161.0	7.5	7.5
			Total	10	163.2	166.0	21.3	14.5
		Falls Court/ Clonard Cres	Catholic	44	168.3	163.0	47.4	42.5
			Refused	<5	300.0	300.0	7.0	7.0
			Total	45	171.2	164.0	46.5	41.0
		Gransha/ Downfine	Catholic	<5	150.0	150.0	27.0	27.0
			Total	<5	150.0	150.0	27.0	27.0
		Grosvenor Road	Catholic	38	162.6	164.0	28.1	27.0
			None	<5	14.0	14.0	14.0	14.0
			Other	<5	102.0	102.0	29.0	29.0
			Undisclosed	<5	149.0	149.0	44.5	44.5
			Total	42	157.0	161.0	28.6	27.0
		Hamill St/John St	Catholic	9	204.2	160.0	25.6	18.0
			Protestant	<5	230.0	230.0	49.0	49.0
			Total	11	208.9	160.0	29.8	18.0
		Lower Suffolk	Catholic	<5	74.0	74.0	38.0	38.0
			Protestant	14	68.7	80.0	18.6	13.0
			Total	16	69.4	80.0	21.0	15.5
		Moyard	Catholic	<5	162.5	171.0	44.3	27.5
			Total	<5	162.5	171.0	44.3	27.5
		New Barnsley	Catholic	<5	182.7	192.0	38.0	28.0
			Total	<5	182.7	192.0	38.0	28.0
		Roden Street	Catholic	10	160.0	164.0	63.5	62.0
			Undisclosed	<5	330.0	330.0	15.0	15.0
			Total	11	175.5	170.0	59.1	62.0
		Springfield Road	Catholic	17	196.6	188.0	34.0	25.0
			Other	<5	161.0	161.0	24.5	24.5
			Total	19	192.8	182.0	33.0	25.0
		Springhill	Catholic	5	170.8	182.0	47.2	40.0
			Total	5	170.8	182.0	47.2	40.0
		Springvale	Catholic	<5	198.0	198.0	11.0	11.0
			Total	<5	198.0	198.0	11.0	11.0

				Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014					
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths	
		St James	Catholic	19	138.5	140.0	27.1	16.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	138.0	138.0	22.0	22.0	
			Total	20	138.5	139.0	26.9	16.5	
		Turf Lodge	Catholic	7	182.0	180.0	61.4	58.0	
			Total	7	182.0	180.0	61.4	58.0	
		Westrock	Catholic	<5	136.0	136.0	25.0	25.0	
			Total	<5	136.0	136.0	25.0	25.0	
		Whiterock	Catholic	10	154.6	185.0	39.5	33.0	
			Protestant	<5	132.0	132.0	34.0	34.0	
			Total	11	152.5	178.0	39.0	34.0	
	Belfast West Constituency Total		Catholic	448	174.1	170.0	35.5	26.0	
			Mixed	<5	160.0	160.0	6.0	6.0	
			None	10	135.6	105.0	7.9	6.0	
			Other	16	162.0	161.0	26.6	21.5	
			Protestant	159	87.4	90.0	16.5	10.0	
			Refused	<5	180.0	180.0	4.5	4.5	
			Undisclosed	44	130.9	140.0	19.2	14.5	
			Total	680	150.2	156.0	29.3	19.0	
Belfast East/South	Castlereagh	Cregagh Castlereagh	Catholic	5	112.8	110.0	29.6	19.0	
				None	<5	66.0	66.0	12.0	12.0
				Other	<5	98.0	98.0	63.0	63.0
				Protestant	37	112.1	120.0	23.2	13.0
				Undisclosed	<5	110.7	110.0	23.7	27.0
				Total	48	109.9	110.0	24.3	15.0
	East Belfast	Willowfield/Upper Castlereagh Road	Catholic	<5	95.0	95.0	14.0	14.0	
				None	<5	123.3	130.0	11.3	12.0
				Other	<5	100.0	100.0	5.0	5.0
				Protestant	20	114.1	122.0	25.4	9.5
				Total	26	113.2	117.0	22.1	10.5
	Belfast East/South Constituency Total		Catholic	7	107.7	100.0	25.1	15.0	
			None	5	100.4	110.0	11.6	12.0	
			Other	<5	99.0	99.0	34.0	34.0	
			Protestant	57	112.8	120.0	24.0	12.0	
			Undisclosed	<5	110.7	110.0	23.7	27.0	
			Total	74	111.0	113.0	23.5	13.5	
Belfast North	Newtown-abbey 1	Abbey Glen	Catholic	<5	140.0	140.0	5.0	5.0	
				Total	<5	140.0	140.0	5.0	5.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Abbeyville	Catholic	<5	120.0	120.0	22.0	22.0
			Mixed	<5	170.0	170.0	14.0	14.0
			Total		<5	145.0	145.0	18.0
		Bawnmore/Old Mill Drive	Catholic	8	136.3	141.0	16.5	9.5
			None	<5	150.0	150.0	7.0	7.0
			Other	<5	100.0	100.0	156.0	156.0
			Total		10	134.0	141.0	29.5
		Longlands	Catholic	7	139.4	144.0	9.6	9.0
			Total		7	139.4	144.0	9.6
		Rathcoole	Catholic	<5	142.0	142.0	15.0	15.0
			None	<5	120.0	120.0	12.0	9.0
			Other	<5	161.3	90.0	9.0	9.0
			Protestant	76	135.9	130.0	14.7	9.0
			Refused	<5	20.0	20.0	23.0	23.0
			Undisclosed	10	117.4	115.0	18.3	18.5
			Total		94	133.1	130.0	14.9
		Rathfern	Other	<5	150.0	150.0	10.0	10.0
			Protestant	<5	121.3	132.0	65.3	35.0
			Undisclosed	<5	100.0	100.0	17.0	17.0
			Total		5	122.8	132.0	44.6
		Rushpark	None	<5	140.0	140.0	4.0	4.0
			Protestant	21	165.9	148.0	23.1	18.0
			Undisclosed	<5	146.0	140.0	21.7	25.0
			Total		25	162.5	144.0	22.2
	Newtown-abbey 2	Glenvarna/ Glengormley	None	<5	67.5	67.5	7.0	7.0
			Other	<5	86.0	86.0	53.0	53.0
			Protestant	10	129.9	139.5	23.6	4.0
			Undisclosed	<5	74.0	92.0	17.7	24.0
			Total		16	108.9	112.5	22.3
		Queens Park/ Queens Avenue	None	<5	153.0	153.0	5.0	5.0
			Protestant	18	112.5	104.0	18.9	11.0
			Undisclosed	<5	111.0	111.0	22.5	22.5
			Total		21	114.3	106.0	18.6
	North Belfast	Alliance	Other	<5	132.0	132.0	80.0	80.0
			Undisclosed	<5	84.0	84.0	20.0	20.0
			Total		<5	108.0	108.0	50.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Ardoyne	Catholic	62	148.1	150.0	24.1	13.5
			Mixed	<5	156.0	156.0	5.5	5.5
			Undisclosed	<5	126.0	130.0	31.3	31.0
			Total		68	147.1	150.0	24.0
		Ballysillan	Catholic	<5	97.5	105.0	3.3	3.0
			Mixed	<5	0.0	0.0	2.0	2.0
			None	<5	10.0	10.0	2.0	2.0
			Other	<5	44.0	44.0	37.0	37.0
			Protestant	22	103.7	97.0	9.5	6.0
			Refused	<5	10.0	10.0	2.0	2.0
			Undisclosed	<5	74.0	76.0	17.5	14.0
			Total		34	89.2	90.0	9.9
		Carlisle/New Lodge	Catholic	61	140.2	140.0	24.5	18.0
			None	<5	290.0	290.0	7.0	7.0
			Other	<5	104.0	104.0	15.0	15.0
			Protestant	<5	122.0	122.0	26.0	26.0
			Undisclosed	<5	175.3	120.0	26.0	33.0
			Total		67	143.2	136.0	24.1
		Carrick Hill/Unity Flats	Catholic	5	140.2	132.0	30.6	24.0
			None	<5	150.0	150.0	16.0	16.0
			Other	<5	120.0	120.0	12.0	12.0
			Undisclosed	<5	132.0	132.0	28.0	28.0
			Total		8	137.9	132.0	26.1
		Cavehill	Catholic	29	153.0	140.0	19.6	12.0
			Mixed	<5	150.0	150.0	5.0	5.0
			None	<5	183.0	183.0	28.0	28.0
			Other	<5	314.0	314.0	37.0	37.0
			Protestant	<5	216.0	216.0	19.0	19.0
			Undisclosed	5	129.6	132.0	18.4	20.0
			Total		40	158.7	144.0	19.9
		Cliftondene	Catholic	<5	92.0	92.0	33.0	33.0
			Mixed	<5	60.0	60.0	8.0	8.0
			None	<5	240.0	240.0	13.0	13.0
			Total		<5	130.7	92.0	18.0

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Cliftonville	Catholic	69	150.6	142.0	23.5	16.0
			Mixed	<5	6.0	6.0	12.0	12.0
			None	<5	208.7	194.0	7.0	7.0
			Other	11	117.3	120.0	27.5	25.0
			Protestant	<5	140.0	140.0	17.0	17.0
			Undisclosed	9	155.7	134.0	27.3	29.0
			Total		94	147.4	140.0	23.6
		Duncairn Gardens	Catholic	<5	114.0	110.0	24.0	23.0
			None	<5	140.0	140.0	13.0	13.0
			Total		<5	120.5	121.0	21.3
		Fairhill	None	<5	104.0	104.0	8.0	8.0
			Other	<5	132.0	132.0	33.0	33.0
			Protestant	<5	127.5	130.0	14.0	12.0
			Total		7	121.4	130.0	15.0
		Gainsborough	Catholic	<5	96.7	90.0	7.0	8.0
			None	<5	70.0	70.0	5.0	5.0
			Other	6	55.0	36.0	15.7	16.5
			Protestant	29	80.4	92.0	19.2	8.0
			Undisclosed	6	86.0	63.0	15.3	8.5
			Total		45	78.6	90.0	17.1
		Grove Area	Catholic	<5	132.0	132.0	29.0	29.0
			None	<5	113.3	120.0	3.0	3.0
			Protestant	6	112.3	110.0	10.8	6.5
			Undisclosed	<5	90.0	90.0	3.5	3.5
			Total		12	110.5	111.0	9.2
		Lower Ligoniel/ Glenbank	Other	<5	94.0	94.0	17.5	17.5
			Protestant	15	91.0	110.0	10.8	7.0
			Undisclosed	<5	138.7	92.0	22.7	26.0
			Total		20	98.5	105.5	13.3
		Lower Oldpark	Catholic	<5	117.3	112.0	13.0	12.0
			Other	<5	110.0	110.0	2.0	2.0
			Protestant	29	65.8	70.0	9.7	5.0
			Undisclosed	5	73.6	50.0	24.2	29.0
			Total		38	72.1	71.0	11.7
		M/S Flats - Carlisle	Catholic	26	134.8	125.0	25.0	14.5
			None	<5	115.0	115.0	11.5	11.5
			Protestant	<5	140.0	140.0	12.0	12.0
			Undisclosed	<5	115.3	114.0	30.3	35.0
			Total		32	131.9	121.0	24.3

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Mount Vernon Estate	Protestant	9	62.4	50.0	25.6	12.0
			Refused	<5	340.0	340.0	7.0	7.0
			Total	10	90.2	62.0	23.7	11.5
		Newington/Limestone	Catholic	16	126.6	135.0	22.0	17.5
			None	<5	155.0	155.0	23.0	23.0
			Other	<5	142.0	142.0	29.0	29.0
			Undisclosed	<5	146.0	146.0	52.0	52.0
			Total	20	131.2	144.0	24.0	22.5
		Oldpark	Catholic	16	164.3	149.0	21.7	19.5
			Undisclosed	<5	206.0	154.0	29.0	40.0
			Total	19	170.8	150.0	22.8	20.0
		Ross House Flats/ Mountvernion Flats	Protestant	16	53.1	40.0	7.6	6.5
			Refused	<5	85.0	85.0	9.0	9.0
			Undisclosed	<5	20.0	20.0	14.0	14.0
			Total	18	53.1	40.0	8.1	8.0
		Shore Road	Other	<5	101.0	101.0	6.0	6.0
			Protestant	15	107.3	100.0	9.3	5.0
			Undisclosed	<5	85.0	85.0	4.5	4.5
			Total	19	104.3	100.0	8.5	5.0
		Skegoneill/ Ashfield/ Fortwilliam	Catholic	8	98.8	105.0	16.5	8.0
			Mixed	<5	10.0	10.0	6.0	6.0
			Protestant	16	88.2	96.0	23.7	11.0
			Undisclosed	<5	80.0	80.0	3.0	3.0
			Total	26	88.1	96.0	20.0	8.0
		Sunningdale	Catholic	<5	96.0	96.0	4.5	4.5
			None	<5	140.0	140.0	3.5	3.5
			Protestant	22	95.6	92.0	19.5	7.5
			Refused	<5	88.0	88.0	10.0	10.0
			Undisclosed	<5	90.0	90.0	1.0	1.0
			Total	28	98.4	94.0	16.3	7.0
		Torrens	Catholic	<5	163.0	165.0	36.8	32.0
			Undisclosed	<5	176.0	176.0	56.0	56.0
			Total	5	165.6	170.0	40.6	42.0
		Upper & Lower Duncairn	Mixed	<5	50.0	50.0	15.0	15.0
			None	<5	43.3	50.0	5.3	2.0
			Other	<5	122.0	122.0	32.0	32.0
			Protestant	44	81.1	80.0	12.5	9.5
			Undisclosed	<5	70.0	70.0	9.0	9.0
			Total	50	78.8	80.0	12.5	9.5

				Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Upper Ligoniel	Catholic	23	151.6	150.0	27.5	14.0
			Mixed	<5	160.0	160.0	18.0	18.0
			Other	<5	139.0	139.0	38.0	38.0
			Undisclosed	<5	108.0	108.0	34.0	34.0
			Total		28	147.9	150.0	28.4
		Westland	Protestant	8	111.3	115.0	10.8	9.5
			Total		8	111.3	115.0	10.8
		Wheatfield	Catholic	<5	70.0	70.0	5.0	5.0
			None	<5	100.0	100.0	4.0	4.0
			Other	<5	70.0	70.0	3.0	3.0
			Protestant	14	38.3	20.0	11.6	5.5
			Undisclosed	<5	103.0	103.0	33.0	33.0
			Total		19	51.7	30.0	12.7
		Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairyknowe	Catholic	21	133.5	140.0	18.8	10.0
			Other	<5	176.0	176.0	50.5	50.5
			Undisclosed	<5	180.7	122.0	21.0	19.0
			Total		26	142.2	135.0	21.5
		Whitewell/White City	None	<5	90.0	90.0	6.0	6.0
			Protestant	5	114.0	100.0	7.8	4.0
			Undisclosed	<5	130.0	130.0	7.0	7.0
			Total		7	112.9	100.0	7.4
	Shankill	Cambrai/ Woodvale	None	<5	70.0	70.0	2.0	2.0
			Other	<5	60.0	60.0	16.0	16.0
			Protestant	67	82.0	90.0	13.0	5.0
			Undisclosed	<5	42.0	40.0	26.0	29.0
			Total		73	79.6	90.0	13.5
		Mid Shankill	Catholic	<5	112.0	112.0	33.0	33.0
			Other	<5	130.0	130.0	4.0	4.0
			Protestant	34	122.6	120.0	19.1	11.0
			Undisclosed	<5	230.0	230.0	4.0	4.0
			Total		38	128.2	120.0	18.3
		Tudor	Protestant	6	135.7	130.0	17.5	14.5
			Total		6	135.7	130.0	17.5

				Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
	Belfast North Constituency Total		Catholic	377	142.2	140.0	22.5	15.0
			Mixed	10	91.8	101.0	9.1	8.0
			None	36	127.4	127.5	9.1	6.0
			Other	44	113.6	110.0	26.9	25.0
			Protestant	494	101.2	102.0	15.3	8.0
			Refused	5	108.6	85.0	10.2	9.0
			Undisclosed	89	119.4	110.0	21.6	20.0
			Total	1055	118.7	120.0	18.6	11.0
Belfast South	Castlereagh	Belvoir	None	<5	110.7	110.0	8.0	5.0
			Other	<5	119.0	105.0	13.7	14.0
			Protestant	29	164.1	118.0	19.9	12.0
			Undisclosed	<5	205.0	213.0	28.3	25.0
			Total	39	160.7	118.0	19.3	12.0
		Bests Hill	Protestant	<5	112.7	112.0	55.0	29.0
			Total	<5	112.7	112.0	55.0	29.0
		Milltown/Grays Park	Catholic	<5	100.0	100.0	3.0	3.0
			None	<5	110.0	110.0	4.0	4.0
			Other	<5	118.0	118.0	8.5	8.5
			Protestant	<5	90.5	96.0	28.5	9.0
			Total	8	101.0	105.0	17.3	6.0
		Milltown/Shaws Bridge	Protestant	5	21.6	20.0	9.4	3.0
			Undisclosed	<5	64.0	64.0	48.0	48.0
			Total	6	28.7	22.0	15.8	4.0
		Newtownbreda Village	None	<5	114.0	114.0	8.0	8.0
			Protestant	<5	157.3	92.0	18.3	18.0
			Total	<5	146.5	103.0	15.8	17.0
	East Belfast	Rosebery	Catholic	13	137.2	130.0	19.3	16.0
			None	<5	118.0	121.0	16.0	17.0
			Other	13	126.2	130.0	16.9	15.0
			Protestant	63	133.5	124.0	22.4	13.0
			Refused	<5	130.0	130.0	23.0	23.0
			Undisclosed	<5	171.0	116.0	21.3	22.5
			Total	98	133.9	130.0	20.9	14.5
	South Belfast	Annadale	Catholic	<5	142.0	151.0	21.5	12.0
			None	<5	40.0	40.0	16.0	16.0
			Other	<5	93.5	105.0	18.3	16.0
			Protestant	6	109.0	100.0	19.0	19.0
			Undisclosed	<5	139.3	130.0	24.7	26.0
			Total	18	114.1	115.0	20.2	17.5

Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
				Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Cromac	Catholic	36	136.0	128.0	30.0	28.0
			None	<5	103.0	95.0	7.5	5.5
			Other	<5	119.3	118.0	26.7	7.0
			Protestant	<5	145.7	130.0	20.0	16.0
			Undisclosed	<5	124.0	130.0	24.3	23.0
			Total		49	132.1	126.0	27.0
		Donegall Pass	Catholic	<5	110.0	110.0	9.0	9.0
			None	5	80.0	110.0	10.0	10.0
			Other	<5	127.0	127.0	20.5	15.0
			Protestant	12	141.1	114.0	17.4	7.5
			Total		22	123.2	114.0	15.9
		Donegall Road	Catholic	<5	84.0	112.0	14.3	9.0
			None	6	111.7	120.0	14.3	16.0
			Other	17	111.8	112.0	22.5	18.0
			Protestant	84	93.0	98.0	14.5	10.0
			Refused	<5	96.0	96.0	14.5	14.5
			Undisclosed	5	80.4	90.0	14.4	13.0
			Total		117	96.0	100.0	15.6
		Finaghy	Catholic	7	147.1	130.0	17.3	11.0
			Mixed	<5	50.0	50.0	2.0	2.0
			Other	<5	107.0	107.0	21.0	21.0
			Protestant	13	147.3	140.0	24.5	12.0
			Total		23	139.5	132.0	21.0
		Flush Park Belfast	Catholic	<5	121.0	121.0	11.0	11.0
			Other	<5	136.0	136.0	32.0	32.0
			Protestant	<5	140.0	140.0	14.0	14.0
			Undisclosed	<5	320.0	320.0	5.0	5.0
			Total		5	167.6	140.0	14.6
		Lower Ormeau	Catholic	20	142.1	141.0	38.0	29.0
			None	<5	190.0	190.0	19.0	19.0
			Other	<5	145.5	114.0	32.3	40.5
			Protestant	<5	156.0	156.0	44.0	44.0
			Undisclosed	<5	198.0	198.0	25.0	25.0
			Total		28	148.8	148.0	35.8
		Sandy Row	Mixed	<5	130.0	130.0	11.0	11.0
			Other	<5	72.0	72.0	32.0	32.0
			Protestant	27	109.7	107.0	15.3	9.0
			Undisclosed	<5	118.0	118.0	11.0	11.0
			Total		30	109.4	108.5	15.5

				Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
		Stranmillis	Protestant	<5	300.0	300.0	13.0	13.0
			Total	<5	300.0	300.0	13.0	13.0
		Taughmonagh	Other	<5	52.0	52.0	59.0	59.0
			Protestant	10	110.3	113.0	22.2	9.5
			Undisclosed	<5	100.0	100.0	22.0	22.0
			Total	12	104.6	106.0	25.3	15.5
		Ulsterville	Catholic	16	154.6	125.0	32.5	30.0
			Other	<5	156.0	115.0	17.8	12.5
			Protestant	10	207.7	180.0	12.8	8.0
			Undisclosed	<5	123.0	121.0	14.5	15.5
			Total	34	166.6	135.0	22.9	17.5
		Upper Ormeau	Catholic	17	174.3	142.0	21.8	19.0
			Other	<5	130.7	150.0	59.7	27.0
			Protestant	5	165.4	133.0	9.2	8.0
			Refused	<5	140.0	140.0	15.0	15.0
			Undisclosed	<5	161.5	120.0	6.3	5.5
			Total	30	165.6	137.0	21.2	14.0
	Belfast South Constituency Total	Catholic	120	143.8	130.0	27.2	24.0	
		Mixed	<5	90.0	90.0	6.5	6.5	
		None	26	105.4	110.0	11.6	10.5	
		Other	62	120.1	115.0	23.2	17.0	
		Protestant	280	123.3	111.0	18.4	11.0	
		Refused	<5	115.5	116.0	16.8	19.0	
		Undisclosed	33	146.4	122.0	19.3	15.0	
		Total	527	128.0	120.0	20.7	13.0	
Belfast South/ Strangford	Castlereagh	Carryduff	Other	<5	110.0	110.0	29.5	29.5
			Protestant	6	143.0	90.0	23.7	10.0
			Total	8	134.8	97.0	25.1	10.0
	Belfast South/Strangford Constituency Total	Other	<5	110.0	110.0	29.5	29.5	
		Protestant	6	143.0	90.0	23.7	10.0	
		Total	8	134.8	97.0	25.1	10.0	
Belfast West/ North	Shankill	Ainsworth	Catholic	<5	120.0	120.0	4.0	4.0
			None	<5	140.0	140.0	11.0	11.0
			Protestant	12	112.3	103.0	16.8	8.5
			Total	14	114.9	108.0	15.5	8.5
	Twaddell/Upper Woodvale	Protestant	<5	155.5	126.0	13.3	9.0	
		Undisclosed	<5	95.0	95.0	11.0	11.0	
		Total	6	135.3	116.0	12.5	9.0	

				Allocations in 1 Year to 31st March 2014				
Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Religion	Number	Mean av Pts	Median av Pts	Mean av Mths	Median av Mths
	Belfast West/North Constituency Total		Catholic	<5	120.0	120.0	4.0	4.0
			None	<5	140.0	140.0	11.0	11.0
			Protestant	16	123.1	108.0	15.9	8.5
			Undisclosed	<5	95.0	95.0	11.0	11.0
			Total		20	121.0	110.0	14.6

The following caveats should be noted:-

- <5 are cases where numbers are less than 5.
- In relation to the parliamentary constituencies in Belfast a significant problem arises with the boundaries of the Belfast East, Belfast West, Belfast North, Belfast South and Strangford Constituencies. In these areas 5 CLAs cross over parliamentary constituencies. These are:
 - Carryduff which crosses Belfast South and Strangford
 - Ainsworth which crosses Belfast North and Belfast West
 - Twaddell which crosses Belfast North and Belfast West
 - Cregagh which crosses Belfast East and Belfast South
 - Willowfield which crosses Belfast East and Belfast South

If a there has been no applications for a specific Religion category e.g. Mixed in a CLA it will not be included in the tables.

- When a question of "average waiting times" occurs MEAN and MEDIAN average months on the waiting list for those applicants who have been successful in receiving an allocated property over a selected period of time is provided. Reasons for this include:
 - The MEAN is the arithmetic average and as a statistic can often be unreliable, having been skewed by significant outliers, i.e. applicants who have been on the waiting list for a number of years
 - This degree of skewing makes the arithmetic average, the MEAN, unreliable. Therefore, following expert advice on this matter, the NIHE Board has approved a methodology that utilises the MEDIAN (a measure of central tendency) as a more reliable indicator in relation to Waiting Lists and Allocations.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of houses that have been allocated to (i) Catholic; and (ii) Protestant households which were on the housing (a) waiting; and (b) transfer list, in each of the last three years, broken down by each Housing Executive area in Belfast.

(AQW 34403/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has provided the following information:-

- Table A attached provides details of Allocations for one year to 31st March 2013 broken down by Application Type, Religion and Belfast Assembly Constituencies.
- Table B attached provides details of Allocations for one year to 31st March 2014 broken down by Application Type, Religion and Belfast Assembly Constituencies.

The Housing Executive has advised that, due to a recording system change to their Housing Management System (HMS) in July 2011 information for the one year period from 1st April 2011 – 31st March 2012 is not available.

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.

Table A: Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013 broken down by Application Type, Religion & Belfast Assembly Constituencies

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
Application	Belfast East	Castlereagh	Ballybeen	<5	0	0	<5	60	<5	<5	66
			Braniel	<5	0	0	<5	29	0	<5	34

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Brooklands	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	5
			Castlereagh	<5	0	<5	0	10	0	<5	13
			Coronation Park	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Downshire Park	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Galway Drive/ Mews	0	0	<5	0	<5	0	<5	6
			Mawhinney Park	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Moatview Park	0	0	0	<5	6	0	0	8
			Sunderland Road	0	0	0	<5	0	0	0	<5
			Tullycarnet	0	0	<5	0	21	0	<5	24
			Vionville Rural	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	<5	0	<5	5	136	<5	13	161
		East Belfast	Albertbridge Rd.	<5	0	<5	<5	26	0	<5	33
			Ardcarn	0	0	0	0	9	0	<5	11
			Ashfield	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Ballyhackamore	0	0	0	<5	13	0	<5	15
			Bloomfield/ Ravenscroft	0	0	0	6	31	0	<5	38
			Clarawood	0	0	<5	0	17	0	0	18
			Dundela	0	0	<5	<5	8	0	<5	13
			Edenvale	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Garnerville	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	6
			Inverary	<5	0	<5	0	6	0	<5	11
			Knocknagoney	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	9
			Lwr Beersbridge/ The Mount	<5	<5	0	<5	22	0	<5	26
			Newtownards Road	<5	<5	<5	<5	72	0	11	92
			Short Strand	17	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	21
			Summerhill	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Sydenham/ Sandbrook/ Lisavon	<5	<5	5	<5	32	0	6	46
			Wandsworth	0	0	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	6
			Total	26	<5	11	21	259	0	30	350
		Belfast East Constituency Application Total		29	<5	14	26	395	<5	43	511

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
	Belfast West	Lisburn Antrim Street	Areema	7	<5	0	0	<5	0	<5	12
			Beattie	<5	0	0		<5	0	0	6
			Total	9	<5	0		6	0	<5	18
		Lisburn Dairy Farm	Twinbrook-Poleglass	107	0	0	<5	0	0	5	115
			Total	107	0	0	<5	0	0	5	115
		Shankill	Agnes Street	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Ballygomartin/West Circular	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	7
			Brown Square	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5
			Dover	<5	0	0	<5	5	0	<5	9
			Florence/Hopewell	0	0	0	<5	26	0	5	32
			Glencairn	0	0	0	<5	31	<5	6	40
			Highfield	0	0	0	<5	26	0	<5	29
			Lawnbrook	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	6
			Springmartin	0	0	0	0	8	0	<5	9
			Upper Shankill	0	0	0	<5	8	0	0	10
				<5	0	0	8	121	<5	19	150
		West Belfast	Andersonstown	194	<5	0	9	<5	0	11	216
			Ardmoulin	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Ballymurphy	<5	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Beechmount	18	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	21
			Divis Complex	16	0	0	0	0	0	<5	17
			Falls Court/Clonard Cres	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
			Gransha/Downfine	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Grosvenor Road	12	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	14
			Hamill St/John St	8	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	14
			Lower Suffolk	<5	<5	<5	0	8	0	<5	13
			Moyard	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			New Barnsley	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Roden Street	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Springfield Road	16	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	19
			Springhill	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
			Springvale	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			St James	29	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	35
			Turf Lodge	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
			Westrock	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
			Whiterock	<5	0	<5	0	0	0	<5	7
			Total	356	<5	<5	12	15	0	25	414
		Belfast West Constituency Application Total		473	<5	<5	23	142	<5	51	697
	Belfast East/South	Castlereagh	Cregagh Castlereagh	<5	0	<5	<5	34	0	7	46
			Total	<5	0	<5	<5	34	0	7	46
		East Belfast	Willowfield/Upper Castlereagh Road	<5	0	<5	<5	19	0	5	30
			Total	<5	0	<5	<5	19	0	5	30
		Belfast East/South Constituency Application Total		<5	0	<5	<5	53	0	12	76
	Belfast North	Newtownabbey 1	Abbey Glen	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	<5
			Abbeyville	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	12
			Bawnmore/Old Mill Drive	25	0	0	0	<5	0	6	34
			Longlands	5	0	<5	0	0	0	<5	8
			Rathcoole	0	<5	5	<5	84	0	22	116
			Rathfern	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Rushpark	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	8
			Total	35	<5	6	7	96	0	37	182
		Newtownabbey 2	Glenvarna/Glengormley	<5	0	0	0	11	0	<5	14
			Queens Park/Queens Avenue	<5	0	0	<5	10	0	<5	16
			Total	<5	0	0	<5	21	0	<5	30
		North Belfast	Alliance	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	5
			Ardoyne	44	0	<5	<5	<5	0	11	58
			Ballysillan	<5	0	<5	<5	28	0	<5	35
			Carlisle/New Lodge	44	0	0	<5	<5	<5	5	55
			Carrick Hill/Unity Flats	9	0	0	0	0	0	<5	11
			Cavehill	28	0	<5	0	<5	0	<5	35
			Cliftondene	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Cliftonville	51	0	<5	<5	<5	0	12	72

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Duncairn Gardens	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Fairhill	<5	0	0	<5	7	0	<5	12
			Gainsborough	<5	0	<5	<5	21	0	6	32
			Glandore & Dunmore	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Grove Area	<5	0	<5	0	19	0	5	27
			Lower Ligoniel/ Glenbank	<5	0	0	<5	10	0	<5	13
			Lower Oldpark	0	0	<5	0	12	0	0	13
			M/S Flats - Carlisle	14	0	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	18
			Mount Vernon Estate	0	0	0	<5	9	0	<5	12
			Newington/ Limestone	7	0	<5	0	0	0	<5	11
			Oldpark	18	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	22
			Rosewood/ Crumlin RDA	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Ross House Flats/ Mount-vernion Flats	0	0	0	<5	14	0	<5	18
			Shore Road	<5	0	<5	<5	20	0	5	30
			Skegoneill/ Ashfield/ Fortwilliam	<5	0	<5	<5	14	0	<5	25
			Somerton Rd (Sheltered)	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Sunningdale	0	<5	0	0	<5	0	<5	7
			Torrens	7	0	0	0	0	0	<5	10
			Upper & Lower Duncairn	0	0	<5	6	19	0	<5	28
			Upper Ligoniel	18	<5	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	29
			Westland	0	0	<5	0	10	0	0	11
			Wheatfield	0	0	<5	0	10	0	<5	15
			Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairyknowe	18	0	0	0	5	0	<5	27
			Whitewell/White City	0	0	0	<5	8	0	<5	11
			Total	277	<5	22	34	229	<5	92	657
		Shankill	Cambrai/ Woodvale	0	0	0	<5	31	0	7	41

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Mid Shankill	0	0	<5	0	59	0	7	68
			Tudor	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	9
			Total	0	0	<5	<5	99	0	14	118
		Belfast North Constituency Application Total		315	<5	30	48	445	<5	145	987
	Belfast South	Castlereagh	Belvoir	<5	0	<5	<5	45	0	11	59
			Bests Hill	0	<5	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Milltown/Grays Park	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Milltown/Shaws Bridge	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Newtownbreda Village	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	8
			Total	<5	<5	<5	5	52	0	11	73
		South Belfast	Annadale	6	0	<5	5	6	0	<5	20
			Cromac	6	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	12
			Donegall Pass	0	0	<5	5	12	0	<5	23
			Donegall Road	<5	0	0	<5	28	0	<5	38
			Finaghy	<5	0	0	11	20	0	<5	35
			Flush Park Belfast	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Lower Ormeau	28	0	0	9	<5	0	<5	42
			Rosebery	10	0	<5	5	34	0	9	60
			Sandy Row	0	0	<5	<5	21	0	<5	28
			Stranmillis	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	5
			Taughmonagh	0	0	0	<5	13	0	6	22
			Ulsterville	16	<5	<5	9	15	0	14	56
			Upper Ormeau	22	0	0	7	22	0	13	64
			Total	99	<5	8	61	174	0	66	409
		Belfast South Constituency Application Total		102	<5	9	66	226	0	77	482
	Belfast South/Strangford	Castlereagh	Carryduff	<5	0	0	0	5	0	<5	8
			Total	<5	0	0	0	5	0	<5	8
		Belfast South/Strangford Constituency Application Total		<5	0	0	0	5	0	<5	8
	Belfast West/North	Shankill	Ainsworth	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Twaddell/Upper Woodvale	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	6

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Total	0	0	0	0	9	0	<5	10
		Belfast West/North Constituency Application Total		0	0	0	0	9	0	<5	10
NIHE Transfer	Belfast East	Castlereagh	Ballybeen	<5	0	0	0	14	0	<5	17
			Braniel	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Castlereagh	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Galway Drive/ Mews	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Moatview Park	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Tullycarnet	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	9
			Total	<5	0	0	0	33	0	<5	36
		East Belfast	Albertbridge Rd.	0	0	0	0	7	0	<5	9
			Ardcarn	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Ashfield	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Ballyhackamore	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5
			Bloomfield/ Ravenscroft	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Clarawood	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	5
			Edenvale	0	0	<5	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Garnerville	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Inverary	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Knocknagoney	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Lwr Beersbridge/ The Mount	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	7
			Newtownards Road	0	0	<5	0	27	0	5	33
			Short Strand	15	0	0	0	0	0	<5	16
			Summerhill	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Sydenham/ Sandbrook/ Lisavon	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	5
			Wandsworth	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	15	0	<5	<5	72	0	14	104
		Belfast East Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		17	0	<5	<5	105	0	15	140
	Belfast West	Lisburn Antrim Street	Areema	<5	0	0		0	0	<5	5
			Total	<5	0	0		0	0	<5	5
		Lisburn Dairy Farm	Twinbrook- Poleglass	50	0	0		0	0	9	59

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Total	50	0	0		0	0	9	59
		Shankill	Agnes Street	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Ballygomartin/ West Circular	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Brown Square	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Dover	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	8
			Florence/ Hopewell	0	0	0	<5	17	0	0	18
			Glencairn	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5
			Highfield	0	0	0	0	6	0	<5	8
			Lawnbrook	0	0	0	0	15	0	<5	17
			Springmartin	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	6
			Upper Shankill	0	0	0	0	5	0	<5	6
			Total	0	0	0	<5	66	0	7	75
		West Belfast	Andersonstown	92	0	<5	<5	<5	0	11	108
			Ardmoulin	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Ballymurphy	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Beechmount	8	0	0	0	<5	0	0	9
			Cavendish Street	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Divis Complex	8	0	0	0	0	0	<5	9
			Falls Court/ Clonard Cres	5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	6
			Grosvenor Road	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
			Hamill St/John St	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Lower Suffolk	0	0	0	<5	5	0	<5	8
			Moyard	<5	0	0	<5	0	0	0	<5
			New Barnsley	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Rockmount	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Roden Street	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Springfield Park	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Springfield Road	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
			Springhill	8	0	0	0	0	0	<5	9
			Springvale	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			St James	11	0	0	0	0	0	<5	14
			Turf Lodge	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Westrock	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Whiterock	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Total	173	0	<5	5	7	0	22	208
		Belfast West Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		227	0	<5	7	73	0	39	347
	Belfast East/South	Castlereagh	Cregagh Castlereagh	0	0	0	<5	5	0	<5	7
			Total	0	0	0	<5	5	0	<5	7
		East Belfast	Willowfield/Upper Castlereagh Road	0	0	0		6	0	<5	9
			Total	0	0	0		6	0	<5	9
		Belfast East/South Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		0	0	0	<5	11	0	<5	16
	Belfast North	Newtownabbey 1	Abbey Glen	0	<5	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Abbeyville	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Bawnmore/Old Mill Drive	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	6
			Rathcoole	0	0	<5	<5	37	0	12	52
			Rathfern	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Rushpark	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	6
			Total	5	<5	<5	<5	42	0	19	70
		Newtownabbey 2	Glenvarna/Glengormley	0	0	0		<5	0	<5	<5
			Queens Park/Queens Avenue	0	0	<5		<5	0	0	<5
			Total	0	0	<5		<5	0	<5	6
		North Belfast	Ardoyne	12	0	0	0	0	0	<5	14
			Ballysillan	0	0	0	<5	5	0	<5	7
			Carlisle/New Lodge	21	0	0	<5	0	0	6	28
			Carrick Hill/Unity Flats	6	0	0	0	0	0	<5	7
			Cavehill	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	5
			Cliftondene	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Cliftonville	8	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	11
			Fairhill	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Gainsborough	0	0	0	0	7	0	<5	8
			Grove Area	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	7

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Lower Ligoniel/ Glenbank	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Lower Oldpark	<5	0	0	0	9	0	0	11
			M/S Flats - Carlisle	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
			Mount Vernon Estate	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Newington/ Limestone	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Oldpark	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	6
			Ross House Flats/ Mountvernon Flats	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Shore Road	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	9
			Skegoneill/ Ashfield/ Fortwilliam	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	7
			Sunningdale	0	0	0	0	8	0	<5	11
			Torrens	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Upper & Lower Duncairn	0	0	0	0	7	0	<5	8
			Upper Ligoniel	5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	6
			Westland	0	<5	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Wheatfield	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairyknowe	<5	<5	0	<5	0	0	<5	9
			Whitewell/White City	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	76	<5	0	5	68	0	27	178
		Shankill	Cambrai/ Woodvale	0	0	0	0	10	0	<5	11
			Mid Shankill	0	0	0	<5	15	0	<5	18
			Tudor	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	0	0	0	<5	26	0	<5	30
		Belfast North Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		81	<5	<5	8	140	0	50	284
	Belfast South	Castlereagh	Belvoir	0	<5	<5		10	0	<5	15
			Bests Hill	0	0	<5		0	0	0	<5
			Milltown/Grays Park	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Milltown/Shaws Bridge	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Newtownbreda Village	0	0	0		<5	0	<5	<5
			Total	0	<5	<5		14	0	<5	21
		South Belfast	Annadale	0	0	<5	0	<5	0	<5	7
			Cromac	6	0	0	0	0	0	<5	9
			Donegall Pass	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Donegall Road	<5	0	0	<5	30	0	6	39
			Finaghy	<5	<5	0	0	8	0	<5	12
			Flush Park Belfast	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Lower Ormeau	<5	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	6
			Rosebery	0	0	0	<5	10	0	<5	15
			Sandy Row	0	<5	0	0	16	<5	6	24
			Taughmonagh	0	0	0	0	5	0	<5	8
			Ulsterville	<5	0	<5	<5	6	0	<5	11
			Upper Ormeau	5	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	12
			Total	18	<5	<5	7	84	<5	33	148
		Belfast South Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		18	<5	5	7	98	<5	37	169
	Belfast South/Strangford	Castlereagh	Carryduff	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Total	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
		Belfast South/Strangford Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
	Belfast West/North	Shankill	Ainsworth	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Twaddell/Upper Woodvale	0	0	0		6	0	0	6
			Total	0	0	0		8	0	0	8
		Belfast West/North Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		0	0	0		8	0	0	8
Housing Assoc Transfer	Belfast East	Castlereagh	Ballybeen	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Braniel	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Brooklands	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Castlereagh	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Galway Drive/ Mews	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Sunderland Road	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Tullycarnet	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	0	0	0	<5	12	0	<5	15
		East Belfast	Albertbridge Rd.	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Ashfield	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Ballyhackamore	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Bloomfield/ Ravenscroft	0	0	0		<5	0	<5	<5
			Dundela	<5	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Edenvale	0	0	0		<5	0	<5	<5
			Garnerville	<5	0	0		0	0	<5	<5
			Inverary	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Knocknagoney	0	0	0		0	0	<5	<5
			Lwr Beersbridge/ The Mount	0	0	0		0	0	<5	<5
			Newtownards Road	0	0	0		10	0	<5	11
			Short Strand	6	0	0		0	0	<5	7
			Sydenham/ Sandbrook/ Lisavon	0	0	0		<5	0	<5	<5
			Total	8	0	0	<5	24	0	9	41
		Belfast East Constituency HA Transfer Total		8	0	0	<5	36	0	11	56
	Belfast West	Lisburn Antrim Street	Areema	0	0	0		0	0	<5	<5
			Total	0	0	0		0	0	<5	<5
		Lisburn Dairy Farm	Twinbrook- Poleglass	32	0	0		0	0	7	39
			Total	32	0	0		0	0	7	39
		Shankill	Florence/ Hopewell	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Glencairn	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Lawnbrook	0	0	0		0	0	<5	<5
			Upper Shankill	0	0	0		<5	0	<5	<5
			Total	0	0	0		8	0	<5	10
		West Belfast	Andersonstown	48	0	0	0	<5	0	6	55
			Ballymurphy	<5	0	0	<5	0	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Beechmount	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Divis Complex	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Falls Court/ Clonard Cres	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
			Grosvenor Road	5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	6
			Hamill St/John St	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Lower Suffolk	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			New Barnsley	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Springfield Road	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
			Springhill	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			St James	8	0	0	0	0	0	<5	10
			Turf Lodge	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Westrock	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Whiterock	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Total	96	0	0	<5	<5	0	10	108
		Belfast West Constituency HA Transfer Total		128	0	0	<5	9	0	20	158
	Belfast East/South	Castlereagh	Cregagh Castlereagh	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Total	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
		East Belfast	Willowfield/ Upper Castlereagh Road	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
		Belfast East/South Constituency HA Transfer Total		0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	6
	Belfast North	Newtownabbey 1	Abbeyville	<5	0	0		0	0	0	<5
			Bawnmore/Old Mill Drive	6	0	0		0	0	0	6
			Rushpark	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
				7	0	0		<5	0	0	9
		Newtownabbey 2	Queens Park/ Queens Avenue	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
				0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
		North Belfast	Ardoyne	14	0	0	<5	0	0	7	22
			Carlisle/New Lodge	5	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	8

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Carrick Hill/ Unity Flats	0	0	0	<5	0	0	0	<5
			Cavehill	8	0	<5	0	0	0	<5	10
			Cliftonville	17	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	23
			Duncairn Gardens	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Fairhill	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Gainsborough	0	0	0	0	7	0	<5	8
			Grove Area	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Lower Ligoniel/ Glenbank	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Lower Oldpark	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			M/S Flats - Carlisle	0	0	0	<5	0	0	0	<5
			Mount Vernon Estate	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Newington/ Limestone	<5	0	<5	0	0	0	0	5
			Oldpark	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
			Rosewood/ Crumlin RDA	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Ross House Flats/ Mountvernon Flats	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Shore Road	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Skegoneill/ Ashfield/ Fortwilliam	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Sunningdale	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Torrens	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	6
			Upper & Lower Duncairn	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Upper Ligoniel	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairyknowe	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	65	0	<5	5	20	0	23	115
		Shankill	Cambrai/ Woodvale	0	0	<5		7	0	10	18
			Mid Shankill	<5	0	0		10	0	<5	12
			Tudor	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Total	<5	0	<5		19	0	11	32

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2013							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
		Belfast North Constituency HA Transfer Total		73	0	<5	5	42	0	34	157
	Belfast South	Castlereagh	Belvoir	0	0	0		<5	0	<5	<5
			Milltown/Shaws Bridge	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Newtownbreda Village	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Total	0	0	0		5	0	<5	6
		South Belfast	Annadale	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Cromac	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
			Finaghy	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Flush Park Belfast	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Lower Ormeau	8	0	0	0	0	0	<5	9
			Rosebery	<5	0	0	<5	9	0	5	16
			Sandy Row	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Taughmonagh	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Ulsterville	5	0	0	5	8	0	<5	20
			Upper Ormeau	6	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	9
			Total	26	0	0	10	22	0	13	71
		Belfast South Constituency HA Transfer Total		26	0	0	10	27	0	14	77
	Belfast West/North	Shankill	Ainsworth	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
			Total	0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5
		Belfast West/North Constituency HA Transfer Total		0	0	0		<5	0	0	<5

Table B: Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014 broken down by Application Type, Religion & Belfast Assembly Constituencies

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
Application	Belfast East	Castlereagh	Ballybeen	0	0	<5	<5	53	0	<5	57
			Braniel	<5	0	<5	0	40	0	<5	43
			Brooklands	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Castlereagh	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Coronation Park	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Downshire Park	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	<5
			Galway Drive/ Mews	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	7
			Moatview Park	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Sunderland Road	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Tullycarnet	0	0	<5	<5	38	<5	<5	42
			Vionville Rural	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	<5	0	<5	5	149	<5	5	164
		East Belfast	Albertbridge Rd.	5	0	<5	7	40	0	<5	56
			Ardcarn	<5	0	0	0	10	0	<5	12
			Ashfield	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Ballyhackamore	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	9
			Bloomfield/ Ravenscroft	<5	0	<5	<5	30	0	5	43
			Bridge End, Rotherdam Court	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Clarawood	0	0	0	0	17	0	<5	18
			Dundela	<5	0	0	<5	10	0	0	12
			Edenvale	0	0	<5	0	<5	0	0	5
			Garnerville	0	0	<5	<5	8	<5	<5	13
			Inverary	<5	0	0	<5	21	0	<5	28
			Knocknagoney	0	0	<5	0	5	0	0	6
			Lwr Beersbridge/ The Mount	<5	<5	<5	7	30	<5	<5	46
			Newtownards Road	5	<5	<5	6	86	0	9	110
			Short Strand	18	0	0	0	0	0	<5	20
			Summerhill	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Sydenham/ Sandbrook/ Lisavon	<5	0	<5	6	12	0	<5	23
			Wandsworth	0	0	<5	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	41	<5	13	35	288	<5	28	409
		Belfast East Constituency Application Total		42	<5	16	40	437	<5	33	573
	Belfast West	Lisburn Antrim Street	Areema	5	0	0	<5	<5	0	5	15
			Beattie	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Total	7	0	0	<5	<5	0	7	19

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
		Lisburn Dairy Farm	Twinbrook-Poleglass	126	<5	<5	<5	0	0	8	140
			Total	126	<5	<5	<5	0	0	8	140
		Shankill	Agnes Street	0	0	0	0	9	0	<5	10
			Ballygomartin/ West Circular	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	6
			Brown Square	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Dover	0	0	<5	0	13	0	<5	15
			Florence/ Hopewell	0	0	<5	<5	25	<5	<5	32
			Glencairn	0	0	0	0	35	0	<5	37
			Highfield	0	0	<5	0	22	0	<5	26
			Lawnbrook	0	0	0	0	5	0	<5	7
			Springmartin	0	0	0	0	10	0	<5	11
			Upper Shankill	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	13
			Total	0	0	<5	<5	137	<5	13	159
		West Belfast	Andersonstown	113	0	<5	<5	<5	0	9	129
			Ballymurphy	<5	0	0	<5	0	0	0	<5
			Beechmount	10	0	<5	0	0	0	<5	12
			Cavendish Street	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
			Divis Complex	8	0	0	0	0	0	<5	10
			Falls Court/ Clonard Cres	44	0	0	0	0	<5	0	45
			Gransha/ Downfine	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Grosvenor Road	38	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	42
			Hamill St/John St	9	0	0	0	<5	0	0	11
			Lower Suffolk	<5	0	0	0	14	0	0	16
			Moyard	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			New Barnsley	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Roden Street	10	0	0	0	0	0	<5	11
			Springfield Road	17	0	0	<5	0	0	0	19
			Springhill	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
			Springvale	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			St James	19	0	0	0	0	0	<5	20
			Turf Lodge	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
			Westrock	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Whiterock	10	0	0	0	<5	0	0	11
			Total	315	0	5	7	18	<5	16	362
		Belfast West Constituency Application Total		448	<5	10	16	159	<5	44	680
	Belfast East/South	Castlereagh	Cregagh Castlereagh	5	0	<5	<5	37	0	<5	48
			Total	5	0	<5	<5	37	0	<5	48
		East Belfast	Willowfield/ Upper Castlereagh Road	<5	0	<5	<5	20	0		26
			Total	<5	0	<5	<5	20	0		26
		Belfast East/South Constituency Application Total		7	0	5	<5	57	0	<5	74
	Belfast North	Newtownabbey 1	Abbey Glen	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Abbeyville	<5	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Bawnmore/Old Mill Drive	8	0	<5	<5	0	0	0	10
			Longlands	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
			Rathcoole	<5	0	<5	<5	76	<5	10	94
			Rathfern	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	5
			Rushpark	0	0	<5	0	21	0	<5	25
			Total	18	<5	5	5	100	<5	14	144
		Newtownabbey 2	Glenvarna/ Glengormley	0	0	<5	<5	10	0	<5	16
			Queens Park/ Queens Avenue	0	0	<5	0	18	0	<5	21
			Total	0	0	<5	<5	28	0	5	37
		North Belfast	Alliance	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	<5
			Ardoyne	62	<5	0	0	0	0	<5	68
			Ballysillan	<5	<5	<5	<5	22	<5	<5	34
			Carlisle/New Lodge	61	0	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	67
			Carrick Hill/ Unity Flats	5	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	8
			Cavehill	29	<5	<5	<5	<5	0	5	40
			Cliftondene	<5	<5	<5	0	0	0	0	<5
			Cliftonville	69	<5	<5	11	<5	0	9	94
			Duncairn Gardens	<5	0	<5	0	0	0	0	<5
			Fairhill	0	0	<5	<5	<5	0	0	7

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Gainsborough	<5	0	<5	6	29	0	6	45
			Grove Area	<5	0	<5	0	6	0	<5	12
			Lower Ligoniel/ Glenbank	0	0	0	<5	15	0	<5	20
			Lower Oldpark	<5	0	0	<5	29	0	5	38
			M/S Flats - Carlisle	26	0	<5	0	<5	0	<5	32
			Mount Vernon Estate	0	0	0	0	9	<5	0	10
			Newington/ Limestone	16	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	20
			Oldpark	16	0	0	0	0	0	<5	19
			Ross House Flats/ Mountvernon Flats	0	0	0	0	16	<5	<5	18
			Shore Road	0	0	0	<5	15	0	<5	19
			Skegoneill/ Ashfield/ Fortwilliam	8	<5	0	0	16	0	<5	26
			Sunningdale	<5	0	<5	0	22	<5	<5	28
			Torrens	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	5
			Upper & Lower Duncairn	0	<5	<5	<5	44	0	<5	50
			Upper Ligoniel	23	<5	0	<5	0	0	<5	28
			Westland	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	8
			Wheatfield	<5	0	<5	<5	14	0	<5	19
			Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairyknowe	21	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	26
			Whitewell/White City	0	0	<5	0	5	0	<5	7
			Total	358	9	27	35	259	<5	65	757
		Shankill	Cambrai/ Woodvale	0	0	<5	<5	67	0	<5	73
			Mid Shankill	<5	0	0	<5	34	0	<5	38
			Tudor	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	6
			Total	<5	0	<5	<5	107	0	5	117
		Belfast North Constituency Application Total		377	10	36	44	494	5	89	1055
	Belfast South	Castlereagh	Belvoir	0	0	<5	<5	29	0	<5	39
			Bests Hill	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Milltown/Grays Park	<5	0	<5	<5	<5	0	0	8
			Milltown/Shaws Bridge	0	0	0	0	5	0	<5	6
			Newtownbreda Village	0	0	<5	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	<5	0	5	5	44	0	5	60
		East Belfast	Rosebery	13	0	<5	13	63	<5	<5	98
			Total	13	0	<5	13	63	<5	<5	98
		South Belfast	Annadale	<5	0	<5	<5	6	0	<5	18
			Cromac	36	0	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	49
			Donegall Pass	<5	0	5	<5	12	0	0	22
			Donegall Road	<5	0	6	17	84	<5	5	117
			Finaghy	7	<5	0	<5	13	0	0	23
			Flush Park Belfast	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	5
			Lower Ormeau	20	0	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	28
			Sandy Row	0	<5	0	<5	27	0	<5	30
			Stranmillis	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Taughmonagh	0	0	0	<5	10	0	<5	12
			Ulsterville	16	0	0	<5	10	0	<5	34
			Upper Ormeau	17	0	0	<5	5	<5	<5	30
			Total	106	<5	17	44	173	<5	24	369
		Belfast South Constituency Application Total		120	<5	26	62	280	<5	33	527
	Belfast South/Strangford	Castlereagh	Carryduff	0	0	0	<5	6	0	0	8
			Total	0	0	0	<5	6	0	0	8
		Belfast South/Strangford Constituency Application Total		0	0	0	<5	6	0	0	8
	Belfast West/North	Shankill	Ainsworth	<5	0	<5	0	12	0	0	14
			Twaddell/Upper Woodvale	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	6
			Total	<5	0	<5	0	16	0	<5	20
		Belfast West/North Constituency Application Total		<5	0	<5	0	16	0	<5	20
NIHE Transfer	Belfast East	Castlereagh	Ballybeen	0	0	<5	0	8	0	<5	11
			Braniel	0	0	<5	0	13	0	0	14
			Brooklands	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Castlereagh	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Downshire Park	0	0	0	<5	0	0	0	<5
			Galway Drive/ Mews	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Rosewood Park	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Tullycarnet	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	15
			Vionville Rural	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	0	0	<5	<5	46	0	<5	52
		East Belfast	Albertbridge Rd.	0	0	0	<5	10	0	<5	12
			Ballyhackamore	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Bloomfield/ Ravenscroft	0	0	0	<5	10	0	0	11
			Clarawood	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	5
			Dundela	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Edenvale	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Garnerville	0	0	<5	0	<5	0	<5	5
			Inverary	0	0	0	0	10	0	<5	12
			Knocknagoney	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Lwr Beersbridge/ The Mount	0	0	<5	0	10	0	<5	12
			Newtownards Road	<5	0	<5	<5	23	0	5	31
			Short Strand	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
			Summerhill	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Sydenham/ Sandbrook/ Lisavon	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	8
			Wandsworth	0	0	0	0	5	0	<5	6
			Total	12	0	<5	<5	92	0	14	125
		Belfast East Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		12	0	5	5	138	0	17	177
	Belfast West	Lisburn Antrim Street	Areema	0	0	0	0	<5	0		<5
			Total	0	0	0	0	<5	0		<5
		Lisburn Dairy Farm	Twinbrook- Poleglass	43	0	0	0	0	0	5	48
			Total	43	0	0	0	0	0	5	48
		Shankill	Agnes Street	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Ballygomartin/ West Circular	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Brown Square	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Dover	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Florence/Hopewell	0	0	<5	0	19	0	<5	22
			Glencairn	0	0	0	<5	11	0	<5	14
			Highfield	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	5
			Lawnbrook	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Springmartin	0	0	0	0	8	0	<5	11
			Upper Shankill	0	0	0	<5	13	0	0	14
			Total	0	0	<5	<5	66	0	8	78
		West Belfast	Andersonstown	34	0	<5	<5	0	0	7	44
			Ardmoulin	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Ballymurphy	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Beechmount	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Divis Complex	10	0	0	<5	0	0	0	12
			Falls Court/Clonard Cres	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
			Grosvenor Road	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
			Hamill St/John St	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Lower Suffolk	<5	0	<5	<5	10	0	0	14
			Moyard	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			New Barnsley	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Roden Street	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Springfield Park	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Springfield Road	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Springhill	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			St James	7	0	0	0	0	0	<5	10
			Turf Lodge	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
			Total	103	0	<5	5	10	0	10	130
		Belfast West Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		146	0	<5	8	77	0	23	257
	Belfast East/South	Castlereagh	Cregagh Castlereagh	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0		<5
			Total	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0		<5
		East Belfast	Willowfield/Upper Castlereagh Road	0	0	0	0	7	0	<5	8

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Total	0	0	0	0	7	0	<5	8
		Belfast East/South Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		<5	0	0	<5	9	0	<5	12
	Belfast North	Newtownabbey 1	Bawnmore/Old Mill Drive	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Longlands	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Rathcoole	0	0	<5	0	32	0	5	39
			Rathfern	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Rushpark	<5	0	0	0	5	0	0	6
			Total	<5	0	<5	0	38	0	5	48
		Newtownabbey 2	Glenvarna/Glengormley	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Queens Park/Queens Avenue	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	6
		North Belfast	Alliance	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Ardoyne	17	0	0	0	0	0	<5	18
			Ballysillan	0	0	0	<5	10	0	<5	12
			Carlisle/New Lodge	11	0	0	0	0	0	<5	15
			Cavehill	<5	0	<5	0	0	0	0	5
			Cliftonville	9	0	0	0	0	0	<5	10
			Fairhill	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Gainsborough	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	9
			Glandore & Dunmore	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Grove Area	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	5
			Lower Ligoniel/Glenbank	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5
			Lower Oldpark	0	0	0	<5	10	0	<5	14
			M/S Flats - Carlisle	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Mount Vernon Estate	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	5
			Newington/Limestone	10	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	13
			Oldpark	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
			Rosewood/Crumlin RDA	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Ross House Flats/ Mountvernon Flats	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Shore Road	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	7
			Skegoneill/ Ashfield/ Fortwilliam	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	6
			Somerton Rd (Sheltered)	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Sunningdale	0	0	0	0	11	0	<5	13
			Torrens	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Upper & Lower Duncairn	0	0	<5	<5	21	0	<5	24
			Upper Ligoniel	7	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	9
			Westland	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Wheatfield	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairyknowe	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Whitewell/White City	0	0	<5	0	5	<5	0	7
			Total	69	0	<5	6	103	<5	21	203
		Shankill	Cambrai/ Woodvale	0	0	0	0	9	0	<5	11
			Mid Shankill	0	0	0	<5	6	0	<5	9
			Tudor	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	0	0	0	<5	16	0	<5	21
		Belfast North Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		74	0	5	9	159	<5	30	278
	Belfast South	Castlereagh	Belvoir	0	0	<5	0	<5	0	0	5
			Bests Hill	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Milltown/Grays Park	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Milltown/Shaws Bridge	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Newtownbreda Village	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	0	0	<5	0	9	0	0	10
		East Belfast	Rosebery	<5	<5	0	<5	24	0	<5	31
			Total	<5	<5	0	<5	24	0	<5	31
		South Belfast	Annadale	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Cromac	<5	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	6
			Donegall Pass	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	9
			Donegall Road	<5	0	0	<5	60	0	<5	68
			Finaghy	0	0	<5	0	9	0	<5	11
			Flush Park Belfast	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Lower Ormeau	<5	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5	5
			Sandy Row	0	0	0	0	16	0	0	16
			Taughmonagh	<5	0	0	0	5	0	<5	9
			Ulsterville	<5	0	<5	0	<5	0	0	5
			Upper Ormeau	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	0	<5	9
			Total	12	<5	<5	5	105	0	15	142
		Belfast South Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		15	<5	5	6	138	0	16	183
	Belfast South/Strangford	Castlereagh	Carryduff	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	5
			Total	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	5
		Belfast South/Strangford Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	5
	Belfast West/North	Shankill	Ainsworth	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	6
			Twaddell/Upper Woodvale	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Total	0	0	0	0	7	0	<5	8
		Belfast West/North Constituency NIHE Transfer Total		0	0	0	0	7	0	<5	8
Housing Assoc Transfer	Belfast East	Castlereagh	Ballybeen	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Braniel	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Brooklands	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Castlereagh	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Downshire Park	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Galway Drive/Mews	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Sunderland Road	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	0	0	0	<5	9	0	<5	11
		East Belfast	Albertbridge Rd.	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Ballyhackamore	0	0	0	<5	0	0	0	<5
			Bloomfield/ Ravenscroft	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Dundela	0	0	<5	0	<5	0	<5	5
			Garnerville	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Inverary	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Lwr Beersbridge/ The Mount	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	6
			Newtownards Road	0	0	0	<5	18	0	<5	21
			Short Strand	5	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	7
			Sydenham/ Sandbrook/ Lisavon	0	0	0	0	5	0	<5	7
			Wandsworth	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	5	0	<5	<5	40	0	9	59
		Belfast East Constituency HA Transfer Total		5	0	<5	5	49	0	10	70
	Belfast West	Lisburn Antrim Street	Areema	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Total	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
		Lisburn Dairy Farm	Twinbrook- Poleglass	17	0	0	0	0	0	6	23
			Total	17	0	0	0	0	0	6	23
		Shankill	Brown Square	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Dover	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Florence/ Hopewell	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	5
			Glencairn	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	6
			Lawnbrook	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Springmartin	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Upper Shankill	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Total	<5	0	0	0	14	0	<5	19
		West Belfast	Andersonstown	19	0	0	0	0	0	<5	21
			Ballymurphy	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Beechmount	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Cavendish Street	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Falls Court/ Clonard Cres	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
			Grosvenor Road	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Hamill St/John St	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Moyard	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			New Barnsley	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Roden Street	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Springfield Road	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Springhill	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Springvale	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			St James	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Turf Lodge	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Westrock	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Total	53	0	0	0	0	0	5	58
		Belfast West Constituency HA Transfer Total		72	0	0	0	14	0	15	101
	Belfast East/South	Castlereagh	Cregagh Castlereagh	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	7
			Total	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	7
		East Belfast	Willowfield/Upper Castlereagh Road	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	5
			Total	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	5
		Belfast East/South Constituency HA Transfer Total		0	0	0	0	8	0	<5	12
	Belfast North	Newtownabbey 1	Bawnmore/Old Mill Drive	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Longlands	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Rathcoole	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	<5	0	0	0	<5	0		6
		Newtownabbey 2	Glenvarna/Glengormley	0	0	0	0	5	0	<5	6
			Queens Park/Queens Avenue	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Total	0	0	0	0	5	0	<5	7
		North Belfast	Alliance	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Ardoyne	12	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	15
			Carlisle/New Lodge	5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	9
			Carrick Hill/Unity Flats	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Cavehill	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Cliftondene	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Cliftonville	10	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	13
			Gainsborough	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Lower Ligoniel/ Glenbank	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Lower Oldpark	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Mount Vernon Estate	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Newington/ Limestone	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	17
			Oldpark	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Skegoneill/ Ashfield/ Fortwilliam	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Somerton Rd (Sheltered)	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Sunningdale	0	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	5
			Torrens	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Upper Ligoniel	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5
			Whitewell/Lwr Whitewell Rd. Fairyknowe	6	0	0	0	0	0	<5	7
			Whitewell/White City	0	0	0	<5	0	0	0	<5
			Total	61	0	0	<5	9	0	16	90
		Shankill	Cambrai/ Woodvale	0	<5	0	0	9	0	25	35
			Mid Shankill	0	0	0	0	6	0	<5	9
			Total	0	<5	0	0	15	0	28	44
		Belfast North Constituency HA Transfer Total		64	<5	0	<5	32	0	46	147
	Belfast South	Castlereagh	Belvoir	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Bests Hill	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Milltown/Shaws Bridge	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Newtownbreda Village	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	<5
			Total	0	0	0	0	<5	0	<5	6
		East Belfast	Rosebery	<5	0	0	<5	18	0	6	26
			Total	<5	0	0	<5	18	0	6	26
		South Belfast	Annadale	<5	0	0	0	0	0	0	<5

Application Type	Assembly Constituency	NIHE Local Office	CLA	Allocations for 1 year to 31st March 2014							Total
				Catholic	Mixed	None	Other	Protestant	Refused	Undisclosed	
			Cromac	<5	0	0	0	0	0	<5	<5
			Donegall Pass	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Donegall Road	0	0	0	<5	11	0	<5	15
			Finaghy	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Flush Park Belfast	<5	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Lower Ormeau	<5	0	0	<5	0	0	<5	<5
			Taughmonagh	0	0	0	0	<5	0	0	<5
			Ulsterville	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0	<5	7
			Upper Ormeau	<5	0	0	<5	<5	0	0	<5
			Total	12	0	0	6	19	0	5	42
		Belfast South Constituency HA Transfer Total		13	0	0	7	41	0	13	74

The following caveats should be noted:-

- <5 are cases where numbers are less than 5.
- In relation to the parliamentary constituencies in Belfast a significant problem arises with the boundaries of the Belfast East, Belfast West, Belfast North, Belfast South and Strangford Constituencies. In these areas five CLA's cross over parliamentary constituencies. These are:
 - Carryduff which crosses Belfast South and Strangford
 - Ainsworth which crosses Belfast North and Belfast West
 - Twaddell which crosses Belfast North and Belfast West
 - Cregagh which crosses Belfast East and Belfast South
 - Willowfield which crosses Belfast East and Belfast South
- If a CLA has had no allocations it will not be included in the tables e.g. Belfast South/Strangford (CLA Carryduff) had no allocations by HA Transfer.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development what budget is available to reroof Housing Executive properties in Chichester Park, Ballymena; and to detail the when this work will be completed.

(AQW 35286/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that a re-roofing scheme for 89 – 105A Chichester Park East is currently programmed with a start date of March 2015. They have further advised they are unable to put forward budget details or a completion date until a Consultant has been appointed, which is likely to take place before the end of October 2014.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of social houses that have been allocated by the Housing Executive to foreign nationals, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35289/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because due to a recording system change in the Housing Executive's Housing Management System in July 2011, equality based information for allocations in the year from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 is not available.

However, the Housing Executive has provided the following information relating to the financial years 2012/13 and 2013/14:-

2012/13 – total allocations from the waiting list was 8,134 (of which 4,312 are undisclosed and less than five refused). Of this, a total of 246 allocations were made to households who had declared a nationality other than British, Northern Irish, Irish, Refused or Undisclosed.

2013/14 – total allocations from the waiting list was 8,809 (of which 3,039 are undisclosed and six refused). Of this, a total of 403 allocations were made to households who had declared a nationality other than British, Northern Irish, Irish, Refused or Undisclosed.

The "nationality" of a household is based on a self-reported answer to a question asked during the housing application process. This question was added during the review of the process in 2011.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the resources available to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to ensure the safeguarding of vulnerable adults as Housing Executive customers.

(AQW 35409/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that safeguarding vulnerable adults who use their offices and services is a matter of priority. The Housing Executive has a zero-tolerance of abuse wherever it occurs and has in place a robust and effective policy to address abuse of vulnerable adults. This policy is supported by resources to ensure effective and efficient responses to allegations of abuse, concerns that abuse may have taken place or disclosures of abuse from vulnerable adults.

The Housing Executive's Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy is intended to cover all functions and services of the Housing Executive where there is the potential for direct or indirect contact with vulnerable adults.

The safeguarding policy applies to everyone involved with the organisation, including members of the Housing Executive Board, senior and all managers, staff, vulnerable adults and their carers, advocates and visitors. The Housing Executive also requires all contractors, groups, and organisations that use its premises or services, or organisations that are funded by the Housing Executive to provide services, to have an acceptable Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy in place.

The Housing Executive's Director of Corporate Services has ultimate responsibility for ensuring compliance with this policy. Day to day responsibility for implementation is delegated through the management structure to the Equality Unit Manager. Managers have a responsibility to ensure this policy is complied with by staff and any other persons associated with their functional responsibility.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development what analysis has been completed on the effectiveness of the IT system used in Britain for processing Universal Credit.

(AQW 35443/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The piloting of Universal Credit in Great Britain (Universal Credit Live Service) by the Department for Work and Pensions has been designed to test the effectiveness of the ICT system, the claimant experience and inform the ongoing development of processes and systems before further expansion.

The Department for Work and Pensions began the phased introduction of Universal Credit in Great Britain for single jobseekers on 29th April 2013. The Live Service caseload continues to grow at pace and is now available to claimants living in 38 areas of England, Scotland and Wales. Claims are now being taken from couples and it is currently planned that in autumn 2014 claims from families will start to be taken. The current planning assumption is that by the end of the year there will be 90, or one in eight, Jobcentres delivering Universal Credit in Great Britain.

DWP are continuing to approach the rollout of Universal Credit in a careful, safe and controlled manner. The provision of digital access to claim Universal Credit continues to prove popular with consistently over 90 per cent of claims being made online.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the new build social housing projects planned in Ballymena Borough Council area.

(AQW 35448/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In Ballymena Borough Council area there are six schemes totalling 94 units currently under construction. These are at:-

- St Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena (Fold) - 49 family units
- Cushendall Road, Ballymena - (Triangle) - 5 learning disability units
- Braidwater Quay, Ballymena (Triangle) - 17 mental health units
- PSNI Kells, (Triangle) - 6 family units
- 29-37 Larne Street, Ballymena (Trinity) - 11 family units
- Pentagon House, Ballymena (Ulidia) - 6 vulnerable women units

In addition, the Social Housing Development Programme for 2014/15 - 2016/17 includes eight new build schemes totalling 256 homes. These are at:

- Larne Road, Ballymena (Oaklee Trinity) - 74 family units - to start 2014/15
- Mill House, Ballymena (Triangle) - 21 homeless units - to start 2014/15
- Market Road, Ballymena (Oaklee Trinity) - 27 family units - to start 2014/15
- Templemoyle, Kells (Ark) - 6 family units - to start 2014/15
- Larne Road, Ballymena (Clanmil) - 32 family units - to start 2015/16
- Waveney Rd, Ballymena (Oaklee Trinity) - 14 family units - to start 2015/16
- Cushendall Road, Ballymena (Fold) - 60 family units - to start 2015/16

- Railway Street, Ballymena (Fold) - 22 family units - to start 2016/17

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the new build social housing projects planned in Ballymoney Borough Council area.

(AQW 35449/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Social Housing Development Programme 2014/15 - 2016/17 for Ballymoney Borough Council area includes two new schemes totalling 12 units. These are at:

- Balnamore, Ballymoney (Ark Housing) - 3 family units - to start 2014/15.
- Garryduff Road, Ballymoney (Triangle) - 9 learning disability units - to start 2014/15.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the new build social housing projects planned in Moyle District Council area.

(AQW 35450/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In Moyle District Council area one scheme of seven family houses is currently under construction by Triangle Housing at Ramoan Road, Ballycastle.

In addition, the Social Housing Development Programme for 2014/15 - 2016/17 includes three new build schemes totalling 40 new homes. These are at:

- Waterfoot, Ballycastle (Ark Housing) - 6 family units - to start 2014/15.
- Fairhill Street, Ballycastle (Habinteg) - 6 family units - to start 2014/15.
- Rathmoyle, Ballycastle (Apex) - 28 frail elderly units - to start 2015/16.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development what action his Department is taking to increase awareness amongst tenants of the importance of checking that their landlords have registered with the Landlord Registration Scheme.

(AQW 35499/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department takes a multifaceted approach to increasing awareness of the Landlord Registration Scheme for both landlords and tenants.

- The original advertising campaign comprised of (television, online and printed media) advertisements and leaflets highlighting the requirement on landlords to register and the responsibility on tenants and potential tenants to check that their landlord is registered.
- In June and July, my Department delivered a series of road shows for Environmental Health Officers from each Council in Northern Ireland. At these road shows, the original message was reinforced through a website demonstration, a presentation and additional distribution of leaflets. During September, my Department is attending seven University "freshers" events across Northern Ireland, allowing direct communication with current and potential student tenants as well as university support staff. The focus of this planned communication will be on the rights and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords. The requirement on landlords to register will form a significant aspect of this.
- A further advertising campaign is planned to commence in November. It is envisaged its key messages will be:
 - All landlords are required to register by February 2015;
 - All tenants should check that their landlord is registered; and
 - Tenants should report unregistered landlords to their local Council.

It is likely that these communication initiatives will be reviewed in the first half of 2015.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of staff employed in his Department broken down by grade; and (ii) the total salary for each grade, for each financial year since 1 April 2010.

(AQW 35516/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The number of staff at each grade and total salary cost at each grade for the years requested are shown in the tables below:

1 April 2010- 31 March 2011

Grade	Number	Salary Cost £
Senior Civil Service	16	1226589.00
Grade 6	14	791643.00
Grade 7	84	3766338.07
Deputy Principal	193	6834292.44
Staff Officer	428	12003076.81

Grade	Number	Salary Cost £
Executive Officer 1	616	14716292.61
Executive Officer 2	1922	38733273.93
Administrative Officer	3520	63364817.54
Administrative Assistant	713	10737213.87
Total	7506	152173537.27

1 April 2011- 31 March 2012

Grade	Number	Salary Cost £
Senior Civil Service	17	1254758.00
Grade 6	13	735800.00
Grade 7	90	4090486.33
Deputy Principal	205	7371370.00
Staff Officer	397	11242103.09
Executive Officer 1	601	14401490.92
Executive Officer 2	1893	38297427.18
Administrative Officer	3478	64154964.73
Administrative Assistant	677	10521808.60
Total	7371	152070208.85

1 April 2012- 31 March 2013

Grade	Number	Salary Cost £
Senior Civil Service	18	1310542.00
Grade 6	17	980325.00
Grade 7	96	4556956.51
Deputy Principal	208	7507716.31
Staff Officer	441	12798626.63
Executive Officer 1	613	15212471.50
Executive Officer 2	2037	44732887.12
Administrative Officer	3358	63945422.55
Administrative Assistant	668	10559051.56
Total	7456	161603999.18

1 April 2013- 31 March 2014

Grade	Number	Salary Cost £
Senior Civil Service	17	1215461.40
Grade 6	20	1179148.00
Grade 7	103	5037197.76
Deputy Principal	250	9203353.86
Staff Officer	482	14147431.34
Executive Officer 1	569	14500077.32
Executive Officer 2	1966	44247839.66
Administrative Officer	3432	66513753.54
Administrative Assistant	638	10189362.02

Grade	Number	Salary Cost £
Total	7477	166233624.90

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the Housing Associations which are actively interested in providing suitable social housing for older people; and (ii) the housing schemes underway, or that are planned, for the West Tyrone constituency, as well as the procedures involved for securing necessary schemes in the future.

(AQW 35575/11-15)

Mr McCausland:

- (i) There are currently six housing associations; Apex, Ark, Clanmil, Helm, Oaklee/Trinity and Ulidia actively providing social housing designed specifically for older people across Northern Ireland, as part of the Social Housing Development Programme 2014/15 - 2016/17.
- (ii) There are currently no social housing schemes under construction in the West Tyrone Parliamentary Constituency. The following are programmed to be delivered through the Social Housing Development Programme 2014/15 - 2016/17. None, however, are designed specifically for older people.
 - Railway Court, Omagh (Apex) - 16 learning disability - to start 2014/15
 - Omagh Town (Habinteg) - 1 physical disability - to start 2014/15
 - Omagh Town (Apex) - 8 young people leaving care - to start 2015/16
- (iii) The procedures for securing social housing schemes differ depending on whether the housing is classified as general needs or supported housing.

General needs housing includes mainstream family/singles housing and housing designed specifically for relatively fit older people. The need for general needs housing is determined by the Housing Executive which carries out a Housing Needs Assessment on an annual basis and calculates a five year projection of need for local areas. These projections are published on the Housing Executive's website in an Unmet Need Prospectus which allows housing associations to bring forward proposals to meet that need and then bid for a slot in the Social Housing Development Programme.

In instances where local councillors/community groups perceive there is a demand but a lack of accommodation for specific client groups in a given area, the Housing Executive can carry out latent need testing to determine any hidden need.

Supported housing caters for a wide range of vulnerable groups, including sheltered housing for the elderly and housing with care for the frail elderly. Supported housing is normally provided through a commissioning process initiated by the relevant Health Trust leading to a partnership approach between the Trust, the Housing Executive and a nominated housing association. The housing association will deliver the scheme on the ground.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development why income from Child Tax Credit is not disregarded when calculating entitlement to Housing Benefit.

(AQW 35607/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit replaced Children's Tax Credit, Working Families Tax Credit, Disabled Person's Tax Credit, and elements of the New Deal 50+. In addition, support for children paid through the benefit system was also integrated into Child Tax Credit. The Tax Credit system aims to create a secure means of support which spans both welfare and work and unlike most other benefits, Tax Credits are paid by HM Revenue and Customs.

Housing Benefit is a social security benefit paid by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. It helps people on a low income pay their rent and rates, and claimants do not need to be unemployed to receive it.

For pension age claims, Child Tax Credit is disregarded when calculating entitlement to Housing Benefit, whilst for working-age claims, Child Tax Credit is treated as unearned income as Housing Benefit is disregarded in the calculation of Tax Credit entitlement, in accordance with the Tax Credit (Definition and calculation of Income) Regulations 2002. In recognition of this disregard it is reasonable to take Tax Credit payments into account when calculating Housing Benefit entitlement. To do otherwise would amount to the Government paying a double financial provision.

For the purposes of Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit is treated as income other than earnings as it is income which is not earnings from employment, or substitute income (in the form of Statutory Sick Pay, for example). It is worth noting that if a claimant remains entitled to Income Support, income-based Jobseekers Allowance, or income-related Employment and Support Allowance, the whole of their income is disregarded.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development when he expects the full implementation of the plan to improve Portrush Harbour and the associated works.

(AQW 35637/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department is preparing a business case for the appointment of consultants to carry out environmental and economic impact assessments and develop a detailed masterplan for the Portrush Harbour area. This work will support

any subsequent planning applications and assess the viability of the project. The appointment is subject to the completion of a satisfactory business case and funds being made available in the Department's budget.

I have met with other Ministerial colleagues to discuss this project and some other regeneration proposals for the town. These are very significant development opportunities which can promote the resort town as an international destination, particularly in preparation for hosting the prestigious British Open at Royal Portrush in 2019.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Social Development to detail his Department's efforts to achieve maximum uptake of social welfare entitlements, particularly in West Tyrone.

(AQW 35644/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Through the network of 35 local and centralised offices, my Department provides information and advice on a full range of social security benefits as part of its daily business to make people aware of their entitlements.

In addition, since 2005, the Department has delivered Benefit Uptake Programmes targeting difficult to reach customers such as older people, people with disabilities and people with caring responsibilities. These programmes cover all Northern Ireland council areas and have included direct targeting, mailshots, Outreach services, partnership working and the "Make the Call" advertising campaign. As a result over £67million of additional annual benefit and arrears has been generated. In the 2013/14 Benefit Uptake Programme, over 1,000 people from the West Tyrone constituency were offered a benefit entitlement check.

A breakdown of the annual benefit and arrears generated through the Benefit Uptake Programme at Council level is only available from 2010. Since then, £34m has been generated and, the proportion for the West Tyrone constituency, which takes in Omagh and Strabane District Councils, is over £1.8m.

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the average annual cost of running the Housing Executives network of district offices.

(AQW 35669/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that the total cost of running their network of 35 District Offices in 2013/14 was £25.7million. This is the direct employee and administration costs.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development whether he has any plans to provide revitalisation investment to support existing traders, improve shop frontages and promote the town of Coleraine.

(AQW 35694/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Last year my Department contributed grant funding of £280,000 to Coleraine Borough Council to deliver a revitalisation scheme in the Waterside/Bridge Street area of Coleraine. The Council was considering a new revitalisation scheme for the town centre this year but my Department is currently unable to provide funding as its budget is fully committed.

Under the Reform of Local Government, the new Councils will take on responsibility for delivering regeneration programmes from 1 April 2015. Shadow Councils have now been advised of their annual indicative budget allocations in advance of budget transferring to them. It will be a matter for Causeway Coast and Glens Council to decide its own spending plans and priorities for future regeneration programmes including those for Coleraine.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the Comprehensive Development Schemes delivered in South Down, in the last five years.

(AQW 35721/11-15)

Mr McCausland: To date my Department has supported a comprehensive programme of urban regeneration schemes in the South Down region including masterplans for Downpatrick and the South East Coast. These documents set out a range of development opportunities and my officials are currently working with Down District Council to develop the Grove area of Downpatrick town Centre.

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) when the report on the conduct of his Special Advisor will be published; (ii) whether the findings of the report will be shared with Mrs Jenny Palmer; and (iii) the reasons for the delay in publishing the report.

(AQW 35724/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As I advised the Assembly, I received a letter on 8 September 2014 from the Chair of the Social Development Committee in respect of this matter and that I would provide a fulsome answer to the Committee within 10 days. I think it important that the Committee is respected and given the opportunity to consider the response, which I have now provided.

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development to detail whether claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance travelling between Northern Ireland and Great Britain are considered to be travelling abroad.

(AQW 35792/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance travelling to Great Britain from Northern Ireland are not considered to be travelling abroad. Where a Jobseeker travels from Northern Ireland to Great Britain, they may be treated as still being resident in Northern Ireland for up to four weeks provided they were entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance before they travelled and they continue to satisfy the normal Jobseeker's Allowance conditions of entitlement while absent from Northern Ireland. If the claimant stay in Great Britain is for more than 4 weeks, they will be advised to make a fresh claim to Jobseeker's Allowance in Great Britain.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of applicants currently registered on the social housing waiting list.

(AQW 35828/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive only reports quarterly on the housing waiting list. They advise that at the end of June 2014 there were 39,295 applicants on the waiting List of which 21,450 were in Housing Stress.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the four projects encompassing the Social Housing Reform Programme.

(AQW 35833/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Work is ongoing on the Social Housing Reform Programme, in phase one we took forward initial exploration of key elements in terms of housing structures and a number of key policies including Rent, Regulation and Engagement. As we move into phase two we are now taking forward more detailed work with the aim to bring forward proposals for consultation across a range of policy areas this year and analysis of potential structural options for consideration by the executive.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the creation of a comprehensive rent policy.

(AQW 35835/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Research and stakeholder engagement is ongoing regarding the potential development of a rent policy for social housing in Northern Ireland. A briefing is scheduled for the Social Development Committee on 25 September 2014 to provide further detail on the issues. The project intends to bring forward a paper for consultation in Spring 2015.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development what role the Strategic Investment Board has in relation to the Social Housing Reform Programme; and whether he is content that no conflicts of interest are present in that role.

(AQW 35836/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Strategic Investment Board provides expert advice to the Social Housing Reform Programme. The Strategic Investment Board is represented on the Social Housing Reform Programme Board. I am content that there is no conflict of interest.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development whether he plans to bring forward legislation, change current legislation or implement new measures that would provide additional powers or authority to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive or Housing Associations to remove or evict tenants who are a threat, annoyance or involved in anti-social behaviour which affects the quality of life of neighbours.

(AQW 35941/11-15)

Mr McCausland: On 2 December 2013, I published proposals to introduce legislation that would provide for a new form of social housing tenancy (the "short tenancy") to be used where certain court orders relating to anti-social behaviour have been made against secure tenants of the Housing Executive and registered housing associations or members of their households, and the tenant needs support to help them to sustain their tenancy. Where a secure tenancy has been converted to a short tenancy, and the anti-social behaviour does not cease, the landlord would be in a position to take possession of the property as soon as the six-month period of the short tenancy comes to an end. Consultation on these proposals closed on 24 March 2014 and I am currently seeking the agreement of my Executive colleagues to commence drafting the necessary legislation.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 26 September 2014

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list (i) the prisoners' groups; and (ii) the victims' groups which were consulted with, and met, in pursuit of consultation on the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre at the Maze, including the date and nature of each such contact, and who met with these groups.
(AQW 22817/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): A list of prisoner groups and victims groups consulted on the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre (PBCRC) at Maze/Long Kesh is provided below.

It was considered appropriate that engagement by the unit in relation to victims primarily should be directly with the Commission for Victims and Survivors. The nature of the meetings was to seek views on the development of proposals for the PBCRC both in terms of the services the Centre could deliver and the facilities needed to deliver these services.

Senior representatives from the Maze/Long Kesh Programme Delivery Unit (MLK PDU) led and held the meetings. Agreement of Ministers to these meetings was not required or sought.

Peace building and Conflict resolution Centre Meetings

Victims Groups and Ex-prisoner Groups

Date of Meeting	Organisation(S)
Victims Groups	
11 August 2010	Victims Commissioners
5 November 2010	Commission for Victims and Survivors NI (CVSNI)
15 November 2010	Victims Commissioners
8 December 2010	NI Centre for Trauma and Transformation
13 December 2010	Victims and Survivors Focus Group (hosted by Commission for Victims and Survivors NI)
5 January 2011	WAVE Trauma Centre (briefing prior to WAVE event at Maze Long Kesh)
11 February 2011	Commission for Victims and Survivors NI
27 June 2011	Pilot Victims' Forum representatives (arranged through Commission for Victims and Survivors)
13 September 2011	Reference Group Meeting (included CVSNI Rep)
18 November 2011	Reference Group Meeting (included CVSNI Rep)
15 February 2012	Reference Groups (included CVSNI/Victims & Survivors Service (VSS) Rep)
16 February 2012	Reference Groups (included CVSNI/VSS Rep)
30 July 2012	Reference Groups (included CVSNI/VSS Rep)
18 October 2012	Reference Group Meeting (included VSS Rep)
14 November 2012	Story Capture Subgroup (included CVSNI Rep)
23 November 2012	Victims Commissioner
14 December 2012	Story Capture Subgroup (included CVSNI Rep)
17 January 2013	Victims Service Psychologists

Date of Meeting	Organisation(S)
27 March 2013	Victims Commissioner
Ex-Prisoner Groups	
25 October 2010	Coiste na n-Iarchimí
27 October 2010	Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre
12 November 2010	An Eochair
18 November 2010	Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre
25 November 2010	Lisburn Prisoners Support Project
26 November 2010	Teach na Failte
1 December 2010	Ex-Prisoners Reference Group
16 March 2011	Ex-Prisoners Reference Group
29 March 2011	Lisburn Prisoners Support Project, Prisoners Aid Networking Group
28 July 2011	Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre
23 August 2011	Coiste na n-Iarchimí
6 October 2011	Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre
7 November 2011	Lisburn Prisoners Support Project
30 November 2011	Lisburn Prisoners Support Project
14 December 2011	From Prison to Peace Partnership
15/16 February 2012	Reference Groups including ex prisoner groups
21 February 2012	Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre
31 May 2012	Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre
14 June 2012	Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre
30 July 2012	Reference Groups including ex prisoner groups
10 September 2012	Reference Groups including ex prisoner groups
18 October 2012	Reference Groups including ex prisoner groups
6 November 2012	Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre
6 December 2012	Ex-Prisoners Interpretative Centre

Mr McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, of the business class flights paid for by their Department in each year since 2008, how many were taken by (i) Elected Representatives; (ii) Civil Servants; and (iii) Special Advisors. **(AQW 25017/11-15)**

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We would refer you to our answer to AQW 24767/11-15 on 16 September 2014.

The table below provides a breakdown of business class flights for which information was held in a readily accessible format.

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Elected Representatives	Not available	Not available	26	19	51	48
Civil Servants	Not available	Not available	44	36	78	58
Special Advisors	Not available	Not available	18	13	53	47
Non-civil servants	Not available	Not available	Nil	1	6	50

Mr McElduff asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what assessment they have made of the pressures faced by St Vincent de Paul in the Omagh area in combatting and alleviating poverty among newly arrived immigrant families who are delayed in accessing assistance from the Social Security Agency. **(AQW 25525/11-15)**

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We understand that voluntary and charitable organisations like St Vincent de Paul are facing ever greater pressures in their efforts to tackle poverty. Our officials have spoken to St Vincent de Paul to discuss the pressures they face.

Latest figures show that poverty figures have been falling here since 2009/10, with 20% of children here living in a household with income less than 60% of the UK median income in 2012/13 (relative poverty before housing costs).

27% of children in Omagh and Strabane were living in low income households over the three year period 2009-10 to 2011-12 (before Housing Costs and After Housing Costs). This is comparable to the NI (27%) and UK (28%) averages after housing costs and higher than the NI (23%) and UK (18%) averages before housing costs for the same three year period. Alleviating poverty is a major commitment of The Executive. To take forward this priority social policy area, the Executive launched the Delivering Social Change Framework in 2012. The Framework's initial focus has been on the needs of children and families, including programmes delivering support for parents and additional, one-to-one help for students who need it.

Building on this work, a new strategy focused on alleviating child poverty will be laid this year. This strategy will contain actions aimed at children and young people and their families to address the causes and consequences of child poverty. We have consulted St Vincent DePaul and other community, voluntary and charitable groups on this work. We also facilitated focus groups with parents, including immigrant families. We will continue to work with these groups to ensure our work helps meet current needs as assessed on the ground.

The Social Security Agency, through its network of local Social Security and Jobs and Benefits Offices and Benefit Centres, currently provides advice and assistance to anyone wishing to claim benefit. A claimant who is a foreign national is given the same assistance and is required to meet the same criteria, subject to fulfilling

the requirements of the Habitual Residence Test, as any permanent Northern Ireland resident, when making a claim to benefit.

Where someone fails the Habitual Residence test and has no access to social security benefits, they can apply for a Social Fund Crisis Loan. A claimant who is refused a Crisis Loan may seek assistance from their local Health and Social Care Trust. Article 15 (2) of the Health and Personal Social Services (NI) Order 2972 enables a Trust to provide a social care service under Article 15(1) to a 'person in need' requiring assistance. This includes provision of cash in exceptional circumstances that constitute an emergency.

The Children (NI) Order 1995, Article 18 specifies the general duty of the authority to provide personal social services for children in need, their families and others. It directs that it is the general duty of every authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within its area who are in need. As such, any family presenting themselves to children's services will be supported according to their assessed need, irrespective of whether or not they satisfy the Habitual Residency Test. Where this need is best provided by other government agencies (e.g. housing) then they will be signposted to the appropriate Agency. The support offered by social services can be in kind, or in exceptional circumstances be in the form of cash.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why AQW 24885/11-15 has not yet been answered; and when it will be answered.

(AQW 25836/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We would refer the Member to the answer to AQW 24885/11-15 which was answered on 16 September 2014.

Mr Copeland asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they received an invitation to participate in the Commonwealth Summit in Sri Lanka on behalf of the Executive.

(AQW 28331/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We did not receive any such invitation.

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the number of Assembly Written Questions received by their Department in each of the last twelve months; and the number which have not been answered within the required deadline.

(AQW 30555/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Between July 2013 and June 2014 our Department received 420 Assembly Written Questions of which 91 were answered on time. The table below shows these figures broken down by month.

Month	Number of AQWs received	Number of AQWs which did not meet deadline
July 2013	34	26
August 2013	Recess	Recess
September 2013	29	24
October 2013	58	41

Month	Number of AQWs received	Number of AQWs which did not meet deadline
November 2013	52	37
December 2013	68	56
January 2014	23	23
February 2014	40	27
March 2014	40	29
April 2014	29	25
May 2014	21	16
June 2014	26	25
Totals	420	329

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the definition of sectarianism used by their Department. (AQW 32691/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Together: Building a United Community Strategy for good relations published by OFMDFM on 23 May 2013, includes a definition of sectarianism as "threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour or attitudes towards a person by reason of that person's religious belief or political opinion; or to an individual as a member of such a group.

As outlined in the Strategy, we will seek to find an appropriate consensus around a definition of sectarianism to be included in the legislation to establish the Equality and Good Relations Commission. Accordingly, this will be one of the issues considered during the planned public consultation on the draft Bill.

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail how the £1.7m savings within victims and survivors funding were achieved. (AQW 34287/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The £1.7m savings within the victims and survivors funding has been achieved as a result of rationalisation in 2010/11 of the funding to support individual victims and survivors. The £1.7m was achieved from a significantly increased budget, which has tripled since 2007.

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQT 1302/11-15, why an inquiry or investigation into non-institution clerical abuse or women aged 18 years and over in Magdalene Laundries and equivalent institutions, cannot happen in parallel to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry. (AQW 34979/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In light of the publication of the McAleese report into Magdalene Laundries last year and representations made to us, we appointed a senior civil servant to prepare a scoping paper regarding the Magdalene Laundry type institutions that operated locally in order to inform us of the potential actions we might be able to take. We received that report and are giving serious consideration to the options it contains before deciding the way forward.

The issue of clerical abuse is no less important or emotive than institutional abuse and we are mindful of the equally destructive impact it has had on many individuals.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what is the definition of victim by which the Victims and Survivors Service operates in making its services available. (AQW 35330/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The definition of a Victim is as set out in Section 3 of the Victims and Survivors (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 as follows;

1. An individual appearing to the Commissioner to be any of the following:
 - a. someone who is or has been physically or psychologically injured as a result of or in consequence of a conflict related incident;
 - b. someone who provides a substantial amount of care for an individual mentioned in paragraph (a); or
 - c. someone who has been bereaved as a result of or in consequence of a conflict-related incident.
2. Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1) of the Order, an individual may be psychologically injured as a result of or in consequence of
 - a. witnessing a conflict-related incident or the consequences of such an incident; or

- b. providing medical or other emergency assistance to an individual in connection with a conflict-related incident.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what restrictions are placed by their Department on the staff of the Victims and Survivors Service in terms of answering legitimate queries from victims, including disclosing the true reasons why expected services have not been provided.

(AQW 35333/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department has not placed any restrictions on the staff in the Victims and Survivors Service.

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of whether the individual victim who wishes to avail of the services of the Victims and Survivors Service directly, rather than through a victims' group, receives parity of treatment and in a timely manner.

(AQW 35334/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Any individual wishing to avail of services may apply themselves through the Individual Needs Programme or as part of a group through the Victims Support Programme.

The Victims and Survivors Service is responsible for the provision and administration of these programmes and processes all applications in line with eligibility criteria.

Mrs Cochrane asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the number of staff employed in their Department broken down by grade; and (ii) the total salary for each grade, for each financial year since 1 April 2010.

(AQW 35514/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:

- (i) The number of staff employed in OFMDFM at 1 September 2014 is as follows -

OFMDFM - Staff In Post At 1 September 2014

Grade (including Analogous)	Number of Staff
AA	11
AO	57
EO2	50
EO1	26
SO	72
DP	76
G7	50
G6	2
SCS	23
Total Staff	367*

* This figure does not include Special Advisers

- (ii) The total salary for each grade, for each financial year since 1 April 2010, is as follows-

Financial Year Salary Cost At 31 March **

Grade	2011	2012	2013	2014
AA	£248,285.91	£229,620.40	£237,042.00	£155,940.00
AO	£1,015,037.78	£1,016,980.13	£1,072,616.08	£1,098,323.08
EO2	£985,986.99	£1,001,257.99	£1,059,018.52	£1,080,279.55
EO1	£641,898.03	£675,148.28	£681,870.76	£806,926.65
SO	£1,666,599.57	£1,695,647.22	£2,017,241.21	£2,081,670.09
DP	£2,217,251.71	£2,487,320.94	£2,780,666.13	£2,837,202.47
G7	£1,844,977.19	£2,046,008.67	£2,335,723.43	£2,326,982.80
G6	£271,385.00	£163,581.00	£172,221.00	£177,621.00

Grade	2011	2012	2013	2014
SCS	£1,611,406.80	£1,728,687.00	£1,531,619.60	£1,801,798.00
Total Salary	£10,502,828.98	£11,044,251.63	£11,888,018.73	£12,366,743.64

** All information provided by HRConnect

Ms Sugden asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the devolution of corporation tax.

(AQW 35744/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Government has previously indicated its intention to make a decision on the devolution of Corporation Tax this autumn, with an announcement to be made no later than the coming Autumn Statement, which is expected to be on

3 December 2014.

In addition, it has previously stated that if it did decide to devolve responsibility for the rate of corporation tax in the autumn, then a stand-alone Bill would be introduced in the normal way, with the aim of it becoming law before the prorogation of Parliament prior to the 2015 Westminster Elections.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what requests the Forest Service has received from Infastrata to drill at Woodburn Forest.

(AQW 35567/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): My Department owns land and manages trees on land owned by NI Water under a management agreement at Woodburn Forest. No request has been received from Infastrata PLC to drill on land owned by my Department.

In February 2013, Infastrata PLC notified my Department of their proposal to drill on an area of land owned by NI Water, and as such dealing with the Infastrata request is the responsibility for NI Water as land owner.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what is the cost of (i) the courses to obtain a licence to use a (a) knapsack sprayer; (b) tractor mounted boom sprayer; and (ii) any other related courses provided by the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise in connection with the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012.

(AQW 35651/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: There are two options available to operators to become suitably qualified to spray using a knapsack sprayer or a tractor mounted boom sprayer in connection with the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012. They are either the current route i.e. the PA1 and PA6 and/or PA2 or the new Grandfather Rights route. CAFRE will offer assessment and training for both options. The training will be provided free of charge to farmers but there will be a charge for registration and certification with City and Guilds and for the assessment.

- (i) The costs of CAFRE provision to obtain a license to use:
- a. Knapsack sprayer is £177 through the current route and £146 through the Grandfather Rights route
 - b. Tractor mounted boom sprayer is £221 through the current route and £148 through the Grandfather Rights
- (ii) The costs of other related courses are as follows:-
- PA3 (Broadcast or Variable Geometry Boom Sprayers) is £152
 - PA6aW (Hand Held Applicators Including Application in or Near Water) is £152
 - PA4 (Granular Applicators) is £152
 - PA9 – Fogging, Misting and Smokes is £94

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the meetings and consultation she and her officials undertook to discuss and seek views on the policy options arising from the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (Pillar I Direct Payments), including details of the groups met and the number of meetings with each group.

(AQW 35710/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: During the year from the political agreement on CAP Reform between the European Parliament and Council was reached on 26 June 2013 and the final policy decisions were announced in June 2014, I met personally with a broad range of stakeholder organisations. My officials also met with a wide range of stakeholders and attended a large number of meetings across the north of Ireland, which were attended by well over 3,000 people. Details of the meetings, including details of the groups met and the number of meetings with each group are listed in the tables below.

Date of meeting	Meeting at request of / held with	DARD Minister/ Officials Present	Location
02 July 2013	Meeting with DOE Minister Alex Attwood	Minister and Officials	Parliament Buildings
05 July 2013	North South Ministerial Council Plenary	Minister	Dublin
09 July 2013	Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development	Minister	Dublin
10 July 2013	North South Ministerial Council - Agriculture	Minister	Armagh
01 August 2013	UFU	Officials	Dundonald House
15 August 2013	UFU	Officials	Belfast
21 August 2013	NBA	Officials	Downpatrick
04 September 2013	Meeting with ARD Committee Clerk	Officials	Dundonald House
10 September 2013	RSPB	Minister	Parliament Buildings
17 September 2013	UFU, Jim Nicholson MEP and the EU Agriculture Commissioner	Officials	Brussels
08 October 2013	Tom Elliott MLA and local farmer	Officials	Dundonald House
09 October 2013	NIAPA	Officials	Dundonald House
22 October 2013	Livestock and Auctioneers Association	Officials	Dundonald House
25 October 2013	UFU	Officials	Dundonald House
31 October 2013	ANC Stakeholder Event (Organisations that attended; CNCC, Farmers For Action, National Trust, NBA, NIACA, NIAPA, NSA, RSPB, UFU, Ulster Wildlife) Note - invitation was also extended to Dairy UK, LMC, National Trust, NILGA, NIMEA, Rural Community Network and Rural Development Council	Officials	Greenmount Campus, CAFRE
01 November 2013	AFBI	Officials	AFBI Hillsborough
06 November 2013	Pillar I Consultation Stakeholder Conference (Organisations that attended: ARD Committee Clerk, ARD Committee Research Officer, Ballymena Borough Council, Butterfly Conservation, CNCC, Dairy UK, Danske Bank, Derry City Council, Diane Dodds MEP Office, Envision, Farmers for Action, Jim Nicholson MEP Office, LMC, Livestock Auctioneers Association (NI), Media, Mourne Farmers, Moyle District Council, NBA, NSA, NIAPA, NIEL, NIGTA, NIACA, NILGA, NIRD Monitoring Committee, Omagh District Council, Organic NI, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (NI), RSPB, RCN, Sequestration Sub-group, Sinn Fein Agricultural Spokesperson, South Down Hill Farmers Association, UK Co-ordinating Body, UAS, Ulster Bank, UFU, Woodland Trust, YFCU). Note - invitation was also extended to Agrifood Strategy Board, AgriSearch, Antrim Borough Council, ARC North West, ARD Committee Members, Ards Borough Council, Armagh City and District Council, Association of Veterinary Surgeon Practitioners in NI, Ballymoney District Council, Banbridge District Council, Bank of Ireland, Belfast City Council, British Wool Marketing Board, Carrickfergus Borough Council, Castlereagh Borough Council, Coleraine Borough Council, Cookstown District Council, Countryside Alliance Ireland, Craigavon Borough Council, Derry City Council, Down District Council, Down Rural Area	Officials	Greenmount Campus, CAFRE

Date of meeting	Meeting at request of / held with	DARD Minister/ Officials Present	Location
	Partnership, Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, European Commission Belfast, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, Fermanagh District Council, First Trust , Friends of the Earth NI, General Consumer Council for NI, Generating Rural Opportunities Within South Antrim, Gibson Institute for Land and Food, Lagan, Rural Partnership LAG, LANTRA, Larne Borough Council, Leader Network / SOAR, Limavady Borough Council, Lisburn Borough Council, Magherafelt District Council, Martina Anderson MEP, Mourne Heritage Trust, Mushroom Industry Association of NI, National Trust, Newry and Mourne District Council, Newtownabbey Borough Council, NI Environment Agency, NI Food & Drinks Association, NI Fruit Growers Association, NI Fruit Industry Federation, NI Meat Exporters Association, NI Potato Industry Stakeholders Forum, NI Poultry Processors Association, NI Rural Women's Network, North Down Borough Council, North East Cluster Rural Development Programme, North of Ireland Veterinary Association, Political Parties Agriculture Spokespersons and Independent Representative, Poultry Association of NI, Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, Rural Development Council, Society of Irish Foresters, South West Action for Rural Development, Strabane District Council, Ulster Wildlife Trust, United Dairy Farmers Ltd, Veterinary NI, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust and Worldwide Fund for Nature.		
12 November 2013	UFU	Minister and Officials	Parliament Buildings
12 November 2013	Presentation to ARD Committee	Officials	Parliament Buildings
12 November 2013	NI Livestock Auctioneers Association	Officials	Dundonald House
15 November 2013	Diane Dodds MEP	Officials	Lisburn
20 November 2013	Group of farmers facilitated by Bronwyn McGahan MLA	Officials	Augher
25 November 2013	NBA, NIAPA, NSA, Organic NI and UFU	Officials	Dundonald House
26 November 2013	UFU Hill Farming Committee	Officials	Cookstown
28 November 2013	Group of farmers facilitated by Declan McAleer MLA	Officials	Cranagh
29 November 2013	UUP staff from office of J Nicholson MEP	Officials	Dundonald House
02 December 2013	NIAPA	Officials	Kilkeel
05 December 2013	Camowen Farmers Combined Ltd	Officials	Loughry Campus, CAFRE
05 December 2013	UFU	Officials	Dundonald House
12 December 2013	Group of farmers facilitated by Oliver McMullan MLA	Officials	Ballymena
13 December 2013	Mourne Farmers	Officials	Dundonald House
16 December 2013	NIAPA	Officials	Enniskillen Campus, CAFRE
07 January 2014	UFU	Officials	Dundonald House
08 January 2014	Strabane Council – group of farmers	Officials	Bready
08 January 2014	Mid Tyrone Lamb Marketing Group	Officials	Loughry Campus, CAFRE
10 January 2014	NIACA	Officials	Dundonald House

Date of meeting	Meeting at request of / held with	DARD Minister/ Officials Present	Location
16 January 2014	SDA Support Group	Officials	Derrygonnelly
21 January 2014	Ulster Arable Society - conference	Officials	Greenmount
21 January 2014	Mid Tyrone Lamb Marketing Group	Officials	Plumbridge
30 January 2014	UFU	Officials	Dundonald House
31 January 2014	Ballylaw Farmers	Officials	Loughry Campus, CAFRE
4 February 2014	Belfast Hills Partnership	Officials	Dundonald House
06 February 2014	NIACA	Officials	Dungannon
10 February 2014	Group of farmers facilitated by Phil Flanagan MLA	Minister and Officials	Parliament Buildings
14 February 2014	National Trust	Officials	Dundonald House
19 February 2014	East Antrim Farming Group facilitated by Oliver McMullan MLA	Officials	Cushendall
26 February 2014	SDA Support Group	Officials	Boho
27 February 2014	UFU Group meeting	Officials	Larne
03 March 2014	Cushendall Farmers facilitated by Oliver McMullan MLA	Minister and Officials	Parliament Buildings
04 March 2014	Presentation to ARD Committee	Officials	Parliament Buildings
04 March 2014	UFU	Minister and Officials	Parliament Buildings
05 March 2014	Carnlough and Glenarm Development Group	Officials	Carnlough
05 March 2014	National Trust	Officials	Dundonald House
06 March 2014	YFCU	Officials	Dundonald House
14 March 2014	RSPB	Officials	Belfast
19 March 2014	Farmers Group facilitated by UUP	Officials	Omagh
20 March 2014	Tirgan Community Association	Officials	Desertmartin
25 March 2014	UFU	Officials	Dundonald House
27 March 2014	North Antrim Dairy Farmers Development Group Ltd	Officials	Ballymoney
01 April 2014	DOE/NIEA	Officials	Dundonald House
03 April 2014	UFU	Officials	Dundonald House
04 April 2014	Rural Support	Officials	Dundonald House
04 April 2014	Farmers group facilitated by Rodney Corrigan UUP	Officials	Moira
07 April 2014	Farmers meeting facilitated by Sam Chesney, beef farmer	Officials	Greenmount
08 April 2014	NIAPA	Minister and Officials	Parliament Buildings
09 April 2014	Crossdernott Church Bowling Club	Officials	Pomeroy
15 April 2014	FFA	Minister	Parliament Buildings
16 April 2014	Churchill Farmers Group	Officials	Churchill
22 May 2014	UFU Hill Farming Committee	Officials	Dundonald House
04 June 2014	YFCU	Officials	Dundonald House

List of organisations/groups involved in meetings, and the number of meetings with each organisation/group

Name of Organisation / Group	Number of times involved in meetings with the Minister / DARD Officials (26/6/2013 – 11/7/ 2014)
Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)	1
ARD Committee	4
Ballylaw Farmers	1
Ballymena Borough Council	1
Belfast Hills Partnership	1
Butterfly Conservation	1
Camowen Farmers Combined Ltd	1
Carnlough and Glenarm Development Group	1
Churchill Farmers Group	1
Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside (CNCC)	2
Crossdernott Church Bowling Club	1
Cushendall Farmers facilitated by Oliver McMullan MLA	1
Dairy UK	1
Danske Bank (Northern Bank)	1
Department of Environment (DOE) Minister	1
Derry City Council	1
Diane Dodds MEP Office	2
East Antrim Farming Group facilitated by Oliver McMullan MLA	1
Envision	1
Farmers for Action (FFA)	3
Farmers group facilitated by UUP	1
Farmers group facilitated by Rodney Corrigan (UUP)	1
Farmers meeting facilitated by Sam Chesney, a beef farmer	1
Group of farmers facilitated by Phil Flanagan MLA	1
Group of farmers facilitated by Declan McAleer MLA	1
Group of farmers facilitated by Bronwyn McGahan MLA	1
Group of farmers facilitated by Oliver McMullan	1
Jim Nicholson MEP Office	3
Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development	1
Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC)	1
Livestock Auctioneers Association (NI)	3
Mid Tyrone Lamb Marketing Group	2
Mourne Farmers	2
Moyle District Council	1
National Beef Association (NBA)	4
National Sheep Association (NSA)	3
National Trust	3
North Antrim Dairy Farmers Development Group Ltd	1
NI Agriculture Producers Association (NIAPA)	7

Name of Organisation / Group	Number of times involved in meetings with the Minister / DARD Officials (26/6/2013 – 11/7/ 2014)
NI Environment Link (NIEL)	1
NI Environment Agency (NIEA)	1
NI Grain Trade Association (NIGTA)	1
NI Agricultural Consultants Association (NIACA)	4
NI Local Government Association (NILGA)	1
NIRDP Monitoring Committee	1
North South Ministerial Council (NSMC)	2
Omagh District Council	1
Organic NI	2
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (NI)	1
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	4
Rural Community Network (RCN)	1
Rural Support	1
Sequestration Sub-group	1
SDA Support Group	2
Sinn Fein Agriculture Spokesperson	1
South Down Hill Farmers Association	1
Strabane District Council – farmers group	1
Tirgan Community Association	1
Tom Elliott MLA and a local farmer	1
UK Co-Ordinating Body	1
Ulster Arable Society (UAS)	2
Ulster Bank	1
Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU)	17
Ulster Wildlife	1
Woodland Trust	1
Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster (YFCU)	3

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 35234/11-15, to detail the cost of felling trees.

(AQW 35844/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The total cost of felling and extracting the trees at Belvoir forest is expected to amount to approximately £90,000. This would be a higher cost compared to an average harvesting site due to challenging factors associated with the operation, including the management of public access and the sensitive work required to protect the veteran oak trees.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what her Department is doing to safeguard redundancies at the Hillsborough site of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute.

(AQW 35923/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: AFBI is currently developing plans to address an expected 25% reduction in its existing sources of revenue up to 2020. Clearly, this represents a very significant challenge for the organisation and options involving both cost reductions and alternative potential revenue streams are being explored by AFBI. The functions currently undertaken by AFBI at Hillsborough represent only a portion of the overall functions undertaken by the Institute and AFBI is considering its business as a whole. I am not in a position at this point to offer assurances around the functions being carried out at Hillsborough now or in the future, but DARD and AFBI are working closely together to develop a sustainable way forward for the Institute.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the amount of grant in aid her Department has provided to the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute in (i) 2010; (ii) 2011; (iii) 2012; (iv) 2013; and (v) 2014.

(AQW 35924/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Grant-in-aid provided by my Department to the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) in each financial year from 2010/11 to 2013/14 is shown in the following table. The 2014/15 figures represent the amount that has been paid to AFBI so far this year.

Financial Year	Resource grant-in-aid	Capital grant-in-aid
2010/11	£43.006m	£1.822m
2011/12	£38.168m	£1.894m
2012/13	£33.571m	£0.738m
2013/14	£44.611m	£1.188m
2014/15	£22.402m	£0m

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the discovery of disease on a plantation of trees at the quarry on the Newtownards side of the Craigtlet Hills.

(AQW 35932/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Following confirmation of Phytophthora ramorum in larch trees in woodland adjacent to the quarry, the owners are working with the Department to implement required measures to control the disease, which will include the felling of the larch trees and other affected trees at this site. The owners have informed local residents of these measures.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the potential impact on farmers as a result of greening requirements.

(AQW 35996/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Farmers who participate in the Basic Payment Scheme must, where applicable, adhere to three greening requirements (retention of permanent grassland, crop diversification and the provision of ecological focus areas (EFAs)). However, the first of these three will be monitored at regional level and, therefore, is unlikely to affect the operations of individual farmers. As land based agriculture in the north of Ireland is dominated by grassland enterprises, the vast majority of farmers will attract the greening payment without any change to their farming practices.

Greening will have its greatest impact in the arable sector. Analysis undertaken by the Department (based on 2013 scheme year applications to the Single Farm Payment) suggests that fewer than 1,500 farms may have to comply with the crop diversification requirements that will apply to arable land. Some of these farm businesses may find that they can comply with the requirements without having to change their existing cropping patterns. However, some farm businesses may be required to grow an additional crop and others may have to change the balance of their cropping mix to achieve the requirements.

Farmers with more than 15 hectares of arable land must ensure that at least 5% of their arable land is used as EFA. The Department's analysis suggests that fewer than 1,000 farm businesses will have an EFA requirement and that the total EFA requirement in the north is likely to be less than the equivalent of 2,000ha. For the majority of farm businesses, existing land based features (e.g. hedges on or adjacent to arable land) are likely to meet all or most of their EFA requirement.

Further details on the greening requirements are available on the DARD website.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how she will ensure that the performance of the Animal and Public Health Information System will not be affected once the changes have been made to show the number of residencies.

(AQW 36000/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has prioritised an Animal and Public Health Information System (APHIS) enhancement to add the residency count to the market download. Any enhancement to APHIS is managed within a robust change control process to ensure changes work properly and that performance of other APHIS functions is not compromised.

My officials have now agreed a specification for the required changes to APHIS with our software supplier. Performance has been considered within this process. Once the software is developed, performance will be tested before it is fully integrated into APHIS. Thereafter, ongoing testing will be carried out when the changes are in place to maintain APHIS performance.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when the altered Animal and Public Health Information System to show the number of residencies will be in place.

(AQW 36003/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has prioritised this APHIS enhancement to add the residency count to the market download. The original target delivery date was December 2014. My officials have worked hard to bring this about quickly, while ensuring that system performance is not compromised. I am pleased that we have already made significant progress in developing this

enhancement. It is therefore likely that we can have this change delivered before the December target date. We are regularly communicating our progress directly to all cattle markets.

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps her Department is taking to address rural crime, particularly farm theft, and to support the PSNI in their efforts in North Antrim.

(AQW 36067/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Responsibility for tackling rural crime lies primarily with the PSNI, however my Department, through its Veterinary Service Enforcement Branch (VSEB) and CAFRE, works closely with the PSNI in tackling rural crime, including agriculture related crime.

DARD's VSEB works with the PSNI in tackling rural crime at an operational level through the sharing of intelligence, the exchange of training and the conducting of joint operations and investigations. In particular VSEB uses its enforcement powers to carry out unannounced inspections of farm animals and premises suspected of involvement in rural crime. More serious criminality is referred to the police and DARD officials assist the police through the provision of expertise. VSEB also participates in multi-agency investigations with other regulators, including the Food Standards Agency, HMRC and cross border agencies.

DARD continues to work with the Department of Justice, the PSNI and representatives of the farming community on a number of joint initiatives aimed at reducing rural crime and raising awareness of action that can be taken to help prevent rural crime, including Farm Watch, the Freeze-branding initiative and the Crimestoppers Campaign.

I have met with the Chief Constable and the Minister of Justice on a number of occasions to highlight my concerns regarding rural crime and the impact it has on the farming community. Reducing levels of rural crime is a key priority of mine and my Department will continue to work closely with the Department of Justice, the PSNI and other partners in seeking to raise awareness and to reduce levels of rural crime, including farm related crime.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the items and artefacts, which are of historical importance and originate in County Tyrone, that are currently held outside County Tyrone by National Museums NI and by other public bodies in Britain and the rest of Ireland.

(AQW 35708/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): My Department's investment and involvement in the museums sector is primarily directed to National Museums NI (NMNI) and the NI Museums Council (NIMC).

NMNI has informed me that of its collections that are catalogued it has 20,875 items and artefacts of historical importance associated with County Tyrone (Archaeology 17,748; Art 40; History 3,087). This includes 440 items and artefacts in the Ulster American Folk Park, Omagh. The remaining items held by NMNI are held at a variety of sites across the north. The NIMC does not hold any collections.

Neither NMNI nor NIMC hold details of items and artefacts that may be held outside of the north of Ireland.

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure why her Department did not supply the in-year monitoring round bid documents requested by the Assembly Research and Information Service.

(AQW 35713/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The in-year monitoring round bid documents have been provided in full to the Assembly Research and Information Service.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many projects in East Londonderry have been supported through the Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CIIF 2) since 2011.

(AQW 35754/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Since 2011, the following projects in your constituency have been supported through the Creative Industries Innovation Fund.

Year	Organisation	Project	Award
2011-2012	Awakin Ltd	Go Explore NI in 2012	9,800
2011-2012	Treasure Pilgrim Ltd	Treasure Pilgrim - Online Treasure Hunts with Real Treasure	10,000
2012-2013	Uproar Comics	"Zombies HI" The App.	9,500
2012-2013	Whittrick Press LLP	Whittrick Press	9,984
2013-2014	Whittrick Press LLP	The Crumble Giant	9,900

Year	Organisation	Project	Award
2013-2014	Uproar Comics	Gamification Publication	9,900
Total			59,084

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the amount of funding allocated to boxing clubs in West Tyrone, in the last three years.

(AQW 35855/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, is responsible for the distribution of funding to sport in the north. In the 2013/14 financial year, Sport NI awarded funding to the Irish Amateur Boxing Association, under the Boxing Investment Programme, for small items of boxing equipment. The following boxing clubs in West Tyrone received a total of £13,873.82 Lottery funding for equipment under this award as follows:

Club	Location	Cost
Bishop Kelly ABC	Omagh	£1,707.88
Carrickmore ABC	Carrickmore	£1,707.88
Immaculata ABC	Strabane	£1,918.66
Lisnafin ABC	Strabane	£1,707.88
Mourne Golden Gloves ABC	Strabane	£1,707.88
Omagh Boys & Girls ABC	Omagh	£2,129.44
Sacred Heart ABC	Omagh	£1,497.10
Two Castles ABC	Newtownstewart	£1,497.10
	Total	£13,873.82

These clubs have received no additional funding from Sport NI in the last 3 financial years.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding her Department provided to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, in each of the last two years.

(AQW 35884/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The funding that my Department provided to the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in each of the last two years is as follows:

Year	Grant In Aid(£)	Capital (£)	Total (£)
2012/13	2,240,189	1,027,709	3,267,898
2013/14	2,180,078	862,318	3,042,396
			6,310,294

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she will consider hosting a civic reception in Parliament Buildings to honour the Down Camogie team, following their fourth All-Ireland Junior Camogie title.

(AQW 35959/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: It was an incredible achievement for the Down Camogie team to win their fourth All-Ireland Junior Camogie title and I have previously publicly congratulated the team on their success.

I intend to host a reception in Parliament Buildings on Tuesday 7 October 2014 for all Ulster GAA team successes during 2013/14, including the Down Camogie Team, to celebrate their remarkable achievements.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the Department's total expenditure to Waterways Ireland in (i) 2012; (ii) 2013; and (iii) 2014 to date.

(AQW 35965/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: As part of the funding arrangements for Waterways Ireland as a North South Implementation Body, my Department has provided the following funding:

Year	Amount
2012	£3,442,099
2013	£3,212,535
2014	£663,396

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether there is legislative provision for her Department to impose a charge on users of waterways.

(AQW 35966/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Under Article 50(1) of the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999, Waterways Ireland has the legislative power to introduce charges for recreation and navigational use of the waterways, including any facilities provided or maintained by it under relevant statutory provision, for the passage through any lock constructed or maintained by it under relevant statutory provision, and in respect of the registration or licensing of any vessel in accordance with an order under Article 49.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 35416/11-15, when she will announce the projects that will be funded by the £1 million allocation to Cultural Programmes.

(AQW 35968/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Pursuant to AQW 35416/11-15, business cases in relation to the additional funding allocated for cultural programming have been advanced but are still not finalised. I am therefore not in a position to announce the detail of the projects to be funded.

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure when the company limited by guarantee to deliver City of Culture legacy programmes and activities will be established.

(AQW 35970/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department's plans for community and cultural development in the North West include proposals for new delivery structures proportionate to any additional funding allocated. As the Executive were unable to meet my Department's June monitoring round bid, it would not demonstrate value for money to establish a new company at this time. My Department's North West Office will continue to provide support in the North West.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the work that Foras na Gaeilge carry out in County Fermanagh.

(AQW 35986/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Foras na Gaeilge's funding schemes are open to the public and advertised on an all-island basis. Foras na Gaeilge does not have any area-specific funding schemes.

In 2014 Foras na Gaeilge funded two summer camps in Fermanagh. These were Bunscoil an Traonaigh, Ros Liath, which received £1,750 and Knocks Grattans Hurling Club, Lios na Sceithe (Lisnaskea), which received £1,600 in funding.

During the 2013/2014 school year, Foras na Gaeilge also provided funding for an tÁisaonad to organise the 'Scríobh Leabhar' project in which 35 children from a gaelscoil in Fermanagh took part (Bunscoil an Traonaigh, Fear Manach).

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure when the departmental North West office will be established.

(AQW 35987/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: As part of my commitment to the North West, my Department formally established a North West Office on 1st April 2014.

The team comprises three officials with the Branch Head based in Derry in Orchard House. The office is supported in my Department by a Strategic Delivery Division which brings together a Departmental focus on the potential of the North West to be a regional driver for the creative industries and social innovation.

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what is the annual running cost of Bangor library.

(AQW 36052/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The annual running cost of Bangor library for 2013/14 is attached at Annex A.

Annex A

2013/14

Recurrent Net Spend	Total (£)
Income	(16,142)

Recurrent Net Spend	Total (£)
Staff Costs	279,969
Newspapers / Periodicals	3,280
Premises Costs	116,659
Supplies & Services	5,813
Total Expenditure	405,721
Net Expenditure	389,579

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what is the annual running cost of Holywood library.
(AQW 36053/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The annual running cost of Holywood library for 2013/14 is attached at Annex A.

Annex A

2013/14

Recurrent Net Spend	Total (£)
Income	(6,555)
Staff Costs	122,178
Newspapers / Periodicals	1,634
Premises Costs	61,910
Supplies & Services	6,903
Total Expenditure	192,625
Net Expenditure	186,070

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what departmental services she has made available to the public via the post office network.

(AQW 36087/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: There are no departmental services available to the public via the post office network.

Department of Education

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Education to detail the financial savings that have resulted from the amalgamation of Lisnaskea High School and Devenish College.

(AQW 35287/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The financial savings that have resulted from the amalgamation of Lisnaskea High School and Devenish College since the school opened in September 2013 to March 2014 are £483,791 (this figure excludes one-off costs arising as a result of the closures such as redundancy).

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 33797/11-15, for a breakdown of the £710,000 expenditure on hospitality by his Department's arm's-length bodies.

(AQW 35615/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Pursuant to AQW 33797/11-15, the breakdown of the £710,000 expenditure on hospitality by my Department's arm's length bodies is as follows:

	2013-14 £'000
Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment	319
Belfast Education & Library Board	121
Southern Education & Library Board	81

	2013-14 £'000
Western Education & Library Board	66
South Eastern Education & Library Board	54
North Eastern Education & Library Board	46
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	11
Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education	4
General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland	3
Middletown Centre for Autism	3
Staff Commission for Education & Library Boards	2
Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta	-
Youth Council for Northern Ireland	-
Total	710

The figures presented in this response are in line with the Department's definition of hospitality, which is based on guidance provided by the Department of Finance and Personnel. Expenditure on hospitality includes refreshments for committees, meetings, training courses, and conferences. The figures are also based on draft accounts.

CCEA incurred the highest amount of expenditure due to the significant number of events and meetings held in support of examinations, curriculum and assessment. These events and meetings are on a regional basis and can exceed 4000 annually. Refreshments for teachers attending training and events are included in the figures quoted. As CCEA operates on a regional capacity and has limited capacity to host events internally, every opportunity is taken to utilise venues within the education sector, however this is not always possible.

The Education and Library Boards host numerous meetings and training events in Board premises and associated outcentres throughout the year, for both teaching and non-teaching staff.

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Education how many assaults on teachers were recorded in (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools in academic years (a) 2011/12; (b) 2012/13; and (c) 2013/14, broken down by education and library board.
(AQW 35619/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department is unable to publish this information. Due to the small numbers involved a high level of suppression would be required to prevent the identification of an individual. This guidance is in accordance with the confidentiality principle of the Statistics Authority's Code of Practice on Official Statistics.

Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained Integrated Schools are not included in this request.

My Department continues to work with Employing Authorities and teaching unions to explore methods of preventing violence and abuse against teachers and support staff who are subjected to it.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education whether his Department is required to approve the Area Plans for each Education and Library Board; and if so, whether primary and post-primary plans, published in 2013 and 2014, have been approved.
(AQW 35803/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: To date, my Department has exercised a scrutiny and challenge role in relation to Area Plans and has been working closely with the Boards and the other school managing authorities, particularly through the Area Planning Steering Group. This will continue until there is greater clarity on the establishment and operation of the new body.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education, given that the process of Area Planning is ongoing, to detail (i) how often this process will be reviewed; (ii) whether the findings for primary and post-primary schools will be published annually by Education and Library Boards; and (iii) the action his Department will take if any of the Education and Library Boards fail to implement the stated policy in relation to Area Planning in a timely manner.
(AQW 35804/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

- (i) The current area planning process was set up as an interim one in advance of the establishment of Education Skill Authority (ESA). As no agreement was reached on ESA, I now have the Executive's agreement to bring forward legislation to create a single body to replace the existing five Education and Library Boards. Therefore, the area planning process and related guidance will need to be reviewed if legislation is passed. Meanwhile I will continue with the interim arrangements until there is greater clarity on the establishment and operation of the new body.

- (ii) The Area Profiles are published annually by the Education Boards and are available on their websites. This ensures everyone with an interest has access to up-to-date information to enable them to get involved in the debate on future provision.
- (iii) Area Planning is a process through which a network of viable and sustainable schools will be developed. It is fundamentally based on the Sustainable Schools Policy, the primary objective of which is to ensure all children and young people get a high quality education in schools that are educationally and financially viable. Any proposals to implement a significant change as a result of the area planning process still need to follow the statutory Development Proposal process.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education, given that the recent judgement following the Judicial Review for Drumragh Integrated College stated that the Needs Model assumes no growth in the integrated sector, when this model will be reviewed and amended in response to the judgement and the statutory duty on his Department in regard to Integrated Education. **(AQW 35805/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The Learned Judge Treacy did not call for the Needs Model to be reviewed. The Court accepted that it was appropriate to use a needs model for planning purposes. It did note that it would be easier for decisions which were in line with the long range plan to be approved than for decisions that are out of line with the long range plan.

The Needs Model does what it was designed to do. It was not designed to calculate estimates for growth in any sector beyond those derived from the population projections and the current patterns of enrolment. However, the distribution of the calculated need for places across the sectors is the starting point for planning purposes. The calculated need can be amended through discussions between the planning authorities, i.e. the Boards and CCMS, and representatives of the Integrated sector. The calculated need may also be increased by up to 10% system-wide to accommodate a degree of parental choice. This has been made clear to all sectors.

It is important, therefore, that those representing the Integrated sector make a robust case in planning discussions to ensure that genuine need for local expansion in the sector is expressed in amended need figures which in turn will be reflected in the area plans.

The area plans, including figures derived from the needs model, are long-term but not static. They will be reviewed as circumstances change and as more up-to-date data becomes available.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education to detail the source of funding for the three agreed Shared Education Campus projects; and whether the full funding for the projects has been agreed. **(AQW 35807/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: I announced the first tranche of successful projects to be supported under the Shared Education Campuses Programme on 1 July 2014.

The three projects will be taken forward to a full Economic Appraisal which, once submitted, will be considered within the normal business approval processes and in line with NI Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation guidelines, including value for money and affordability.

Until full Economic Appraisals have been developed, it is difficult to estimate the capital costs associated with the three proposals. As with other major capital projects, formal allocation of the budget for these projects will not be made until Economic Appraisals are approved and the Department of Education's capital budget for future years has been confirmed. At this stage, capital budgets from April 2015 onwards have not yet been agreed for all Departments.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education whether performance related pay and bonuses have been paid to the staff of the General Teaching Council in each of the last five years; and if so, to detail (i) how much; and (ii) to how many individuals and whether final salaries have been enhanced for pension purposes. **(AQW 35822/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: I can confirm that the General Teaching Council has paid performance related pay and bonuses to staff in each of the last five years, broken down as follows:

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Performance Related Pay Paid (£)	3,0951	3,2181	Nil	Nil	Nil
Bonuses Paid (£)	2,7082	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
How many individuals received PRP?	*	*	Nil	Nil	Nil
How many individuals received Bonuses?	*	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

1 represents fully consolidated pay increase (4.0%)

2 represents non-consolidated amount (3.5%)

* denotes fewer than 5 individuals

I can advise that the consolidated amounts would have been included in the final salary used for pension calculations.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education whether performance related pay and bonuses have been paid to the staff of Education and Library Boards in each of the last five years; and if so, to detail (i) how much; and (ii) to how many individuals and whether final salaries have been enhanced for pension purposes.

(AQW 35823/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I can confirm that the Education and Library Boards have paid performance related pay and bonuses to staff in each of the last five years, broken down as follows:

ELB	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Performance Related Pay Paid	£60,776	£98,546	£19,988	£165,416	£3,199
Bonuses Paid	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
How many individuals received PRP?	16	23	5	22	*
How many individuals received Bonuses?	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

* denotes fewer than 5 individuals.

I can advise that the consolidated amounts would have been included in the final salary used for pension calculations.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education to detail the estimated level of savings that will result from the creation of a single Education and Library Board.

(AQW 35881/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: While the business case for the establishment of the new Education Authority (which will replace the five Education and Library Boards and the Staff Commission) has not yet been finalised, it is anticipated that savings will be realized comparable in scale to those expected from ESA (£185m over its first 10 years).

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education for an estimate of the annual budget that will be allocated to the new support body for controlled schools.

(AQW 35882/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Work on establishing the Controlled sector support body will commence after the introduction of a Bill to the Assembly to replace the 5 Education and Library Boards and their staff commission with one organisation.

At that point work will begin with representatives of the controlled sector to determine among other things, the expected annual budget for the Controlled Sector Support Body.

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education whether the new support body for controlled schools will provide support to controlled integrated schools.

(AQW 35883/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department will fund the proposed Controlled Sector Support body to offer support to all controlled schools. The functions of the body will also incorporate building co-operation and engaging with other sectors in matters of mutual interest, including promotion of tolerance and understanding.

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Education why learning support units are not available for primary school children in the Newtownabbey area.

(AQW 35900/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The North Eastern Education and Library Board has advised that there are currently seven learning support units (LSCs) in primary schools in the board area. Prior to 2006 these LSCs were referred to as special units and catered exclusively for pupils with a moderate learning difficulty (MLD). However, following the introduction of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order (NI) 2005 (SENDO) which strengthened the rights of children with special educational needs (SEN) to be educated in mainstream schools, the Board reviewed this element of SEN support. To facilitate a continuum of provision the Board agreed to re-designate the previous MLD unit provision as LSCs thereby enabling them to cater for a wider range of special educational needs.

When the MLD units were originally established cognisance was taken of the fact that there were already two existing special schools catering exclusively for pupils with MLD - Rostulla School in Jordanstown and the former Dunfane School (now part of the Castle Tower complex) in Ballymena. The former MLD units were therefore geographically located to provide MLD provision across the whole board area with the majority of the units therefore being located in the north of the board area where there was no other specialised MLD provision.

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Education why there is not provision, such as an equivalent school to Cedar Lodge, for those children who do not have learning difficulties but who are unable to be educated in a mainstream setting, even when extra assistance is provided.

(AQW 35901/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As detailed in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (SEN), no child should be placed in a special school (such as Cedar Lodge) except by a board, as specified in a statement of SEN, or for the immediate commencement of a statutory assessment of SEN. A child that does not have learning difficulties, as defined in the Code of Practice, will not be able to meet either of these criteria and should therefore not be able to receive provision within a school equivalent to Cedar Lodge.

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Education to detail the average time is for a statement of need to be put in place; and whether there are any plans to improve this.

(AQW 35902/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have advised that the average length of time taken from a request for a statutory assessment of special educational needs (SEN) to the issue of a final statement of SEN in the 2013/14 academic year, rounded to the nearest week, excluding permitted exceptions, is as follows:

BELB	25
NEELB	22
SEELB	24
SELB	21
WELB	20

A key proposal of the ongoing Review of SEN and Inclusion, agreed by the Executive, is the reduction of the statutory timeframe, excluding permitted exceptions, for ELBs to complete a statement from 26 weeks to 20 weeks.

Reducing the statutory timeframe will allow for earlier assessment and intervention and will enable effective and timely supports to be put in place for SEN children as required.

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Education why all schools in Newtownabbey are not part of the Multi Agency Support Team scheme.

(AQW 35903/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The North Eastern Education and Library Board has advised that early in 2007 all primary and nursery schools within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area were contacted in writing to ask for an expression of interest in being involved in the Multi Agency Support Teams in Schools (MASTS) service. 102 schools (25 in the East Antrim area which covers the Newtownabbey area) expressed an interest and joined the service.

Schools who have subsequently expressed an interest in becoming part of the MASTS service have been added to a waiting list in the order they applied and this is reviewed on an annual basis within the confines of existing resources.

The East Antrim MASTs team currently supports a total of 43 schools including 8 schools which joined in September 2011 and a further two schools which joined in September 2012.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the reasons for the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment's high expenditure on hospitality.

(AQW 35906/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am informed by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) that the Council holds a significant number of events and meetings in support of qualifications, curriculum and assessment. These events and meetings are on a regional basis and can exceed 4000 annually.

In the area of qualifications alone CCEA contracts in excess of 5,000 practising teachers to help set, mark and award examinations, and that throughout the process CCEA needs to undertake training and meetings to ensure all of the work is done to the highest standard.

Modest catering is provided for teachers attending training and events and this makes up the great majority of the Council's expenditure on hospitality.

CCEA operates on a regional capacity and has limited capacity to host events internally. Every opportunity is taken to utilise venues within the education sector, however this is not always possible.

The catering CCEA provides for meetings and events is kept under constant review and subject to challenge via internal business case approval.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the reasons for the variance of spend on hospitality by each Education and Library Board.

(AQW 35907/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have informed me that they host numerous meetings, seminars and training events in Board premises and associated outcentres throughout the year, for both teaching and non-teaching staff as well as for other stakeholders. Modest hospitality, usually consisting of tea, coffee, sandwiches, etc. is often provided at these events, and in the main is provided by internal canteen facilities.

The cost of hospitality incurred by each ELB will vary depending on a number of factors, including the number of pupils and staff within schools in each ELB area, the number of other premises managed by the ELB, the number of staff employed in the ELB Headquarters and other premises, the frequency of meetings/seminars etc. and the numbers in attendance.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the intake at each pre-school in North Down.

(AQW 35910/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The table below gives provisional details of the number of children in each funded pre-school setting in the North Down Borough Council area at 15 September 2014.

Name of Pre-School	Intake
North Down Area	
Ballymagee PS Nursery Unit	30
Bangor Central Nursery School	79
Bloomfield Road PS Nursery Unit	52
Hollywood Nursery School	60
Kilcooley PS Nursery Unit	29
Kilmaine PS Nursery Unit	55
Rathmore PS Nursery Unit	52
St Malachy's PS Nursery Unit	52
Towerview PS Nursery Unit	52
Trinity Nursery School	52
Ballycrochan Playgroup	37
Ballyholme Presbyterian Church Playgroup	26
Bangor Abbey Playgroup	24
Bangor West Nursery Playgroup	26
Big Red Balloon	16
Bo-Peep Corner Pre-School	26
Bright Sparks Playgroup	18
Cabbage Patch Day Nursery	18
Crawfordsburn Playgroup	16
Early Days Playgroup	24
Glencraig Playgroup	26
Groomsport Playgroup	26
Little Acorns Playgroup	31
Little Bears Playgroup	20
Little Bunnies Playgroup	12
St Comgall's Playgroup	24
Tiddliwinks Playgroup	23
Tiggers Palace	18
Total	924

Final figures for each setting will be available after the School Census is completed later in the year.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the Coleraine Education Project.
(AQW 35943/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Phase 1 of the Coleraine Education Community Project (the Project), funded by DSD's Neighbourhood Renewal Programme, from April 2010 to March 2014, has successfully met its targets and has demonstrated improvements in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Literacy and Numeracy. Attendance rates in the primary schools across the sectors have improved by 1.6%. In the post-primary sector the number of pupils remaining in education at Year 13 has increased by just over 10%, well beyond the final year target.

Phase 2 of the Project, which builds on and enhances the work undertaken in Phase 1, commenced at 1 April 2014 and is currently being funded through DE's Community Education Initiatives Programme. The aims and objectives of the Project complement important elements of my raising standards agenda including improvements in literacy and numeracy and the strengthening of school-community links. An evaluation of the DE funded element of the Project will be undertaken in due course.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education for an update on the future support of the Coleraine Education Project.
(AQW 35945/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In 2014/2015, the Coleraine Education Community Project (the Project) was successful in applying for funding of £81,555 through the Department of Education's Community Education Initiatives Programme (CEIP). It is estimated this funding will meet the cost of the Project to the end of October 2014.

The CEIP budget for 2014/2015 is fully committed and the Department is therefore unable to provide further funding to support the Project in this financial year.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Education how his Department works with Foras na Gaeilge to deliver Irish language tuition in schools in County Fermanagh.
(AQW 36002/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Primary Languages Programme was introduced in 2007 to give pupils at Foundation Stage / Key Stage 1 the opportunity to learn an additional language in school. The Programme offers primary schools the opportunity to work with peripatetic language tutors to deliver Irish, Spanish and Polish. There are currently four schools in County Fermanagh registered for this programme in Irish.

The Department has received proposals from Foras na Gaeilge to develop the teaching of Irish in non-Irish medium primary schools supported by training and resources. The Department is currently considering the feasibility of this proposal.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education what departmental services he has made available to the public via the post office network.
(AQW 36019/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education does not provide any services to the public through the Post Office Network.

The Department will continue to look at opportunities as they arise to consider whether any new public service could be delivered through the Post Office, although these would be subject to the appropriate procurement policy.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education to detail the estimated total cost savings that will result from the new single education board in the first five years of its operation.
(AQW 36027/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: While the business case for the establishment of the new Education Authority (which will replace the five Education and Library Boards and the Staff Commission) has not yet been finalised, it is anticipated that savings will be realized comparable in scale to those expected from ESA (£185m over its first 10 years).

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education whether he can provide an assurance to staff of each Education and Library Board that their job will be secure when a single education board is created.
(AQW 36054/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The establishment of the Education Authority will represent a rationalisation of existing structures (the five Education and Library Boards and the Staff Commission). The new Authority is therefore expected to employ fewer staff, particularly in management grades, than are currently employed by the Education and Library Boards. Significant reductions in staff had already been made in anticipation of the establishment of ESA; it is my expectation that any remaining reductions will be achieved through voluntary redundancy, retirement or resignation.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Education when he will publish the report on the Independent Review of Home to School Transport.

(AQW 36055/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Independent Review Panel presented its final report to me on 28th August. It contains a considerable number of proposals for change which I now intend to consider before making decisions on the way forward. I will publish the report in due course.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the current pupil to teacher ratio in (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools, broken down by sector; and how this compares with 2009.

(AQW 36075/11-15)

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

School Type	Management Type	Pupil Teacher Ratio	
		2008/09	2013/14
Primary (including preparatory departments of grammar schools)	Controlled	20.4	21.3
	Voluntary	16.5	15.4
	Catholic Maintained	20.5	21.0
	Other Maintained	16.3	16.9
	Controlled Integrated	19.2	21.0
	Grant Maintained Integrated	20.6	22.6
Post Primary (secondary and grammar)	Controlled	14.4	15.3
	Voluntary	15.1	16.3
	Catholic Maintained	14.1	14.8
	Other Maintained	11.3	13.2
	Controlled Integrated	13.3	14.0
	Grant Maintained Integrated	13.7	15.0

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what budget has been allocated for the teaching of coding in schools.

(AQW 36151/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) in each of the Education and Library Boards provides advisory and support services to all grant aided schools and are the main providers of in-service training for teachers. Training is primarily demand lead and therefore a specific budget is not allocated to curriculum subject areas.

The Department of Education (DE) has, however, allocated £46.5k in 2014/15 to Queen's University Belfast to pilot a course to upskill post-primary teachers to deliver software systems development at GCE A-Level. The pilot is being jointly funded by DE and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. In addition in 2013/14, DE allocated £20k from its STEM budget to enable teachers to work with industry representatives to develop material to support the teaching of computing, including programming skills, in the classroom.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how many appeals have been lodged against Nendrum College, Comber in the last five years; (ii) how many appeals were from Comber residents; and (iii) how many appeals have been successful.

(AQW 36186/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In the last five years 11 admissions appeals have been lodged against Nendrum College, three of which were from Comber residents. All 11 appeals were dismissed.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education how many (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools use an enrolment criteria stipulating that weight will only be given to siblings who are current rather than former pupils.

(AQW 36222/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Neither the Department or the Education or the Education and Library Boards hold the information in the format you have requested.

It is the responsibility of a school's Board of Governors to set and publish admissions criteria for entry to its school. The criteria will reflect the particular priorities each individual school wishes to apply when considering admissions to their school. The Department of Education has no role in this process other than to offer guidance. The admissions criteria for each school

can be found within booklets published by the relevant Education and Library Boards or on the Education and Library Boards' websites.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to outline the process for reassessing the appropriate enrolment level at a school; and when Nendrum College in Comber's enrolment level was last considered.

(AQW 36223/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Area Planning Process is the means through which planning authorities will ensure that we have the right type and size of schools, in the right places, to meet the needs of our pupils and young people.

Nendrum College is a controlled school and it is therefore a matter for the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) to determine the need in the area and to ensure that there are sufficient places.

The SEELB's Post-primary Area Plan states that Nendrum College's 'enrolment is below the Sustainable Schools Policy threshold but this is due to the limited accommodation at the school. The school attracts applications above its admission figure'.

The plan also states that the school will be retained with no action proposed at this time.

Mrs Overend asked Minister of Education for an update on the Special Educational Needs Review.

(AQW 36240/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I hope to bring a special educational needs draft Bill to the Executive shortly. The draft Bill will include the legislative requirements agreed with the Executive in 2012 and those surrounding associated policy considerations that were raised during the consultation process and highlighted to the Executive.

Over the last 3 years, I have provided funding for a number of important capacity-building initiatives to support the introduction of my proposals. These include: the special educational needs (SEN) Early Years Pilot in Department of Education-funded statutory and non-statutory early years settings; an Educational Assessment Pilot in almost 300 primary and post-primary settings; and a SEN Continuing Professional Development course at Masters level to improve the skills of teachers in teaching reading, writing and spelling to SEN children with literacy difficulties.

The capacity building programme has delivered a comprehensive SEN Resource File and leadership and management training for SEN Coordinators (SENCOs), available to all grant-aided schools. Funding has also been made available for a one-day training course in leadership and management of classroom assistants, which will be offered to all SENCOs and delivered by board staff in this school year. As an extension to the SEN Resource File, Early Years Handbooks have been developed for staff in all funded pre-school settings.

The capacity building programme, the provisions within the draft Bill, the associated regulations and a revised statutory Code of Practice will bring a rounded and considered package of proposals to improve the management, by both schools and education and library boards, of children's special educational needs.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Education how many children are recorded as having autism spectrum disorder, broken down by Education and Library Board.

(AQW 36266/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is detailed in the table overleaf. The information provided relates to the 2013/14 school census, the 2014/15 school census takes place on the 10th October this year, provisional figures will be available in December, finalised figures in February.

Pupils with autism spectrum disorder by Education and Library Board area, 2013/14

Belfast	Western	North Eastern	South Eastern	Southern	Total
1,327	846	1,294	1,807	917	6,191

Source: NI school census

Notes:

1. Figures include funded children in voluntary and private preschools, nursery schools, primary (including nursery, reception and year 1-7 classes), post primary and special schools.
2. Autistic Spectrum Disorder includes autism and/or aspergers syndrome.
3. Figures include pupils at stages 1 – 5 on the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.
4. Data refers to any special educational need rather than primary need.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Education to detail the education services available in each Education and Library Board for children with autism.

(AQW 36268/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Following publication of the 'Report of the Task Group on Autism' (2002), DE funded the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) to establish an inter-board Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Group to provide support to children on the autistic spectrum within each ELB. As a consequence, an ASD advisory team was established in each ELB to enhance existing ASD services.

The ASD advisory service provides valued and worthwhile practical support to schools and is a resource of knowledge and skill, with the capacity to raise the standards of education and the social inclusion for children on the autistic spectrum by providing tailored support to match the individual needs of each child to ensure that they reach their full potential.

The ELBs have also developed a comprehensive range of services and provision to support pupils with learning difficulties (including autism), their parents/carers and schools. ELBs also provide autism-specific training in schools and all ELBs deliver a range of autism-specific training for school staff.

Examples of support include:

Early Years

- teaching support for children and parents in the home setting; this is organised on the basis of referral from either educational psychologists, community paediatricians, or multi-disciplinary teams;
- advice, support and training to nurseries and some playgroups to support the child's effective inclusion in mainstream pre-school settings;
- in some cases, children have statements of SEN in the early years. If this is the case, the child may access placement in a nursery with adult assistance, where appropriate, placement in a diagnostic setting, or placement in nursery class that is attached to a special school.

Primary Years

- advice and support from learning support staff who can advise schools on individual education plans as well as strategies that may be appropriate for specific children;
- outreach support and teaching from staff that are attached to special schools for children at stages 3,4 and 5 of the Code of Practice;
- adult assistants, where appropriate, in mainstream schools for children who have statements of SEN;
- access to placement in learning support classes that are attached to mainstream schools; this provides teaching in a small group placement with inclusion in mainstream classes, as appropriate;
- placement in special schools that meet the needs of children and young people with SEN.

Post-Primary Years

- The core areas of support include all the services offered at primary level and in addition:
- access to transition services to support the planning of young people's needs as they transition from school to adult learning programmes;
- access to counselling services as part of post-primary support; and
- participation in a range of course options through the Entitlement Framework.

The Middletown Centre for Autism also provides a range of support and intervention to professionals, parents and children with autism. Parents can avail of a range of training courses provided free of charge by the Centre and can access a broad range of online learning resources, including training video materials.

The Centre is also currently expanding its programme of direct support and intervention to children with complex autism who are referred to it by the ELBs.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Education how many educational facilities are available for children with autism spectrum disorder. (AQW 36271/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can attend grant-aided schools in the north of Ireland. The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (COP) sets out a five stage approach to the identification of children with learning difficulties, the assessment of their SEN and the making of whatever special educational provision is necessary to meet those needs. The COP recognises that there is a continuum of needs and a continuum of provision which may be made in a variety of forms; in mainstream schools, Learning Support Centres attached to mainstream schools or special schools.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education what legislative changes are being made in replacing the five existing educational boards; and to detail the applicable timescales for the change. (AQW 36282/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am seeking the Executive's agreement to introduce a Bill which will establish a single Education Authority in place of the five existing Education and Library Boards and their Staff Commission. The timescale will depend upon the Assembly's consideration of the Bill. I will be seeking agreement to the use of the accelerated passage procedure so that the Bill may complete its passage in time to allow for the establishment of the Education Authority by 1 April, 2015, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education to outline his plans for the restructuring of Education and Library Boards.
(AQW 36357/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am seeking the Executive's agreement to introduce a Bill which will establish a single Education Authority in place of the five existing Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and their Staff Commission. The role and functions of the Education Authority, including its employer responsibilities, shall be the same as those of the ELBs as set out in the Education Orders.

Department for Employment and Learning

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the number of work placements in East Londonderry that are available to students at the Northern and North Western Regional Colleges.
(AQW 35605/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): According to the North West Regional College, there were 45 work placements in training provision and 113 further education placements in the East Londonderry area in the 2013/14 academic year. Similarly, Northern Regional College have confirmed there were 4 work placements in training and 128 further education placements within the East Londonderry area in the 2013/14 academic year.

The process of obtaining, monitoring and evaluating work placements takes significant effort by colleges, but is a key element of the student experience and an integral part of their study.

Research emphasises the importance of work placements. In particular, learners benefit from experience of the work environment to complement their main studies. This is also a very effective way for learners to acquire the all-important employability skills required by employers.

My Department's current reviews of further education and youth training are considering how work placements can be included in the most effective way in individual students' programmes of learning.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning who is currently delivering the Extractives and Minerals Processing apprenticeship frameworks; and who will deliver the frameworks in future.
(AQW 35621/11-15)

Dr Farry: Southern Regional College and South West College hold contracts to deliver the Extractives and Mineral Processing apprenticeship frameworks. However, no apprentices are currently undertaking training aligned to these frameworks.

Subject to the suppliers' compliance with the programme's operational guidelines and conditions of contract, they will continue to deliver the contract until its expiry date of the 31st March 2016.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what qualifications or accreditations does a body or individual require to deliver the Extractives and Minerals processing apprenticeship frameworks.
(AQW 35622/11-15)

Dr Farry: ApprenticeshipsNI contracted training suppliers must ensure that all teaching/training staff have a qualification which is a minimum of a Level 3 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) /Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in the professional and technical area(s) in which they are teaching/training.

In addition, training suppliers must ensure that all training personnel who are qualified teachers, achieve, or work towards achieving, the Certificate in Teaching, currently provided by the University of Ulster in accordance with the contract tender documentation.

Contracted training suppliers must also ensure that they have Awarding Body approval. However, training suppliers would not be expected to have obtained all Awarding Body approvals on the commencement date of the ApprenticeshipsNI contract. Suppliers should seek awarding body approval when it becomes evident that a need has arisen to deliver specific apprenticeship framework training.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of students from Targeting Social Need areas enrolled in each university and college, for each of the last three (i) academic; and (ii) financial years.
(AQW 35642/11-15)

Dr Farry: The tables below provide the available information from the 40% most deprived areas across Northern Ireland for each of the last three academic years. By using the bottom 40%, we are very likely to be identifying the majority of people in disadvantaged areas.

Information is only collected on an academic year basis and therefore financial year analysis is not available.

Table 1: Number of students at FE Colleges from 40% Most Deprived Areas in Northern Ireland

FE College	Academic Year		
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Belfast Metropolitan College	11,612	10,511	9,359
Northern Regional College	5,106	5,237	5,111
North West Regional College	9,483	9,278	9,092
South East Regional College	5,390	4,536	4,762
Southern Regional College	8,120	7,844	7,755
South West College	7,295	7,852	8,001
All FE Colleges	47,006	45,258	44,080

Source: Further Education Statistical Return (FESR)

Table 2: Number of enrolments at HE Institutions from 40% Most Deprived Areas in Northern Ireland

HE Institutions	Academic Year		
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Queen's University, Belfast	4,995	5,185	4,990
University of Ulster	7,435	7,495	7,715
Stranmillis University College	350	350	325
St Mary's University College	400	405	435
All HE Institutions	13,185	13,435	13,465

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes: The latest available data are for the 2012/13 academic year.

Figures for Northern Ireland enrolments at NI Higher Education Institutions have been rounded to the nearest 5 in line with HESA policy.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of students who have (i) applied for; and (ii) received student hardship funding in each of the last three academic years, broken down by each university and college.

(AQW 35643/11-15)

Dr Farry: In the last three academic years, the six further education colleges in Northern Ireland have assessed the eligibility of students' applications for hardship funds and have provided support to student numbers as follows:

Further Education College	Academic Year	(i) Number of students who applied for hardship funding	(ii) Number of students who received hardship funding
BMC	2013/14	637	480
	2012/13	610	522
	2011/12	564	462
NRC	2013/14	165	134
	2012/13	145	115
	2011/12	151	118
NWRC	2013/14	516	424
	2012/13	579	480
	2011/12	469	388
SERC	2013/14	185	147
	2012/13	183	153
	2011/12	183	121

Further Education College	Academic Year	(i) Number of students who applied for hardship funding	(ii) Number of students who received hardship funding
SRC	2013/14	797	643
	2012/13	491	443
	2011/12	638	510
SWC	2013/14	566	466
	2012/13	400	364
	2011/12	308	268

In the last three academic years, for which information is currently available, Queen's University, The University of Ulster, St Mary's College and Stranmillis College have assessed students' eligibility for and where appropriate, delivered support funds to students as follows:

University / College	Academic Year	(i) Number of students who applied for hardship funding	(ii) Number of students who received hardship funding
Queen's University Belfast	2012/13	2258	1848
	2011/12	1612	1509
	2010/11	1502	1375
The University of Ulster	2012/13	2332	2052
	2011/12	1775	1464
	2010/11	2706	2457
St Mary's College	2012/13	74	57
	2011/12	44	32
	2010/11	68	43
Stranmillis College	2012/13	48	41
	2011/12	52	32
	2010/11	52	30

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many applications from students studying at the (i) Northern Regional College; and (ii) North Western Regional College, for financial assistance from the Further Education Fund and the College Hardship Fund, were rejected.

(AQW 35751/11-15)

Dr Farry: In the last five academic years, the number of students studying at the Northern Regional College and North West Regional College who have received funding from Further Education Awards and the Hardship Fund and the number who have had applications rejected from both funds are as follows:

Further Education College	Academic Year	Number of students who applied for Further Education Award	Number of students who received Further Education Award	Number of students whose application was rejected
(i)NRC	2013/14	618	508	110
	2012/13	602	487	115
	2011/12	463*	463	*Data not available
	2010/11	631	383	248
	2009/10	544	335	209

Further Education College	Academic Year	Number of students who applied for Further Education Award	Number of students who received Further Education Award	Number of students whose application was rejected
(ii)NWRC	2013/14	912	675	237
	2012/13	835	628	207
	2011/12	633*	633	*Data not available
	2010/11	1036	616	420
	2009/10	1033	639	394

*Data for 2011/12 not available by college.

Further Education College	Academic Year	Number of students who applied for hardship funding	Number of students who received hardship funding	Number of students whose application was rejected
(i)NRC	2013/14	165	134	31
	2012/13	145	115	30
	2011/12	151	118	33
	2010/11	122	113	9
	2009/10	151	139	12
(ii)NWRC	2013/14	516	424	92
	2012/13	579	480	99
	2011/12	469	388	81
	2010/11	457	362	95
	2009/10	592	511	81

Question AQW 35759/11-15

Eligible students must apply through the Western Education and Library Board for a Further Education Award before they can be considered for assistance through college Hardship Funds. Anyone who is refused a Further Education Award is advised individually by the Board that they may apply to their college for help through Hardship Funds.

The colleges do not record statistical data in the manner requested and so cannot confirm how many students received help through Hardship Funds after being refused assistance through Further Education Awards.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of students studying at the (i) Northern Regional College; and (ii) North Western Regional College who have received financial assistance from (a) the Further Education Fund; and (b) College Hardship Funds, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35758/11-15)

Dr Farry: In the last five academic years, the number of students studying at the Northern Regional College and North West Regional College who have received funding from Further Education Awards and the Hardship Fund and the number who have had applications rejected from both funds are as follows:

Further Education College	Academic Year	Number of students who applied for Further Education Award	Number of students who received Further Education Award	Number of students whose application was rejected
(i)NRC	2013/14	618	508	110
	2012/13	602	487	115
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The colleges do not record statistical data in the manner requested and so cannot confirm how many students received help through Hardship Funds after being refused assistance through Further Education Awards.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, of those students from the (i) Northern Regional College; and (ii) North Western Regional Colleges whose application to either the College Hardship fund or the Further Education fund was rejected, how many were referred to and received support from the other source.

(AQW 35759/11-15)

Dr Farry: In the last five academic years, the number of students studying at the Northern Regional College and North West Regional College who have received funding from Further Education Awards and the Hardship Fund and the number who have had applications rejected from both funds are as follows:

Further Education College	Academic Year	Number of students who applied for Further Education Award	Number of students who received Further Education Award	Number of students whose application was rejected
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	2009/10	151	139	12
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	2011/12	469	388	81
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The colleges do not record statistical data in the manner requested and so cannot confirm how many students received help through Hardship Funds after being refused assistance through Further Education Awards.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the range and number of higher education courses which are currently available to students who attend the Omagh Campus of the South West College; and how his Department plans to increase higher education provision in Omagh.

(AQW 35853/11-15)

Dr Farry: Details of the higher education courses offered at the Omagh campus of South West College in academic year 2013/14 and the number of enrolments on each course are provided in Annex A to this response. My Department does not hold detailed information on the range and number of higher education courses being offered at Omagh campus in the 2014/15 academic year but this is available in the college prospectus.

South West College's allocation of full-time higher education places has increased from 186 in academic year 2008/09 to 565 in academic year 2014/15. This significant increase is the result of my Department's annual review of college full-time higher education allocations and additional full-time places that I have made available, including 68 places I awarded in academic year 2013/14 and an extra 23 places I awarded in the 2014/15 academic year. These allocations of additional places demonstrate my continuing commitment to increasing higher education provision in the south west.

However, it is the responsibility of the senior management in the regional college to apply their allocation of full-time higher education places across campuses and curriculum areas to balance local demand and Departmental priorities.

My Department is committed to carrying out further reviews of college allocations in the future and to providing additional places when extra resources are identified, but there can be no guarantee that any additional full-time places would be allocated to South West College.

My Department does not place a cap on part-time higher education places and expansion of that provision therefore offers South West College another route to increase higher education opportunities. In this regard, the South West College is

participating in a pilot project to encourage those who are in work and who hold a foundation degree to progress to a bachelor degree on a part-time basis. This could lead to additional part-time higher education enrolments in the Omagh area.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Employment and Learning why Co. Tyrone and Co. Fermanagh has not been included to stage departmental job fairs; and whether his Department plans to host a job fair in Omagh.

(AQW 35856/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department works closely with employers and actively pursues opportunities to facilitate employer events, Job Fairs and single recruitment events.

When sufficient commitments have been received from employers in the Co Fermanagh and Co Tyrone areas we would be happy to facilitate Job Fair events.

In the meantime any employers in these areas who are planning to expand and undertake large scale recruitment exercises will be supported by the Department through local customised recruitment events

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he is aware of the concern amongst first year students at Queen's University and their families at the difficulties currently being experienced in obtaining university accommodation; and to detail the steps he is taking to resolve this situation.

(AQW 35890/11-15)

Dr Farry: The allocation of student accommodation is a matter for the University and is therefore not one that my Department has a role in. However, I have asked Queen's University about this matter and they have informed me that they are by far the largest provider of Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) in the city. Queen's has invested over £60m to support the creation of 2,243 rooms. In line with the recommendations of the Buchanan Report, Queen's has developed new proposals to further increase its provision of PBMSA and is working tirelessly to bring these to a successful conclusion.

The demand from students for high quality managed accommodation demonstrates the urgent need to increase provision in the city. The University is fully committed to playing its part in increasing the supply of PBMSA and will continue to work proactively, in partnership with all stakeholders, to make this a reality.

Queen's recognises that the availability of PBMSA is an important factor for students who choose to come to study at the University. Given that demand outstrips supply, Queen's allocate rooms based on a comprehensive policy linked to distance from the University.

Queen's appreciate that this is a very difficult time for new students and their parents and they provide as much proactive assistance as possible. Queen's offer a waiting list for those students who can commute and who wish to continue to be considered for rooms that become available after term starts.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail any potential employers based in East Londonderry who have signed up as partners to his Department's Computing and Engineering Scholarship Programme.

(AQW 35981/11-15)

Dr Farry: No employers have signed up to the programme as yet. The programme was launched on 15 September 2014 and the closing date for applications is 14 November 2014.

The Department will not be in a position to know which employers have submitted an application until after this closing date.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many applications from South Eastern Regional College students to the (i) Further Education Fund; and (ii) Hardship Fund, were rejected in each of the last five years.

(AQW 36006/11-15)

Dr Farry: In the last five academic years, the numbers of students studying at the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) who have received funding from Further Education Awards and the Hardship Funds and the number who have had applications rejected from both funds are as follows:

Further Education College	Academic Year	Number of students who applied for Further Education Award	Number of students who received Further Education Award	Number of applications rejected
(i)SERC	2013/14	714	564	150
	2012/13	685	530	155
	2011/12	511*	511*	*Data not available
	2010/11	748	389	359
	2009/10	551	339	212

*Data for 2011/12 not available by college.

Further Education College	Academic Year	Number of students who applied for hardship funding	Number of students who received hardship funding	Number of applications rejected
(ii)SERC	2013/14	185	147	38
	2012/13	183	153	30
	2011/12	183	121	62
	2010/11	154	119	35
	2009/10	436	370	66

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many South Eastern Regional College students received assistance from the (i) Further Education Fund; and (ii) Hardship Fund in each of the last five years.

(AQW 36007/11-15)

Dr Farry: In the last five academic years, the numbers of students studying at the South Eastern Regional College (SERC) who have received funding from Further Education Awards and the Hardship Funds and the number who have had applications rejected from both funds are as follows:

Further Education College	Academic Year	Number of students who applied for Further Education Award	Number of students who received Further Education Award	Number of applications rejected
(i)SERC	2013/14	714	564	150
	2012/13	685	530	155
	2011/12	511*	511*	*Data not available
	2010/11	748	389	359
	2009/10	551	339	212

*Data for 2011/12 not available by college.

Further Education College	Academic Year	Number of students who applied for hardship funding	Number of students who received hardship funding	Number of applications rejected
(ii)SERC	2013/14	185	147	38
	2012/13	183	153	30
	2011/12	183	121	62
	2010/11	154	119	35
	2009/10	436	370	66

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what mechanisms are in place to measure the quality of the skills being delivered in the Engineering and Utility Sector.

(AQW 36033/11-15)

Dr Farry: I established and chair the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Services Working Group to consider how issues related to the provision of skills in the Engineering and Utility sector can be addressed. This Group brings together Government, academia and local employers to identify specific skills needs and develop appropriate solutions through an agreed Action Plan which was launched in April 2014.

My Department also has a Quality Improvement Adviser who works closely with the Education and Training Inspectorate to evaluate the quality of provision across Training for Success and ApprenticeshipsNI programmes in all sectors including Engineering and Utilities. Inspections are carried out on a three yearly cycle and reports cover the quality of leadership and management, standards and outcomes and teaching and learning.

In addition, my Department's Supplier Performance Branch and the Finance and Audit Support Team both carry out at least one monitoring visit each financial year to ensure that contracted training suppliers are fully compliant with Operational Guidelines and conditions of contract. Subsequent visits are undertaken based on risk assessment.

Information gathered during monitoring and inspection activity is reviewed at an annual case conference. The review of all available information will inform decisions on further action required.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many companies in East Londonderry are partners with his Department's Bridge Programme.

(AQW 36045/11-15)

Dr Farry: The number of companies in East Londonderry and throughout Northern Ireland which have run Bridge to Employment programmes in conjunction with my Department since 2011 to the present are detailed below. The table also details the number of participants who were offered employment following participation in the Bridge to Employment scheme;

Year	Bridge to Employment Programmes In Northern Ireland	Bridge to Employment Programmes In East Londonderry	Offered Employment (Northern Ireland)	Offered Employment (East Londonderry)
2011/12	43	0	288	0
2012/13	63	2	391	11
2013/14	50	0	302	0
2014/15*	43	4	34	15
Total	199	6	1015	26

* figures for 2014/15 are from 1st April 2014 – 18th September 2014

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) East Londonderry have been made offers of employment following participation in the Bridge to Employment scheme.

(AQW 36047/11-15)

Dr Farry: The number of companies in East Londonderry and throughout Northern Ireland which have run Bridge to Employment programmes in conjunction with my Department since 2011 to the present are detailed below. The table also details the number of participants who were offered employment following participation in the Bridge to Employment scheme;

Year	Bridge to Employment Programmes In Northern Ireland	Bridge to Employment Programmes In East Londonderry	Offered Employment (Northern Ireland)	Offered Employment (East Londonderry)
2011/12	43	0	288	0
2012/13	63	2	391	11
2013/14	50	0	302	0
2014/15*	43	4	34	15
Total	199	6	1015	26

* figures for 2014/15 are from 1st April 2014 – 18th September 2014

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how the Northern Ireland Tourist Board is developing greenways; and to outline the anticipated tourism potential from these projects.

(AQW 35452/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The Northern Ireland Tourism Board (NITB) has not received any financial assistance applications for the development of Greenways in Northern Ireland.

In November 2013 the Minister for Regional Development announced the establishment of a Cycling Unit dedicated to working on cycling. The Cycling Unit is working to ensure that cycling provision is a key element in both transport strategy and delivery and to develop and promote the bicycle as an everyday mode of transport for everyone in Northern Ireland and also in relation to tourism and culture.

The Department for Regional Development (DRD) Cycling Unit currently has a Draft Bicycle Strategy for Northern Ireland (August 2014) out to consultation. The draft Strategy proposes the development of Amenity Routes, Greenways and cross border routes as a way of developing tourism and celebrating the unique character of Northern Ireland. DRD is currently in the lead in the development of cycling provision, including Greenways in Northern Ireland. This will require multi-agency and Departmental input and support.

In May 2014, to ensure cohesive delivery DRD established a Northern Ireland Cross Sectoral Cycling Group to oversee and co-ordinate delivery the Strategy. NITB is represented on this Group.

In relation to other Greenway projects such as the Western Greenway in Co. Mayo, in 2011 research demonstrated that a €3million investment yielded €7million estimated economic benefit. Greenways are therefore one of the key strategic considerations being taken forward by the Northern Ireland Cross Sectoral Cycling Group.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the funding provided for the Titanic Showdown event on 6 September 2014; and (ii) who provided the funding, given that it is not included in the list of events that were successful in bidding for the 2014/15 events.

(AQW 35504/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has committed £150,000 through the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Tourism Ireland who are working with the promoters of the Frampton/Martinez fight to maximise exposure for Northern Ireland.

The Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure (DCAL) has allocated £100,000 of funding to this event.

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail any investment funds that InvestNI invested in, broken down by year, for each year since its foundation.

(AQW 35533/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI has invested in the following investment funds:

Fund	Fund Manager	Year
Nitech	Clarendon Fund Managers	2002
Crescent Capital II	Crescent Capital	2004
NISPO	E-Synergy	2009
Growth Loan Fund	WhiteRock Capital Partners	2012
Small Business Loan Fund	Ulster Community Investment plc	2013
Development Fund I	Crescent Capital	2013
Development Fund II	Kernel Capital	2013
techstart NI	Pentech Ventures	2014

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the Programme for Government 2011/15 Commitment 7 to increase visitor numbers to 4.2m and tourist revenue to £676m by December 2014.

(AQW 35560/11-15)

Mrs Foster: All Programme for Government (PfG) targets on tourism have been achieved to date.

The latest full year Official Statistics on tourism are for 2013 and these figures show that the PfG milestone targets on visitor numbers and tourist revenue were met. Total visitor numbers for 2013 were 4.1 million with visitor expenditure of £723million against targets of 4.1 million visitors and revenue of £637million.

Statistics for the first quarter of 2014 (January to March) were published by NISRA on 17 July 2014. These show that total visitor numbers increased by 2% for the first 3 months of 2014 when compared to January to March 2013, with associated expenditure from these visitors up by 10% when compared to the first quarter of 2013.

Full year statistics for 2014 will not be published until spring 2015.

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assistance her Department can offer to private sector companies who provide 3G communications services in Limavady.

(AQW 35629/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As a fully privatised sector Mobile communications is one of the most competitive areas of the UK telecommunications market and the four main Mobile Network Operators are currently investing significantly to upgrade their 2G and 3G networks in Northern Ireland. Government can only intervene where the market has failed and in compliance with EU competition law and state aid rules.

For those areas that are not currently being addressed by market forces, the UK Government is implementing the £150 million Mobile Infrastructure project which aims to address mobile voice and basic data not-spots across the UK by March 2015. While the project is focused on 2G technology, it is understood that opportunities will be taken to upgrade to 3G where possible. Northern Ireland is in line for 72 new mast sites under this project.

My Department is maintaining a watching brief on these ongoing initiatives and will assess the need for further government intervention once they have completed.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she has had discussions with her UK counterpart regarding the Kurdistan region of Iraq, and the potential impact that current events could have on possible inward investment projects.

(AQW 35635/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department, through Invest Northern Ireland, continues to liaise with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the ongoing situation in the Kurdistan region. Our primary concern at this stage is the welfare of Invest NI's own officer in Erbil, other UK nationals and the local population.

The primary focus of Northern Ireland's contact with Kurdistan has been to increase the export of goods and services from Northern Ireland. The current conflict in Northern Iraq has slowed economic development across the region but Northern Ireland companies have made progress in Kurdistan over the past few years.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment which companies have received financial support for investments made in East Londonderry and North Antrim, in each year since 2010.

(AQW 35690/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The tables below show the companies that have been offered support by Invest NI in (i) the East Londonderry and (ii) North Antrim parliamentary constituency areas in each full financial year since 2010-11.

Businesses Offered Financial Assistance by Invest NI in East Londonderry (2010-11)

Company Name

- | | |
|--|---|
| ■ Air Cool Engineering (N.I.) Ltd. | ■ Lestas Consulting |
| ■ Armstrong Medical Ltd | ■ Limavady Gear Company Limited |
| ■ ATG Services (Ireland) Ltd | ■ M L Associates |
| ■ Awakin Ltd | ■ Mc Laughlin Fruit & Vegetables |
| ■ Ballyrashane Co-Operative Agricultural and Dairy Society Limited | ■ McWilliams Communications Limited |
| ■ Box Displays | ■ Mullins Ice Cream |
| ■ Camroe Supplies Limited | ■ Multishower GB Ltd |
| ■ Colum McAuley Builders Ltd | ■ Nonglak McFadden |
| ■ Compass Windows & Doors | ■ North West Lifelong Learning Ltd |
| ■ Crossland Tankers Limited | ■ Ovflo Limited |
| ■ Digital Future Solutions Limited | ■ PIC Fresh Food Fast |
| ■ D-Stone (NI) Ltd | ■ Pipesketch Limited |
| ■ Dynamic Unique Interiors Ltd | ■ QLS Ireland |
| ■ Fugro-BKS Limited | ■ R.C.D.S. (Reinforced Concrete Detailing Services) |
| ■ Gaelectric Developments Limited | ■ ReforceTech (NI) Limited |
| ■ Geopii | ■ Rockstar Logistics Ltd |
| ■ H360 LTD | ■ Roe Park Resort |
| ■ Harrington Handmade Kitchens | ■ Rutledge Recruitment & Training Ltd |
| ■ Hawthorne Heights | ■ Sandy Arthur Training Services Limited |
| ■ J T M Meats | ■ Scott and Stinson Engineering |
| ■ J Wilson Agricultural Ltd | ■ Seating Matters Ltd |
| ■ Jam NI Recycle & Environmental Solutions | ■ Seopa Ltd |
| ■ Kara Irish Pottery Ltd | ■ Toner McAllister Contracts |
| ■ Kestrel Thermo-Plastics Limited | ■ Transen Sustainable Energy Systems Ltd |
| ■ Lamont Fireplaces Ltd | ■ Unitas Software Ltd |

Businesses Offered Financial Assistance by Invest NI in East Londonderry (2011-12)

Client Name

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| ■ A.Farlow (Engineering) Ltd | ■ Society Limited |
| ■ Acidy Ltd | ■ Best Western Magherabuoy Hotel |
| ■ Altec Solutions (North) Ltd | ■ Blaney Gears Ltd |
| ■ Arbarr Electronics Limited | ■ Brian Scott Engineering Limited |
| ■ Armstrong Medical Ltd | ■ Brighter Gold |
| ■ AVEX Cable Jointing Ltd | ■ Bushtown Hotel |
| ■ AVX Limited | ■ Campbell's Pharmacy |
| ■ Ballyrashane Co-Operative Agricultural and Dairy | ■ Carey Consulting (NI) Ltd |

- Carnroe Supplies Limited
- Cashel Construction Limited
- Causeway CAB
- CK ENGINEERING
- Coleraine Radiator Specialists
- Compass Windows & Doors
- Contractuary Ltd
- Crossland Tankers Limited
- Digishare360
- Digital Future Solutions Limited
- Drenagh Sawmills Limited
- Dunluce Golf
- Dunola Oil
- Dynamic Unique Interiors Ltd
- Elite Fitness and Performance
- ELSS Engineering Limited
- Enterprise Northern Ireland Ltd
- Exoticsilver
- Fine Food and Wines
- First 4 Printing
- First4Fruit
- Fugro-BKS Limited
- G E Services (Lim) Ltd
- Geopii
- Golden Vale NI
- Hampton Conservatories Limited
- Hands That Talk
- Hutchinson Engineering
- J T M Meats
- J Wilson Agricultural Ltd
- Kara Irish Pottery Ltd
- Lestas Consulting
- Light & Sound
- Limavady Linen Services Ltd
- Lynas Foodservice Limited
- MACCES Limited
- Manor Mouldings (N.I.) Limited
- Mc Laughlin Fruit & Vegetables
- MI - Dental Design
- Montgomery Irwin Architects Ltd
- Motion Pedals Ltd
- Mullins Ice Cream
- Multishower GB Ltd
- Natural Import Company
- O'Hara Machinery
- Palbor Limited
- Pipesketch Limited
- Rain Harvesting Ireland
- Ramore Restaurants Limited
- Redback Creations
- River Ridge Recycling
- Roe Valley Enterprises Ltd
- Rutledge Recruitment & Training Ltd
- S.J.C. Hutchinson (Engineering) Limited
- Sandy Arthur Training Services Limited
- Scott and Stinson Engineering
- Seating Matters Ltd
- Silverfish Studios Limited
- The Fish House
- The Good Food & Wine Company Limited
- The Institute of Education, Coleraine
- Tierney Associates Ltd
- Timber Tots
- Txt2Give Limited
- Unique Timber Frame Limited
- Uinitas Software Ltd
- Valley View
- W.D. Meats
- Waterside Warehouse Ltd
- Wood Creations
- Zing Design & Print

Businesses Offered Financial Assistance by Invest NI in East Londonderry (2012-13)

Client Name

- A.Farlow (Engineering) Ltd
- Adele McCloskey Bridal Couture
- Agrimac (NI) Limited
- Air Cool Engineering (N.I.) Ltd.
- Altec Solutions (North) Ltd
- Annies Traditional Food
- Arbarr Electronics Limited
- Armstrong Medical Ltd
- Ashland Chemicals & Hygiene Supplies Ltd
- AVX Limited
- B & E Security Systems Limited
- Ballyrashane Co-Operative Agricultural and Dairy Society Limited
- Best Western Magherabuoy Hotel
- Brian Canavan Associates
- Brighter Gold
- Bushtown Hotel
- Campbell Creations
- Candys
- Captain Cooks Homestore Limited
- Causeway Fabrics
- Causeway Jewellery Creations
- Claudy Rural Development Limited
- Compass Windows & Doors
- Contractuary Ltd
- Cross Concrete Flooring Ltd
- Crossland Tankers Limited
- Decoratives.com
- Digishare360

- Drenagh Farms Limited
- Drenagh Sawmills Limited
- Dri-Mittz Limited
- Dynamic Unique Interiors Ltd
- Eco Turf Ltd
- Elite Fitness and Performance
- Elite Ireland Ltd
- Eurospar Ballycastle Limited
- Exorna Kitchens
- Franco Fandango's Fabulous Foods
- Fugro-BKS Limited
- Geopii
- Glen Renewable Systems Limited
- Ground Espresso Bars
- Hutchinson Engineering
- J Wilson Agricultural Ltd
- Kanesbrook Developments Ltd
- Kara Irish Pottery Ltd
- Kestrel Thermo-Plastics Limited
- Kookycook Fresh Pesto
- Lestas Consulting
- Lodge Hotel And Travel Stop
- Lynas Foodservice Limited
- Mc Laughlin Fruit & Vegetables
- McKendry Engineering
- MCM Engineering
- Meat Connected Ltd
- Micro-Flexitronics Limited
- Montgomery Irwin Architects Ltd
- Mullins Ice Cream
- Multishower GB Ltd
- Natural Import Company
- Nicobrand Limited
- Nisa Local
- Perfecseal Limited
- R.C.D.S. (Reinforced Concrete Detailing Services)
- Rain Harvesting Ireland
- River Ridge Recycling
- ROCO Door Design Ltd
- Roe Park Resort
- Rutledge Recruitment & Training Ltd
- S.J.C. Hutchinson (Engineering) Limited
- Scott and Stinson Engineering
- Stendhal Festival Ltd
- Tamnagh Foods
- The Bayview Hotel Partnership
- The Good Food & Wine Company Limited
- The Nail Boutique
- Ti Amo Bridal
- Troggs Surf Shop Ltd
- Ulster Stores Limited
- Uritas Software Ltd
- V.Semple & Sons Ltd
- Valkyrie Craft
- W.D. Meats
- Whoosh
- Wilson Agriculture
- WM Body Works
- Zing Design & Print

Businesses Offered Financial Assistance by Invest NI in East Londonderry (2013-14)

Client Name

- A.Farlow (Engineering) Ltd
- Air Cool Engineering (N.I.) Ltd.
- Anderson Banners
- Annies Traditional Food
- Arbarr Electronics Limited
- Armstrong Medical Ltd
- Asbestos Management Company (Ireland) Limited
- Ashland Chemicals & Hygiene Supplies Ltd
- ATG Services (Ireland) Ltd
- AVEX Cable Jointing Ltd
- AVX Limited
- Axis Bioservices Limited
- Ballyrashane Co-Operative Agricultural and Dairy Society Limited
- Beansup Ltd
- Big Telly Theatre Company
- Brian Scott Engineering Limited
- Bridgeline Environmental Services Limited
- Brighter Gold
- C. P. Hire Limited
- Carnroe Supplies Limited
- Charlotte's Webb
- Compass Windows & Doors
- Crossland Tankers Limited
- Crystal Crafters
- Culbertsons Food Stores Limited
- Danny Boy Craft
- Digishare360
- Dunluce Golf
- Dunola Oil
- ELSS Engineering Limited
- Epitome Recruitment
- e-surveysni
- Europa Foods
- Exorna Kitchens
- Floristry Warehouse
- Geepy Games
- Gemini Electrical & Security Services Ltd
- Geopii
- Hampton Conservatories Limited
- Hutchinson Engineering

- Innovative Inventions Limited
- J Wilson Agricultural Ltd
- Kestrel Thermo-Plastics Limited
- Kookycook Fresh Pesto
- KS Autobody Repairs
- Landed
- Laser Spoke Limited
- Louise McKeag Opticians
- Macgen Power Generation Limited
- Maine Metal Services
- Mc Laughlin Fruit & Vegetables
- McKendry Engineering
- Meat Connected Ltd
- Montgomery Irwin Architects Ltd
- Multishower GB Ltd
- Natural Import Company
- Nonglak McFadden
- Overdrive
- Patrick Bradley Limited
- PCL Concrete Ltd
- Perfecseal Limited
- Peter Osborne Family Butcher
- R.C.D.S. (Reinforced Concrete Detailing Services)
- Rain Harvesting Ireland
- RMG Electrics
- RMK Security Ltd
- Roe Park Resort
- Roebank Service Station
- S.J.C. Hutchinson (Engineering) Limited
- Seating Matters Ltd
- Silverfish Studios Limited
- Smyth Steel Limited
- Spar Church Brae
- Spar Foodstore
- T B F Thompson (Garvagh) Limited
- The Bayview Hotel Partnership
- The Chocolate Manor
- The Good Food & Wine Company Limited
- Timber Tots
- Tweedy Acheson & Co.,(Coleraine) Limited
- Txt2Give Limited
- Udders and Grapes
- Ulster Stores Limited
- Uritas Software Ltd
- V.Semple & Sons Ltd
- W.D. Meats
- Warke's Deli

Businesses Offered Financial Assistance by Invest NI in North Antrim (2010-11)

Client Name

- Absolute Technologies
- Adair Arms Hotel
- Aerospace Metal Finishers Limited
- Agquip
- Alexander Bonar & Co., Limited
- Arcon Engineering
- Ashgrove Contract Furniture Limited
- Ben Vista Nursery
- Bushmills Inn
- Christies Direct Ltd
- Ciga Healthcare Limited
- Clinelm
- Clinty Chemicals Limited
- Coating Developments
- Compass Advocacy Network Limited
- Crawford Contracts Group Ltd
- Doko Sushi Ltd
- Element Consultants
- Fencing Solutions (NI) Ltd
- FSS-Portable Kitchens
- Garage Door Systems Limited
- Gibson Contracts
- Glover Site Investigations Limited
- GOHit Solutions
- Gold Link Stationary
- Gracehill Fine Foods
- J. F. & H. Dowds Limited
- Jango Golf
- Joseph Hughes Painting Contractor
- KBB Doors Limited
- KMS Georgian Fabrications
- M. Clarke & Sons Contracts Limited
- Maine Surface Finishing Limited
- McAuley Precision Limited
- Mecatec Services
- Met Healthcare Limited
- Moore Concrete Products Limited
- Moorings Mediquip
- Mugginsoft
- NORBEV
- Northern M & E
- Northern Materials Handling (Ireland) Limited
- O'Kane Poultry Limited
- PCD Contractors
- Quicktag
- R. Robinson & Sons (Chartered Architects & Civil Engineers) Ltd
- Rosspark Hotel
- Sadie B
- Shaw Automation Ltd
- Stephens Catering Equipment Company Limited
- Tap Straps
- The Suffolk Sheep Society

- Travon Precision Engineering Ltd
- UK ATVS
- Warwick Engineering (NI) Ltd
- Woodland Kitchens (N.I.) Limited
- Wright Composites Limited
- Wrightbus Limited

Businesses Offered Financial Assistance by Invest NI in North Antrim (2011-12)

Client Name

- Absolute Technologies
- Adair Arms Hotel
- Agquip
- Arcon Engineering
- B.H.C. Distributors Limited
- Bella Jo Ltd
- Ben Vista Nursery
- Carroll Falls
- Christies Direct Ltd
- Ciga Healthcare Limited
- Crawford Contracts Group Ltd
- Dixons Contractors Ltd
- DMS
- Doherty & Gray Limited
- Doherty Woodshavings
- Drumack Coachworks
- Education Recruitment and Marketing
- Ellies Deli
- Fleck Imet Group
- Francis Dinsmore, Limited
- FSS-Portable Kitchens
- Fundraize Solutions Ltd
- Fyfes Vehicle & Engineering Supplies Ltd
- Galgorm Manor Hotel Limited
- Garage Door Systems Limited
- Garvinvent Ltd
- Gibson Paving Limited
- Glenview Foods
- Glover Site Investigations Limited
- GOHit Solutions
- J. F. & H. Dowds Limited
- J.M.F. Ltd.
- John McElderry (Motors & Tractors) Limited
- KIRO DESIGNS
- Larkfield Timber Products
- Lawscript (NI) Ltd
- Logans Executive Travel
- M.Hasson & Sons Limited
- Maine Soft Drinks Limited
- Maine Surface Finishing Limited
- Martin Mechanical & Electrical Ltd
- McAuley Precision Limited
- Mecatec Services
- Met Healthcare Limited
- Michelin Tyre Public Limited Company
- Moore Concrete Products Limited
- Moorings Mediquip
- Mugginsoft
- New World Developments Limited
- NORBEV
- O'Kane Poultry Limited
- Patton Group
- PCD Contractors
- Quicktag
- Quizfortune Limited
- R. Robinson & Sons (Chartered Architects & Civil Engineers) Ltd
- Red Heifer Cheese
- Riada Recruitment Ltd
- RJ Cherry & Son
- Robert Craig & Sons (Merchant) Ltd
- Roonivoolin Naturals Ltd
- Royale Windsor Motor Company (Co. Antrim Northern Ireland) Limited
- S M Designs
- Shaw Automation Ltd
- Simply Scrumptious
- Smith's Engineering Works (Northern Ireland) Limited
- Solve Engineering
- St Patricks Slemish Water Co Ltd
- T And M Electrical
- The Old Bushmills Distillery Company Limited
- The Play Fanatics
- The Pretty Useful Map Company Limited
- Tinsdale Specialist Joinery Ltd
- UK ATVS
- Village Blinds
- Wallace Engineering
- Warwick Engineering (NI) Ltd
- Waste Not Ireland
- Woodland Furniture Ltd
- Woodland Kitchens (N.I.) Limited
- Wrightbus Limited

Businesses Offered Financial Assistance by Invest NI in North Antrim (2012-13)

Client Name

- Adair Arms Hotel
- Aerospace Metal Finishers Limited
- Agquip
- Albert Graham Limited
- B.H.C. Distributors Limited
- Bath Shack

- Bayview Farm Holiday Cottages
- BDL Design & Shopfitting
- Bestbusprice.com Limited
- Boydcreative Ltd
- Broughgammon Farm
- Bushmills Inn
- Cask
- Causeway Geotech Limited
- Celtic Seaweed Products Marketing Ltd
- Chilltec Refrigeration Ltd
- Christies Direct Ltd
- Ciga Healthcare Limited
- Coating Developments
- Commercial Wipes
- Concept Noise Ltd
- Cregagh Farms Limited
- Crosskeys Inn
- Daimler Limo Hire
- David Patton & Sons (NI) Limited
- Dixons Contractors Ltd
- Doherty & Gray Limited
- Dontaur Engineering Limited
- Dunbia (Ballymena)
- Education Recruitment and Marketing
- Everafter
- Fleck Imet Group
- Fluorescents Plus
- Francis Dinsmore, Limited
- FSP Alarms Ltd
- Galgorm Group
- Galgorm Manor Hotel Limited
- Galgorm Meats
- Gallaher Ltd
- Garage Door Systems Limited
- Garvinvent Ltd
- Gemat Automation
- Grant's Electrical Services (N.I.) Limited
- Hayburn Wood Products Limited
- J.M.F. Ltd.
- James Stevenson (Quarries) Ltd
- Jasmine Foods
- K&F Electrics
- Knightsbrook Limited
- Lawscript (NI) Ltd
- Loft Sound
- M. Clarke & Sons Contracts Limited
- Maine Soft Drinks Limited
- Maine Surface Finishing Limited
- McAuley Precision Limited
- McKeown Fine Foods Limited
- Met Healthcare Limited
- MIL
- Moore (Unidrill) Limited
- Moore Concrete Products Limited
- Moorings Mediquip
- Mugginsoft
- New World Developments Limited
- Nisa Cullybackey Ltd
- NORBEV
- Ocean Veg Ireland Limited
- O'Kane Poultry Limited
- PathLogic Limited
- PCD Contractors
- Quizfortune Limited
- Ramage Contracts
- Red Heifer Cheese
- Redflite Limited
- RJ Cherry & Son
- Robert Craig & Sons (Merchant) Ltd
- Robinson Quarry Masters Ltd
- RocBlast Ltd
- Royale Windsor Motor Company (Co. Antrim Northern Ireland) Limited
- S Pollock & Partners Ltd
- Smith's Engineering Works (Northern Ireland) Limited
- Stephens Catering Equipment Company Limited
- T70 Media Group
- The Old Bushmills Distillery Company Limited
- The Pretty Useful Map Company Limited
- Tinsdale Specialist Joinery Ltd
- UK ATVS
- Village Blinds
- Whyte and Wood
- Woodland Kitchens (N.I.) Limited
- Wrightbus Limited

Businesses Offered Financial Assistance by Invest NI in North Antrim (2013-14)

Client Name

- A N E Solutions Ltd
- Advance Engineering
- Advent Wind Ltd
- Aerospace Metal Finishers Limited
- Agquip
- Ballee Pharmacy
- Ballygarvey Eggs Limited
- Beat Street
- Bella Jo Ltd
- Ben Vista Nursery
- Broughgammon Farm
- Bushmills Inn
- Calorgen Biomass Ltd
- Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust

- Causeway Geotech Limited
- Centra Ballybogey
- Christies Direct Ltd
- Ciga Healthcare Limited
- Clover 51 Limited
- Commercial Wipes
- D Robinson and Son
- Dallat Group
- Disturbance Realtime Narrative Ltd
- Doherty & Gray Limited
- Doherty Woodshavings
- Drumack Coachworks
- Duke Consulting
- E. McMullan Ltd
- Education Recruitment and Marketing
- Everafter
- Fleck Imet Group
- Galgorm Group
- Galgorm Manor Hotel Limited
- Gallaher Ltd
- Garage Door Systems Limited
- Garvinvent Ltd
- Gault Engineering
- Gibson Paving Limited
- Gillen Machine Tools Ltd
- Glacier Water Systems Limited
- Graham's Ahoghill
- Granny Braids
- Grant's Electrical Services (N.I.) Limited
- H. K. Dickey
- Hamac Trading
- Hayburn Wood Products Limited
- J. F. & H. Dowds Limited
- J.M.F. Ltd.
- Jasmine Foods
- K & G McAtamney (Wholesale Meats) Limited
- Kells & Connor Pharmacy
- Khyber Restaurant
- KMS Georgian Fabrications
- Lawscript (NI) Ltd
- Loft Sound
- M. Clarke & Sons Contracts Limited
- Maine Surface Finishing Limited
- Marine Hotel
- McAuley Engineering
- McAuley Kitchens Limited
- McAuley Precision Limited
- McGarry Fabrication
- McKeown Fine Foods Limited
- Met Healthcare Limited
- Michelin Tyre Public Limited Company
- Money Pillar Limited
- Moore (Unidrill) Limited
- Moore Concrete Products Limited
- Moore Electrics
- Nampak Plastics
- New World Developments Limited
- NORBEV
- North Coast Smokehouse
- Northern Regional College
- Ocean Veg Ireland Limited
- PathLogic Limited
- Perfect Day Print
- Progressive Business Services
- Quicktag
- Roonivoolin Naturals Ltd
- Royale Windsor Motor Company (Co. Antrim Northern Ireland) Limited
- S Pollock & Partners Ltd
- Set Contracts Ltd
- Shaw Automation Ltd
- SJM Security
- Smith's Engineering Works (Northern Ireland) Limited
- Stephens Catering Equipment Company Limited
- The Big House
- Tinybird Media
- UK ATVS
- Warwick Engineering (NI) Ltd
- Waste Not Ireland
- Woodland Kitchens (N.I.) Limited
- Wright Composites Limited
- Wrightbus Limited
- XL Stop & Shop

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the Economic Inactivity Framework. (AQW 35711/11-15)

Mrs Foster: A public consultation on the Strategic Framework to Tackle Economic Inactivity was undertaken between 23 January and 17 April 2014. 58 written responses were received.

During the public consultation period, a number of public consultation events, and information sessions were held with a wide range of stakeholders across Northern Ireland. More than 120 stakeholders attended the events.

Due to the extensive nature and the complexity of the subject matter, additional stakeholder engagement with a number of specific economically inactive client groups was undertaken in May and June 2014. I, along with the Minister for Employment and Learning and the Minister for Social Development, also met with a number of business representatives to determine how we can support business to contribute to the aims of the strategy.

A summary of responses document, based on analysis of the written consultation responses and transcripts of the public stakeholder engagement events was published in June 2014 and can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/economic-inactivity-report-responses.pdf>

Following the public consultation period, the Executive Sub-Committee on the Economy noted the key findings from the consultation and endorsed a number of recommendations going forward. This includes an audit of existing service provision across Northern Ireland for the target inactive groups identified in the Strategic Framework document which has commenced. The results of the audit will provide an evidence base to inform development and delivery of the final Strategy.

Officials from DETI and DEL, supported by DHSSPS and DSD, are now working to finalise the Strategy which Minister Farry and I would hope to bring to the Executive before the end of this year.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what actions her Department is taking to learn from other parts of the UK on their policies, targets and achievements in promoting innovation and attracting business to use the expertise that exists here locally and to bring their expertise to Northern Ireland.

(AQW 35733/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department works very closely with the UK Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the other Devolved Administrations in order to deepen its understanding and knowledge of developments on wider Innovation policy measures. We are represented on a number of key working groups, at both UK and EU level, which ensures that Northern Ireland contributes to wider UK and EU policy development on innovation and also helps inform our policy development here.

My officials have built up very strong relationships with a number of UK Innovation organisations such as InnovateUK (formerly the Technology Strategy Board) NESTA, and the Open Data Institute. These organisations contributed very positively to the recently published Northern Ireland Innovation Strategy while at an operational level they have been helping us test new programmes and support mechanisms that can help improve Northern Ireland's innovation performance. An example of this is the Small Business Research Initiative where, working in collaboration with InnovateUK, Northern Ireland was the first devolved Administration to run its own SBRI competition. Similarly, with the support of NESTA and the Open Data Institute, my Department and the Department of Finance and Personnel recently organised the first NI Open Data challenge in Northern Ireland. These new programmes are designed to encourage more of our local companies, particularly SME's and Micro Business to engage in research and innovation.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how her Department is planning to combat the low levels of Foreign Direct Investment for clinical research.

(AQW 35763/11-15)

Mrs Foster: DETI and Invest NI recognise the importance of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in growing any sector. FDI brings new investment in skills and technology and is a key factor in growing productivity. Invest NI's recent success in FDI have been from the Financial and Professional Services and ICT/Software sectors. However, the Life Sciences sector, including clinical research, is an area of increasing interest from potential investors.

A Memorandum of Understanding between DETI (including Invest NI) and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety seeks to identify areas in which the organisations can work together to contribute to improved health and well-being, enhanced patient care and the development of opportunities to support the wider economic development strategy.

Invest NI has also committed to place a Business Development Executive in its Boston office in order to make connections between institutions in the US and Northern Ireland, develop export opportunities for Northern Ireland companies and to explore the possibility of increasing FDI in the Life Sciences and Connected Health sectors. A recruitment exercise for this position has recently concluded and the successful candidate will be in place in October 2014.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps her Department has taken to collaborate with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, to promote innovative healthcare research and attract investment for clinical research.

(AQW 35764/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department works closely with colleagues in DHSSPS to promote innovative healthcare research and attract investment for clinical research.

At a strategic level both departments have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to develop health, social care and economic opportunities in Connected Health for Northern Ireland, through better coordination of public assets and funding. One of the key aims of the MOU is to support clinical research on Connected Health in Northern Ireland.

In collaboration with Industry and the Universities both departments are working on the Life & Health Sciences MATRIX Capability and Foresight mapping exercise which will inform government on the new Life and Health Sciences Strategy.

This strategic work has led to a number of initiatives to support and attract research.

In June 2014 HSC Innovations and the Connected Health Innovation Centre (CHIC) signed a MOU to facilitate collaborative working between academia, industry and HSC Innovations. The collaboration between CHIC and HSC Innovations will streamline the assessment of how emerging technologies and innovations will become tools to improve healthcare

professionals' ability to deliver better care. One such example is a project coordinated by CHIC and HSC Innovations working with Randox Laboratories Ltd, Exploristics, EMC Corporation and Southern Health and Social Care Trust. In this project CHIC member companies are looking at utilising new analytics and big data techniques applied to diagnostics in order to improve health outcomes.

Invest NI, HSC Research & Development and University of Ulster (UU) have co-funded an R&D investment of £11.5million in a new Stratified Medicine Centre at C-TRIC (the Clinical Translational Research and Innovation Centre), Altnagelvin Hospital. The project involves collaboration between UU, the Western Health Trust and C-TRIC in age related diseases.

Invest NI and HSC Research & Development have recently worked with the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry and the local universities to host the Northern Ireland Life Sciences Pharmaceutical Industry Clinical Research visit. The objective of this event was to build relationships between Northern Ireland and Pharmaceutical industry clinical researchers with a view to increasing collaborative research. The event was attended by over 100 delegates including scientific and medical personnel from 19 global pharmaceutical companies. Outcomes will include improvements in clinical research processes, further opportunities to attract research and the possible co-funding of a clinical research industry liaison executive.

In summary both departments are actively collaborating at strategic and operational levels to promote and attract healthcare and clinical research. Actions arising from the new Life and Health Sciences Strategy will further strengthen and set targets for this activity.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much financial support Invest NI has provided to Bombardier in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35784/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Assistance Offered to Bombardier by Invest Northern Ireland during the past three financial years is detailed below.

	Assistance Offered	Assistance Paid
1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012	£ 1,817,050	£ 1,700,030
1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013	£ 1,459,448	£ 795,932
1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014	£ 2,616	£ 2,616

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation to the Titanic Showdown boxing event held on Saturday 6 September 2014, (i) what financial contribution in the way of sponsorship was made to the event by her Department; and (ii) what representations regarding the event were received by her Department from (a) public representatives; (b) Ministers; (c) Special Advisors; and (d) lobby interests.

(AQW 35788/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department, through NITB and Tourism Ireland, contributed £150,000 to the Titanic Showdown boxing event.

Tourism Ireland committed £100,000 towards international TV, press and online exposure for Titanic, Belfast and Northern Ireland in the run-up to the event and during its live screening to a potential global audience of 850,000 viewers.

NITB committed £50,000, entering into a three year marketing sponsorship agreement with Cyclone Promotions to use the high profile media coverage and digital following of the event to promote Belfast and Northern Ireland.

OFMDFM was approached by Cyclone Promotions regarding proposals for the Titanic Showdown. The Head of the Civil Service asked DETI to meet with the company and consider its proposals.

My Department was not lobbied by public representatives, Ministers, Special Advisors or lobby interests.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the cost of conferences, including room hire, hospitality, travel and associated fees, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35802/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Cost of conferences including room hire, hospitality, travel and associated fees

Financial year	Total cost (excluding vat)
2009/2010	£6866.86*
2010/2011	£7866.00*
2011/2012	£1300.00*
2012/2013	£5134.88*
2013/2014	£6914.02*

*Footnote:- In some cases it has not been possible to identify the associated travel costs.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the provision of basic and superfast broadband services.

(AQW 35841/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As a result of previous investment, Northern Ireland already has the highest availability of superfast broadband services in the UK. However, I recognise that challenges remain and there is still room to do more.

On 4 February 2014 my Department signed a contract with BT, for delivery of the c£23.5million Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement project. This project aims to provide improvements in access to basic and superfast fixed-line broadband services across Northern Ireland and is anticipated will bring more choice and improved broadband speeds to a further 45,000 premises by the end of 2015.

The project is being delivered in eight phases, each of which requires an extensive survey and design process. This takes account of technical feasibility, quality of existing infrastructure in the area, reasonable costs, number of anticipated customers etc and seeks to achieve the greatest value for money and the highest number of beneficiaries.

On 23 July my Department published details of the street level postcodes where improvements had been delivered under the first implementation phase, together with a high level roll-out plan for future phases, including indicative completion dates. The intention is to update this information as each phase completes and as services come online. The information can be found at <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/broadband-improvement-project.htm>

My Department has also been indicatively allocated £7.24million by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) for the extension of superfast broadband and is seeking to match this, to provide a potential funding pot of £14.48million.

On 26 August, we commenced a public consultation on the proposed intervention area for a further project, which will utilise this funding support and aimed at extending superfast broadband services to at least 95% of premises across Northern Ireland by 2017. This consultation closes on 26 September. The consultation document can be found at http://www.detini.gov.uk/index/what-we-do/deti-telecoms-index/consultations_from_2014/superfast_rollout_programme_phase_2.htm

If value for money is demonstrated, it is proposed that a mini-competition will be taken forward; using an existing framework to find a suitable supplier and it is anticipated that a contract award may take place in early 2015.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the steps that she has taken to boost the tourism potential of South Down, including the (i) details of investment; (ii) dates of investment; (iii) recipients of investment; and (iv) amounts invested in the last three years.

(AQW 35842/11-15)

Mrs Foster: NORTHERN IRELAND TOURIST BOARD SUPPORT:

Tourism Events Funding Programme:

1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014:

Detail:	Date:	Recipient:	Amount:
Festival of Flight	August 2013	Down District Council	£30,000
International Bread Festival	May 2013	National Trust	£15,000
		Total:	£45,000

1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013:

Detail:	Date:	Recipient:	Amount:
Circuit of Ireland Rally	April 2012	Circuit of Ireland Management Ltd	£70,000
Blues on the Bay Festival	May 2012	Ian Sands	£15,000
		Total:	£85,000

1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012:

Detail:	Date:	Recipient:	Amount:
Festival of Flight and One Cool Weekend	August 2011	Down District Council	£30,000
Willowstone Arts and Music Festival	July 2011	TRC Promotions	£8,000
		Total:	£38,000

Tourism Development Scheme: 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014:

Detail:	Date:	Recipient:	Amount:
Mourne Public Art Phase 3	October 2013	Mourne Heritage Trust	£27,500
		Total:	£27,500

1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013:

Detail:	Date:	Recipient:	Amount:
Bloody Bridge Amenity Area	July 2012	Newry & Mourne District Council	£80,930
Silent Valley Walking Routes	August 2012	Northern Ireland Water	£55,935
Strangford Yacht Haven Pontoon	September 2012	Down District Council	£12,582
Bloody Bridge Coastal Path	September 2012	The National Trust	£31,081
Mourne Coastal Route Signage	October 2012	Newry & Mourne District Council North Down Borough Council Banbridge District Council Belfast City Council Down District Council Ards Borough Council	£278,014
		Total:	£458,542

1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012:

Detail:	Date:	Recipient:	Amount:
Slieve Patrick	August 2011	Down District Council	£43,514
Mourne Mountain Bike Trails	September 2011	Down District Council	£1,414,691
St Patrick's Church of Ireland Hall and Coach Park	November 2011	Down District Council	£164,632
Whitewater Visitor Amenity Upgrade	November 2011	Newry & Mourne District Council	£41,659
Ross's Monument	November 2011	Newry & Mourne District Council	£44,494
Donard Car Park	December 2011	Down District Council	£10,900
St Patrick's Grave	January 2012	Down District Council	£4,692
Donaghaguy Reservoir Amenity Upgrade	January 2012	Newry & Mourne District Council	£37,160
Down Walking Routes	January 2012	Down District Council	£186,065
Local TIC points	January 2012	Down District Council	£6,680
Narrow Water Amenity & Millbay Amenity Signage	February 2012	Newry & Mourne District Council	£16,500
Downpatrick Walking Trail	February 2012	Down District Council	£20,205
		Total:	£1,991,192

Invest Northern Ireland Support:**1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014:**

Detail:	Approval Date:	Client Trading Name:	Total Assistance Offered £
Job Creation Project	27/03/2014	Life	£14,000
Innovation Based Project	05/03/2014	Millbrook Lodge Hotel	£2,880

Detail:	Approval Date:	Client Trading Name:	Total Assistance Offered £
Innovation Based Project	05/03/2014	Millbrook Lodge Hotel	£2,880
Business Growth Project	03/03/2014	St Patrick Visitor Center Limited	£3,280
Business Growth Project	20/01/2014	Kilmorey Arms	£2,250
Innovation Based Project	09/09/2013	Glassdrumman Lodge	£1,560
		Total:	£26,850

1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013:

Detail:	Approval Date:	Client Trading Name:	Total Assistance Offered £
Innovation Based Project	26/03/2013	Donard Hotel	£924
Innovation Based Project	26/11/2012	St Patrick Visitor Center Limited	£1,680
Innovation Based Project	15/11/2012	St Patrick Visitor Center Limited	£2,192
Innovation Based Project	18/09/2012	Jumpack	£4,750
Innovation Based Project	10/09/2012	St Patrick Visitor Center Limited	£924
Innovation Based Project	27/07/2012	The Cuan	£1,915
Innovation Based Project	27/06/2012	Jumpack	£1,700
Innovation Based Project	08/06/2012	Narrow Water Castle	£2,904
		Total:	£16,989

1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012:

Detail:	Approval Date:	Client Trading Name:	Total Assistance Offered £
Innovation Based Project	13/03/2012	Mourne Heritage Trust	£4,000
Job Creation Project	08/12/2011	Kribben Cottages	£100,000
Innovation Based Project	30/11/2011	Whistledown Inn	£1,551
Innovation Based Project	08/07/2011	Kribben Cottages	£4,000
		Total:	£109,551

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much has been spent by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board on funding events in the Banbridge District Council area in the last three years; and to detail the events that have been funded.

(AQW 35843/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board in 2011/12; 2012/13 and 2013/14 received over 240 applications to the Tourism Events Funding Programme.

During this period only one application was received from event organisers in the Banbridge District Council area.

This application was unsuccessful in securing funding through the events fund.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the budget attached to each of the eight phases of the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project.

(AQW 35874/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project is being delivered in eight phases with an overall completion date of 31 December 2015.

The expected public expenditure budget for each phase is

Phase	Amount
1	£95,092

Phase	Amount
2	£1,152,795
3	£1,806,598
4	£2,580,075
5	£3,373,698
6	£3,131,309
7	£3,668,610
8	£3,491,823
Total	£19,300,000

This of course may change if the roll out plan needs to be updated during this time.

In addition BT expects to contribute over £4.3 million during the lifetime of the project.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide a timetable for the delivery of the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project.

(AQW 35891/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project is being delivered in eight phases with an overall completion date of 31 December 2015.

The postcode areas where improvements have been made under the first two phases are published on the NI Direct website (www.nidirect.gov.uk/broadband-improvement-project) together with an indicative timetable for completion of improvements in other areas over the remainder of the project.

DETI officials will continue to update the information on NI Direct as the project progresses.

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what changes she envisages in the role, remit, scope and number of local economic development agencies in light of the current transformation of local government.

(AQW 35931/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI will remain the primary economic development agency for Northern Ireland responsible for local business development after the reform of local government takes place. However a number of functions relating to enterprise awareness, start a business activity and social enterprise will transfer from Invest NI to the new councils on 1 April 2015.

A comprehensive programme of engagement has taken place between my Department, Invest NI and the Councils to ensure the transfer of functions takes place smoothly and efficiently. After April 2015 it will be the responsibility of local councils to determine the schemes they will establish to deliver those functions which are transferring.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment which areas in South Down will benefit from the Broadband Improvement Project; and when these improvements will be implemented.

(AQW 35933/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project is being delivered in eight phases with an overall completion date of 31 December 2015.

The postcode areas where improvements have been made under the first two phases are published on the NI Direct website (www.nidirect.gov.uk/broadband-improvement-project) together with an indicative timetable for completion of improvements in other areas, including South Down, over the remainder of the project.

DETI officials will continue to update the information on NI Direct as the project progresses.

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what proposals her Department has to secure the future of Aghnacloy street market; and to mitigate the potential reduction in footfall in Aghnacloy, if this market closes; and whether her Department has had any engagement with Monaghan County Council on this matter.

(AQW 35958/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Policy responsibility for the retail sector cuts across a number of Executive Departments. Responsibility for street markets and in particular the levies imposed on traders is a matter for the local council.

While I appreciate the importance of the Aghnacloy market to the village and the surrounding area, my Department does not have any remit in this area. My Department has had no engagement with Monaghan County Council on this matter.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment which areas in West Tyrone will benefit from the Broadband Improvement Project; and when these improvements will be implemented.

(AQW 36014/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project is being delivered in eight phases with an overall completion date of 31 December 2015.

The areas where improvements have already been made under the first two phases are published on the NI Direct website. In addition consumers can use the online postcode checker to find out when work is scheduled to be carried out in their area. This information can be accessed at: <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/broadband-improvement-project>

DETI officials will continue to update the information on NI Direct as the project progresses.

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail her Department's plans to improve mobile phone coverage in Strabane and the surrounding rural areas.

(AQW 36015/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The telecommunications market is fully privatised and independently regulated and operators make network investments on the basis of commercial return.

The UK's four main mobile network operators have invested significantly to improve their 2G and 3G networks. For instance, to the end of 2013, 'EE' had invested some £30 million in its Northern Ireland network, while 'Three' had invested over £12 million.

For those areas that are not currently being addressed by market forces, the UK Government is implementing the £150 million Mobile Infrastructure project, which aims to address mobile voice and basic data 'not-spots' across the UK by March 2015. While the project is focused on 2G technology, it is understood that operators will future proof the infrastructure being deployed, in order to further support 3G, 4G and beyond, where possible. Northern Ireland is in line for the deployment of 72 new mast sites under this project, with the first site expected to go live in the last quarter of 2014.

My Department is maintaining a watching brief on these ongoing initiatives and will assess the need for further government intervention once they have completed.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) to detail the recommendations of the report into the NI Events Company; (ii) whether any of the recommendations could lead to prosecutions; and (iii) whether she will be contacting the PSNI as a result of the report.

(AQW 36115/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As advised in my response to AQW 35712/11-15, it is not the intention of my Department to publish the report of the company inspection of the Northern Ireland Events Company and any further comment would be inappropriate at this stage.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 35712/11-15, what action she will take in relation to the report by the company inspectors on the NI Events Company.

(AQW 36118/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As advised in my response to AQW 35712/11-15 and AQW 36115/11-15, it is not the intention of my Department to publish the report of the company inspection of the Northern Ireland Events Company and any further comment at this stage would be inappropriate.

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she will send the Report into the NI Events Company to the relevant Assembly Committees.

(AQW 36218/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As advised in my response to AQW 35712/11-15, AQW 36115/11-15 and AQW 36118/11-15, it is not the intention of my Department to publish the report of the company inspection of the Northern Ireland Events Company, so I will not be sending the report to relevant Assembly Committees.

Department of the Environment

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the approximate cost of disposing of one tonne of waste (i) to landfill; (ii) through incineration; and (iii) by recycling.

(AQW 35569/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): The UK Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) publishes an annual report on gate fees for a range of waste management, recovery and disposal options in the UK.

Approximate cost information has been obtained from the publicly available report produced by WRAP 'Comparing the cost of alternative waste treatment options, Gate fees report 2013'. (http://www.wrap.org.uk/sites/files/wrap/Gate_Fees_Report_2013_h%20%282%29.pdf)

The estimated gate fee for waste disposal in 2013 was £80 to £121 per tonne.

The estimated gate fee for waste incineration in 2013 was £62 to £126 per tonne.

The estimated gate fee for waste recycling in 2013 was -£40 to £13 per tonne. A negative gate fee indicates that the facility is paying to obtain the material.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment whether there is concern in his Department or any of its agencies that showing the video footage taken by enforcement agency staff at Ravenhill Stadium on 23 August 2013 could prove detrimental to the argument for the proposed Single Tier Taxi system in its current format.

(AQW 35584/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I am not aware of any concerns from my officials that the footage could prove detrimental to the argument for a single tier taxi licensing system.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment for an update, including timescales, on the provision of approved taxi meter centres.

(AQW 35600/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The details of the new installation, testing and calibration regime are being finalised and I anticipate being able to provide further information on the new arrangements in the coming weeks. It remains my intention for the new requirements to come into force from September 2015.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what regulations will be introduced in relation to the fitting of taxi meters.

(AQW 35601/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I intend that the taximeter regulations will:

- set out the structure and level of the maximum fare tariff;
- require specified classes of taxi to have a taximeter and receipt printer fitted;
- make provision for the manner of use of the taximeter;
- make provision for the testing, calibration and sealing of taximeters.

The regulations will reference the Measuring Instruments Directive and relevant implementing regulations which establish the essential requirements that taximeters have to satisfy prior to their being placed on the market and put into use.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what provisions will be put in place to ensure that the setting and fitting of taxi meters does not create any conflict of interest, by ensuring that there is not a connection between those responsible for the installation of meters and companies that will use their services.

(AQW 35604/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department continues to develop the operational model within which taximeters will fitted and tested and I anticipate being able to provide information on the details of the arrangements in the coming weeks. The arrangements will address any potential conflicts of interest between installers and users of taximeters.

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (a) the areas of architectural and townscape importance; (b) healthier living environments; (c) conservation areas; (d) areas of townscape/village character; (e) historic parks; (f) gardens and demesnes that have been established in the East Belfast constituency by the adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan.

(AQW 35632/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In my Oral Statement to the Assembly delivered 8 September 2014, I detailed the provisions in the Plan Proposals to safeguard those areas that may be vulnerable to development pressure or that are visually or environmentally sensitive. The Plan's environmental designations acknowledge and protect the rich natural and built heritage of the Belfast Metropolitan Area, including East Belfast.

The BMAP Urban Environment Strategy promotes new development of the highest quality, protects areas of architectural and townscape importance and promotes healthier living environments.

The development of healthier lifestyles in support of Belfast City Council's Healthy Cities Project is encouraged through increased provision for walking and cycling facilities together with policies which seek to provide an alternative to travel by car. Reduction in car travel offers the potential for improvement in air quality on major routes. Community greenways are identified including parks, playing fields and natural areas to create a network of open spaces and opportunities for leisure and recreation. In addition, the Plan Proposals identify new lands for open space.

The Plan does not designate Conservation Areas but identifies five areas within East Belfast, for information, already designated under Article 50 of the Planning (NI) Order 1991. These are Cyprus Avenue, Kings Road, Knockdene, McMaster Street, and Templemore Avenue.

Areas of Townscape or Village Character (ATC/AVCs) are designated by the adoption of BMAP, in accordance with PPS 6: Planning, Archaeology and the Built Heritage. There are 15 ATCs designated in East Belfast but no AVCs as follows:

- BT 015 Belmont;
- BT 019 Cherryvalley Extension;
- BT 020 Circular Road;
- BT 022 Cyprus Park / Cyprus Gardens;
- BT 032 Holland Park;
- BT 034 Hollywood Arches;
- BT 048 Ravenscroft Avenue;
- BT 051 Sandford Avenue / Sandbury Avenue;
- BT 057 Templemore Avenue;
- BT 061 Woodstock Road;
- MCH 019 Cregagh;
- MCH 020 Cregagh Park and Everton Drive;
- MCH 021 Dundonald;
- MCH 023 Rochester; and
- MCH 024 Thiepval.

Historic Parks, Gardens and Demesnes are detailed in a Register published by the NI Environment Agency and designated through the development plans. BMAP designates three within East Belfast. They are MCH 025 Belvoir (Forest Park), BT 075 Ormeau Park, and BT 076 Stormont Castle and Parliament Buildings.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment how many employees of the Driver and Vehicle Agency have been redeployed. (AQW 35656/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department for Transport (DfT) decision to centralise vehicle licensing services in Swansea created 266 surplus staff in DVA based in the Central Office in Coleraine or in 8 Local Vehicle Licensing Offices (LVLOs) located throughout the Province. A further 27 DVA staff became surplus, in Road Transport Licensing Division (RTLTD), as a result of my decision to transfer DOE posts from Belfast to Coleraine.

As at 15 September 2014, 117 of the original 266 DVA surplus staff had been permanently redeployed as well as 21 of the 27 RTLTD Belfast based surpluses. In overall terms 138 (48%) of the total 293 DVA surpluses have been permanently redeployed.

My officials, with the assistance of all other NICS Departments, will continue to actively seek permanent redeployment opportunities for surplus staff or if required temporary placements pending permanent redeployment.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment whether the letter of 20 June 2014 from the Director of the Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division was sent to all taxi licence holders, as well as taxi operator licence holders. (AQW 35668/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The letter referred to, which covered a copy of my Written Statement to the Assembly dated 19 June 2014, was sent to all holders of Taxi Operator Licences. My Department is preparing material to explain the changes which will result from taxi reform; this will be issued to members of the taxi industry and taxi users in advance of the implementation of the various reforms.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment on how many occasions, detailing the dates and venues, have departmental officials or associated agency staff held meetings with (i) fonaCAB; and (ii) Value Cabs, or their respective representatives, in the last three calendar years. (AQW 35756/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Departmental officials have attended meetings with representatives of Fonacab and Value Cabs on 13 occasions in the last three calendar years; details of dates and venues are provided in the table below.

Note: this schedule does not include routine compliance visits undertaken by DVA.

Date	Location
26 March 2012	Clarence Court, Belfast
4 October 2012	Clarence Court, Belfast
13 November 2012	Clarence Court, Belfast
23 January 2013	Clarence Court, Belfast
25 February 2013	Corporation Street, Belfast
6 March 2013	Clarence Court, Belfast
20 May 2013	Clarence Court, Belfast
20 June 2013	Clarence Court, Belfast

Date	Location
26 June 2013	Value Cabs Offices, Wellington Park, Belfast
27 September 2013	Corporation Street, Belfast
21 October 2013	Goodwood House, Belfast
21 October 2013	Corporation Street, Belfast
9 July 2014	Corporation Street, Belfast

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment in relation to information provided to the Committee for the Environment by departmental officials that outlay for Single Tier Taxi compliance for taxi drivers requiring to purchase meters, printers and signage will total approximately £1,000, which would be recouped from the consumer/service user at 3 pence per mile within five years, to outline (i) the evidence or reports on which this estimate was based; and (ii) the investigation that has been carried out into the accuracy of the suggested figure.

(AQW 35757/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My officials have on a number of occasions indicated a maximum cost of around £800 per taxi to comply with the various reforms being made under the Taxis Act 2008. They include the cost of a taximeter and receipt printer, a new roof sign and periodic training. The costs may be lower dependent on the equipment already installed in a taxi. The costs have been estimated by seeking information and prices from providers.

My officials have indicated on a number of occasions that the additional costs could be recouped over a three year period by a fare rise of 1 penny per mile. This is based on the average taxi covering 25,940 live miles per year, a figure determined by a survey of taxi drivers by PA Consulting Services in 2011. The live miles figure formed part of the PA Consulting Services report which was issued as part of my Department's consultation on maximum fares in November 2011.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what monitoring will be carried out on taxi meters to ensure they have been correctly calibrated.

(AQW 35774/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department is developing the procedures to ensure that taximeters have been correctly calibrated. I anticipate being able to provide information on the details of the arrangements in the coming weeks.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what actions will be taken to ensure that the installation and calibration of taxi meters will be completed independently.

(AQW 35775/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department is developing the installation and calibration procedures for taximeters. I anticipate being able to provide information on the details of the arrangements in the coming weeks.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment why it is proposed to implement single tier taxi licensing ahead of the new regulations on taxi meters.

(AQW 35776/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Concerns have been raised by the taxi industry regarding the costs associated with the implementation of the Taxis Act 2008. I am also conscious of the time required for the taxi industry and meter suppliers and fitters to install the necessary equipment in vehicles. I gave these issues careful consideration when agreeing the implementation timetable that I provided in a Written Statement to the Assembly on 19 June 2014. The timetable provides for a phasing of the different reforms to recognise these cost and capacity issues.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the number of prosecutions for fraudulent calibration of a taxi meter, in the last five years.

(AQW 35777/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There have been no prosecutions for the fraudulent calibration of a taxi meter in the last five years.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment on how many occasions, detailing the dates and venues, have departmental officials or associated agency staff held meetings with him in which a briefing was included on the detrimental impact that the proposed Single Tier Taxi System, in its present format, will have on Belfast Public Hire Taxis and smaller private hire taxi operators.

(AQW 35809/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The reforms to the taxi industry under the Taxis Act (NI) 2008 are designed to deliver a safe, fair and fit for purpose industry. I have met with representatives of the taxi industry and its users, and with my officials, on many occasions

and have explored many different aspects of the reforms. These have on many occasions included discussion of the concerns of Belfast Public Hire taxi drivers on the potential impact of the reforms on their activities.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 35119/11-15, whether by permitting unauthorised sand extraction from Lough Neagh Special Protection Area to continue, his Department is breaching Article 6(2) of the Habitats Directive and the precautionary principle which underpins that Directive, as set out in the ruling of the European Court of Justice in Case C-127/02, Waddenzee.

(AQW 35852/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Article 6(2) of the Habitats Directive requires Member States to take appropriate steps to avoid the deterioration of the interest features of Natura 2000 sites. Between the last two reporting rounds there has been no deterioration of the features of Lough Neagh SPA that can be attributed to sand and gravel extraction.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 34573/11-15 and his statement on 19 June 2014, to clarify what he meant by "Whilst I am aware of the concerns of Belfast Public Hire taxi drivers, I must balance these with the requirements, clearly set out by consumer and disability groups, to improve regulation for a safe, fair and fit for purpose taxi industry" when his answer clearly states that disability access compliance was already existing and accepted in Belfast Public Hire taxis.

(AQW 35876/11-15)

Mr Durkan: This sentence in my Statement to the Assembly on 19 June 2014 is set in the context of Belfast Public Hire drivers' concerns around single tier licensing, which has been supported (as set out in my Statement) by many consumer and disability groups.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration has been given to using the Small Business Research Initiative to find a sustainable solution to the processing of waste from disposable nappies.

(AQW 35927/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Waste from disposable nappies is part of the municipal waste stream. Responsibility for the preparation of waste management plans (WMPs) setting out the arrangements for recovery, treatment or disposal of municipal waste in Northern Ireland lies with the three regional district council waste management groups (WMGs). The plans, which take account of the Waste Management Strategy prepared by the Department, include the type, scale and location of waste facilities that will be required during the period of the plan. It would be for the councils, through the WMGs in the first instance, to consider the Small Business Research Initiative approach.

Furthermore there are businesses offering treatment facilities for Absorbent Hygiene Products, which includes disposable nappies. The Department has supplied these businesses with application information for the Rethink Waste Revenue Fund and contact details for the WMGs.

The Department has also provided funding for the Cloth Nappy Library through the Rethink Waste Revenue Fund. This organisation promotes waste prevention through the use of real nappies. In addition the Rethink Waste website highlights the benefits of using real nappies: <http://www.rethinkwastei.org/at-home/reuse/go-real/>.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, in the absence of planning permission to extract sand from Lough Neagh Special Protection Area, why the granting an Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme (ALCS) certificate does not constitute a "development consent" as defined in Article 1(c) of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive; and whether an ALCS certificate in, or affecting a European site, should have been subject to the requirements of the EIA and Habitats Directives, including EIA screening, EIA and Appropriate Assessment, prior to certificates being granted.

(AQW 35961/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Operators extracting sand from Lough Neagh (as well as others from the aggregates industry) were not obliged to join such a scheme as the Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme, i.e. the scheme was voluntary.

This scheme, or any certificate issued in relation to it, did not constitute development consent as it was not mandatory to have it prior to carrying out the operation in question; and therefore the granting of an ALCS certificate was not subject to the requirements of the EIA and Habitats Directives.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether the Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme (ALCS) Code of Practice specifically requires that planning permission is obtained for extraction operations within European sites or if protected species are affected, prior to an ALCS certificate being granted.

(AQW 35962/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Prior to an Aggregates Levy Credit Scheme (ALCS) certificate being issued, the Department had to satisfy itself that the operator was operating the site within the regulatory framework, including planning permission requirements. The ALCS had no statutory regulatory function. It depended on the relevant regulating authority to provide the comment on whether the site met the required statutory standards.

As a member of the ALCS, operators had to comply with the Code of Practice that specifically included conditions relating to biodiversity. Adherence to these conditions was reviewed during independent audits and improvement notices raised as required.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the reason for the contradiction between his answer to AQW 31750/11-15, where he makes it clear that planning permission is required for the extraction of sand from Lough Neagh Special Protection Area, and AQW 35123/11-15, where he states that his Department has no powers to require planning permission to be obtained; and to indicate which of his answers is incorrect.

(AQW 35963/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Both answers are correct. In AQW 31750/11-15 I advised that there is currently no planning permission for sand extraction on the Lough. I also advised that planning permission and assessment under The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (NI) 2012 is required.

In AQW 35123/11-15 I advised that the sites referred to around the Lough pre-dated the Planning (NI) Order 1972 and as such Planning Service had no powers to require that planning permission be obtained for these pre-1972 sites.

This answer was drafted in the context of on-shore development associated with dredging activities around the Lough. The continued removal of sand from the bed of the Lough is development which still requires planning permission.

I trust this clarifies the situation in relation to various activities in and around Lough Neagh.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment for a breakdown of the expenses paid to staff of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, in the last twelve months.

(AQW 35990/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Expenses are paid to staff in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to reimburse them for the costs incurred on official business in line with the policies detailed in the NICS HR Handbook. These expenses in the main relate to the costs associated with travel, accommodation, subsistence allowances and other miscellaneous expenses.

A breakdown of the expenses paid to staff for the twelve month period 1st August 2013 to 31st July 2014 is provided in the table below.

Expenses Paid to NIEA Staff: 01-08-13 to 31-07-14

Description	Total
Mileage	£246,460
Air fares	£67,463
Rail, bus and boat fares	£21,391
Accommodation (GB & NI)	£46,013
Subsistence payments	£41,883
Excess Fares	£20,199
Car Parking	£16,983
Taxi fares, car hire	£5,460
Miscellaneous	£1,845
Grand Total	£467,697

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, following the decision to permit the inclusion of a sentence within a pending letter to inform taxi licence holders, as well as taxi licence operators, that as the law currently stands it is against terms, conditions and regulations to pick up fares and/or ply for trade unless operating with a yellow plate within the Belfast city limits area or without a prearranged booking; and to detail (i) whether this letter is going ahead with this inclusion; and (ii) when the letter is due to be sent; and to provide a copy of the letter.

(AQW 35997/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Taxi operators and their drivers should be clear about the existing legislative requirements which will continue to apply until such times as new legislation takes effect. The relevant licensing restriction is printed on each taxi licence. For example, the licence for a 'Private Hire' taxi is endorsed with the note that the taxi driver named on the licence 'is licensed to use the taxi described below for carrying passengers for hire, but not for standing or plying for hire on any road or public place'.

I made a written statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly on Thursday 19 June 2014 setting out proposals for the implementation of the remaining elements of the Taxis Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. Within these proposals, from January 2015, the current licensing arrangements will change to permit all taxis to ply for hire within Belfast. A copy of my written statement was sent to all taxi operators.

Regular communications are planned to advise taxi operators of each change as it approaches. The next communication, which is expected to issue shortly, is a mailshot to all taxi operators and their drivers advising of the introduction of the new taxi test for new drivers and periodic training requirements.

Appropriate enforcement action will continue to be taken against any drivers and operators found to be committing offences and these will be dealt with by applying a variety of measures that include advice and warnings, fixed penalties, prohibitions and prosecutions.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment how many times since May 2011 he has transferred an Assembly Question to a Freedom of Information request; and of these, to detail (i) the number that resulted in the supply of the requested information; (ii) who provided the advice regarding the transfer and whether the departmental solicitor was involved; (iii) when this procedure became departmental practice; and (iv) whether the relevant Member was advised of this procedure in advance of the transfer.

(AQW 35998/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There has been none in my Department. An Assembly Question cannot be transferred to a Freedom of Information request, but must be answered in line with Assembly procedures.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether a review of town centres, based on the monitoring of viability and vitality, has taken place.

(AQW 36022/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department appointed a consultant team led by GL Hearn to carry out a review of town centres last year to inform the new retailing and town centres planning policy contained within the draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS). The consultant's report provides an updated evidential context for strategic town centres and retail planning policy, including an assessment of the current health of designated town centres across the Region. It was published for information alongside the draft SPPS. You can view or download the report from the following web link www.planningni.gov.uk/spps.

Furthermore, Departmental officials have been undertaking some local preparatory development plan work in order to allow councils to move quickly with bringing forward their own development plans once they become planning authorities next year. This preparatory work includes preliminary studies of the vitality and viability of some city and town centres. It is anticipated that a full evidence base for Local Development Plan preparation will be undertaken by each Council post transfer of planning functions on 1 April 2015.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the existing and committed out-of-centre retail development capacity; and whether he has completed a review of the capacity.

(AQW 36023/11-15)

Mr Durkan: It is my assessment that retail development capacity for towns and cities throughout the North should be addressed by the new councils in bringing forward Local Development Plans for their areas. This is the approach proposed for consultation in the emerging Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS), which seeks to ensure Local Development Plans and decisions are informed by robust and up to date evidence in relation to retail need and capacity. You will be aware that the SPPS has itself been informed by a comprehensive review of existing town centres in the North last year, undertaken on behalf of the Department by a consultant team led by GL Hearn. This updated evidential context and the consultants recommendations on possible future planning policy direction have been reflected in the SPPS. You can view or download the report from the following web link www.planningni.gov.uk/spps.

Finally you will note from my answer to AQW 36022 that, as part of the preparatory work for new Local Development Plans, my Department has agreed with some shadow Councils to undertake preliminary work on the vitality and viability of city and town centres. It is anticipated that a full evidence base for Local Development Plan preparation will be undertaken by each Council post transfer of planning functions on 1 April 2015.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 35226/11-15, to detail (i) whether he will reinvestigate if a report or notes of any nature were compiled on this matter; (ii) on what he has based his concerns regarding the release of the footage; (iii) whether he sought advice from the departmental solicitor prior to answering this question; and (iv) if no report remains on record, whether he will order a report in the interests of transparency.

(AQW 36078/11-15)

Mr Durkan: In response to each of the member's questions:

- (i) I have confirmed that the observations of enforcement officers were not captured in a separate formal report but rather formed part of the overall consideration of the arrangements, which included seeking legal clarification and advice from the Departmental Solicitors Office;
- (ii) My concerns about releasing information gathered during an investigation are not specific to the footage taken at Ravenhill, but relate to protecting the integrity of the wider investigatory process undertaken by enforcement officers;
- (iii) Regarding my response to AQW 35226/11-15, legal advice was not sought; and

- (iv) The Department has determined that the provision of taxi services at Ravenhill rugby ground is compliant with the requirements of the Taxi Act (NI) 2008 and other related legislation and in the interests of transparency published its interpretation of the legal position in this regard on 18 October 2013. I therefore do not intend to revisit this matter.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications for wind farms have been approved, even when the case officer working on the application had reported that the application should be refused.
(AQW 36111/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department operates a corporate decision making process and each recommendation must be signed off by three officers, one of whom must be a designated 'authorised' officer. The Department's corporate opinion on a planning application may either be reached by the unanimous view of the three officers or by a majority. This applies to all planning applications not just those for windfarm development.

The discussion at the development management group meeting is informed by the report and recommendation of the individual case officer. The development management group can agree or disagree with the recommendation, whether that is to refuse or approve an application. The reasons for the final opinion of the group will be fully recorded.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) why his Department granted permitted development rights to Infrastrata for exploratory drilling at Woodburn Forest when their petroleum licence specifies the completion of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as a condition of their licence in year three before the commencement of drilling; and (ii) in light of the condition and emerging evidence which has since weakened the case for the original determination and instances of negative EIA determinations which were subsequently deemed positive, such as in planning applications A/2011/0671/f and A/2008/0397/f, whether his Department intends to review the negative EIA determination for exploratory drilling at Woodburn Forest.

(AQW 36161/11-15)

Mr Durkan:

- (i) Infrastrata's Notification of Permitted Development to the Department met Schedule 1 Part 16 A of The Planning (General Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 1993 as amended. Therefore my Department was within its rights to grant permitted development. Issues over Petroleum licences are not under the planning regime.
- (ii) My Department is confident that the negative EIA determination was carried out in a robust manner.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what work has been completed to identify the cause of the recent fish kill in the River Lagan where it runs through Dromore Town Park.

(AQW 36379/11-15)

Mr Durkan: This fish kill was first reported to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) on the afternoon of Monday, 22 September 2014, when a report was received through NIEA's Water Pollution Hotline that a number of dead fish were in the River Lagan at Dromore, Co. Down. Departmental officials visited the site to investigate the report and determine the environmental impact.

Officials confirmed that there were a number of dead fish in the river over an approximate 200 metre stretch where it flows through Dromore. However some live fish and invertebrates were also visible in the river, indicating that whatever had caused the fish deaths had not killed all fish in this reach of the river. While there was some slight foaming in the river this was assessed as natural and there were no obvious signs of gross pollution.

Nevertheless NIEA collected a water sample on the day from the river to rule out the possibility that pollution had caused the fish kill. As it takes a number of days to complete the standard laboratory tests for common pollutants, at the time of writing the results from this sample are not yet available.

Through the afternoon of 22 September officials checked all known potential discharge points into the river and also checked a number of premises in the Dromore area; with further follow-up checks continuing over the following days. However no evidence of any recent polluting discharge through any of these discharge points or from any of these premises was found.

One possibility is that this fish kill was a semi-natural phenomenon caused by the unusually hot weather over the past weekend and on Monday, combined with low river flows.

Following this fish kill officials from my Department and from DCAL Inland Fisheries have worked closely together in carrying out a comprehensive investigation. However it remains the case that, pending the results of the sample analysis, there is no conclusive evidence that this fish kill was caused by pollution.

Mr F McCann asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department will ensure the zoning of additional land in Belfast, as part of the Belfast Metropolitan Plan, for the purpose of building social housing to meet the needs of the local communities.

(AQO 6639/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Social housing is a subject I feel strongly about and BMAP has made provision for the development of land for this purpose. My Department, in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, ensured that the Plan provides

adequate provision for the delivery of a reasonable level of social housing in line with the finance available. In addition the Plan has extensive remaining potential on sites zoned for general housing. In areas lacking strong private sector demand there may be a shift from general housing to social housing provision.

The adoption of BMAP on 3 September ended the development plan process undertaken by my Department in respect of Belfast City Council area and the other five districts. On 1 April 2015 responsibility for planning powers will transfer to local authorities, including Belfast City Council, and shall include preparation of Local Development Plans. Part of that process will include reviewing relevant matters such as the principal purposes for which land is used in the City. Housing and social housing are principal land uses in Belfast. The limits of development could also be reviewed.

I have also been considering how the issue of providing social housing can be addressed, not just in Belfast, but on a regional basis. To this end, draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 22: Affordable Housing was published for public consultation in June this year in an attempt to find new ways of securing additional affordable housing. This draft PPS puts in place a mechanism for securing developer contributions for the delivery of affordable housing.

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on his Department's Road Safety Strategy.
(AQO 6643/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Road Safety Strategy to 2020 sets out four strategic targets and 224 action measures to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads.

The implementation process is shared work, involving many parts of government – and all of us as citizens. Some 118 of the Strategy action measures have already been completed or embedded in ongoing business, and there have been positive reductions against the Strategy's four targets.

At the end of last year, and when compared with the 2004-2008 average:

- road deaths had reduced by 55%
- serious injuries had reduced by 35%
- child deaths and serious injuries had reduced by 43% ; and
- deaths or serious injuries of young people had reduced by 52%.

I am however extremely concerned by the fact that road deaths have risen this year. My Department continues to take a range of actions to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads. We focus on problem areas, such as drink driving, speeding, carelessness and inattention; and on groups which are over-represented in the casualty figures. The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, which I introduced into the Assembly in May, seeks to address a number of these issues.

For most of us, using the roads is our most dangerous daily activity. I am committed to working with many partners across and beyond government to ensure effective implementation of the Road Safety Strategy.

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of the Environment to outline any plans he has to ban the burning of smoky coal.
(AQO 6644/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Through the North South Ministerial Council a research study has being jointly commissioned, funded and overseen by my department and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government to assess the current levels of air pollution on an all island basis. It will examine the significance of residential heating and solid fuel burning as a source of current air pollution taking into account the social and economic implications of potential policy options.

The final report due to be completed early next year will make recommendations for the most appropriate, proportionate and effective way to reduce air pollution from residential heating in both jurisdictions.

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the actions being taken in his Department and local government to meet the Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme targets for 2020.
(AQO 6645/11-15)

Mr Durkan: District Councils are responsible for meeting the Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme, or NILAS, targets. In 2012/13, the amount of biodegradable municipal waste collected by District Councils and sent to landfill was 276,702 tonnes. This is less than half the amount landfilled in 2005 when NILAS was introduced and is well under the target for 2012/13 of not more than 320,000 tonnes. The target for 2020 is not more than 220,000 tonnes.

My Department's Waste Management Strategy set out a number of policy interventions aimed at ensuring we meet EU landfill diversion targets. These include developing a Waste Prevention Programme, setting challenging recycling targets and introducing legislation that will prohibit the landfilling of separately collected food waste. These interventions, which are supported by Rethink Waste funding, will assist Councils to meet future NILAS targets.

Waste Management Plans prepared by the three regional Waste Management Groups set out the arrangements for managing waste for their constituent Councils. Taking account of the Department's Waste Strategy, these Plans set out actions to achieve the 2020 NILAS target through a combination of waste prevention initiatives, increased recycling and plans for waste infrastructure.

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of the Environment in how many planning applications for anaerobic digestors since July 2013 has he taken a personal involvement.

(AQO 6646/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Since coming to office in July 2013, I have received numerous requests and invitations from MLAs and other elected representatives to consider a wide range of planning applications including Anaerobic Digestors. Normally this is when the proposal generates strong local objections and elected representatives become involved on behalf of their constituents.

I have been involved in a number of cases where the application has been for an anaerobic digester. This has been at the request of MLAs or as a result of correspondence to my office from interested parties. My involvement in each has varied depending on the request, and includes attending site meetings with elected representatives, meeting objectors or providing an update through correspondence.

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the timetable for his Department's plans to implement the Local Government Act.

(AQO 6647/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the 2014 Act) received Royal Assent on 12 May 2014 introducing the legislative framework for Northern Ireland's 11 new councils.

The 2014 Act will be supported by a comprehensive programme of subordinate legislation and guidance. This programme is being introduced on a phased basis, to accommodate key stages of the ongoing reform programme.

Two commencement orders have so far been made to bring specific provisions of the 2014 Act into operation during the shadow period, in particular, the new governance arrangements and ethical standards framework and the provisions which allow transitional arrangements to be made for the shadow period.

The Local Government (Transitional, Supplementary, Incidental Provisions and Modifications) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014, which provide for the activities of the new councils during the shadow period, and the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors were both approved by the Assembly on 27th May 2014 and came into operation the following day.

A number of statutory rules will be laid in the Assembly over the coming months and will include legislation:

- on the new governance arrangements for councils;
- to specify posts and employments, the holding of which will continue to bar a council officer from being a councillor;
- to specify community planning partners;
- to specify performance indicators and performance targets;
- on the Transferred Functions Grant designed to cover the costs of the functions transferring from central to local government, and
- on compensation for loss of office due to local government reform.

The legislative programme will ensure that the new councils have the necessary provisions in place, at the appropriate time, to enable those councils to carry out their full range of functions.

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of the Environment when the public consultation on the proposed new plans for the implementation of salmon farm cages in Red Bay will be launched.

(AQO 6648/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Formal public consultation on any proposal to extend the existing fish farm at Red Bay will not begin until a Scoping Study from the owners, Glenarm Organic Salmon is received by my Department. The Scoping Study initiates the process of what has to be included in the Environmental Statement that is required in this instance and which will be subject to a public consultation. I understand that the Company may be in a position to start this process at the end of the year.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the effectiveness of the road safety message on young people in East Antrim.

(AQO 6649/11-15)

Mr Durkan: I recognise the continuing challenges of preventing road deaths and serious injuries and my Department, working with our road safety partners, continues to work to address the causes of road casualties through various activities.

DOE's advertisements are regularly tracked to measure their effectiveness at influencing attitudes and behaviours. They do not target specific geographies; rather the campaigns are data-led, research-led and psychology-led to target the most at-risk cohorts of the entire population and the biggest killer behaviours on our roads.

Research gauging the awareness and influence levels of four recent DOE campaigns has shown that our recent seatbelt wearing advert, our pedestrian advert, our Share the Road To Zero advert and our new anti-speeding advert all show awareness levels of between 69%-75% amongst the 16-24 year old age group. Of those, 86%-91% of this age group reported that they have been influenced by the road safety messages contained in the adverts. The industry norm for campaign

awareness is 50% and for campaign influence is 30%; the figures for my Department's campaigns therefore tell us that the message is resonating with the public.

My Department also has a portfolio of initiatives and educational tools which are delivered in schools to improve road safety learning. Feedback from teachers and students has been very positive.

In the last five years the number of 17-24 year old drivers responsible for fatal collisions has reduced from 29 to 13. The number of 17-24 year old drivers responsible for deaths and serious injuries has reduced from 202 to 116 – a 43% fall.

Improvements have therefore been made; but young drivers continue to be disproportionately involved in fatal and serious collisions. Other initiatives my Department is currently developing to address young drivers include the provisions of Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill concerning Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL), and an educational pack for learner drivers to be delivered by Approved Driving Instructors (ADIs).

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the level of sufficiency of the additional funding proposed for the new councils to undertake their new responsibilities.

(AQO 6650/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Central to the Executive's vision for a reformed local government sector is the delivery of high quality, efficient services that respond to the needs of people and continuously improve over time.

The Executive commitment is for the transfer of new functions to councils based on the principles of rates neutrality and fitness for purpose at the point of transfer. In this context, "rates neutral" means that councils will receive funding from central government which is equivalent to the cost to NI departments of delivering the services that are transferring.

Transferring Departments, including my own, have been working closely with local government sector stakeholders to effect the transfer of new powers to councils. Each transferring department has now provided local government with indicative budget allocation information on the resources (budget, staff and assets) attached to the package of functions and powers to transfer to each council.

Within my own Department, I have ensured that, despite the difficult financial situation faced by the Executive, the transfer of planning functions to local government is adequately funded and fit for purpose. Indeed, I have gone further than simply protecting the budgets relating to the planning functions that are transferring from the cuts that my Department has to deliver. I have committed additional funding to bolster the numbers of senior planners that are to transfer to local government and to ensure that the Planning Portal is fully compatible with local government information systems. This is a clear demonstration of my commitment to the overall Local Government Reform programme.

The budgets transferring from other departments are a matter for individual Ministers. I have, however, written to my Executive colleagues, reminding them of the Executive commitments around rates neutrality and fitness for purpose and urging them to protect those budgets, as I have done in my own Department.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment why agency workers in the Northern Ireland Environment Agency had their employment terminated prematurely during the height of the tourist season.

(AQO 6651/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The June Monitoring Round led to an in year compression of 2.1% in the Department's budget and this required cost saving measures within the Agency. The early release of temporary workers has been one measure to address this budgetary position.

The impact of the early reduction of temporary workers was mitigated by their phased release over four weeks, ending on 5 September. This prevented significant disruption to the availability of visitor facilities during the height of the tourist season.

The Agency's key visitor attractions such as Carrickfergus Castle, Dunluce Castle and Crawfordsburn Country Park were unaffected by the early release of seasonal workers due to the voluntary manning and redeployment of permanent staff where practicable.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, based on current figures, to detail the number of (i) domestic; and (ii) non-domestic ratepayers that have been awaiting rates rebate payments for (a) three months or more; and (b) six months or more.

(AQW 35555/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): Land & Property Services (LPS) does not currently have the capability to split rate rebate payments by Domestic, Non-Domestic or by the period they are due. There are currently 7,300 rate accounts in credit on the LPS rating system. This number constantly fluctuates as LPS releases rate rebate payments and new ones come onto the system.

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people were awarded the Lone Pensioner Allowance in each of the last three years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 35673/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Lone Pensioner Allowance is administered jointly by Land & Property Services (LPS) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). Information on the number of people who were awarded the Lone Pensioner Allowance in each of the last three years, broken down by constituency is not available.

The number of people awarded Lone Pensioner Allowance by LPS broken down by district council is available and is given in the following table for each of the last three years (2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 to date).

Number of People Awarded LPA by LPS in 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15

District Council	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Antrim	645	669	681
Ards	1,365	1,376	1,393
Armagh	808	823	831
Ballymena	1,081	1,083	1,092
Ballymoney	377	395	399
Banbridge	535	540	539
Belfast	4,433	4,438	4,378
Carrickfergus	688	707	702
Castlereagh	1,669	1,712	1,675
Coleraine	1,034	1,039	1,019
Cookstown	322	339	354
Craigavon	973	993	1,011
Derry	880	927	946
Down	986	999	1,015
Dungannon & South Tyrone	498	524	536
Fermanagh	770	785	807
Larne	583	590	582
Limavady	283	298	302
Lisburn	1,725	1,745	1,749
Magherafelt	344	369	384
Moyle	241	256	252
Newry & Mourne	922	931	932
Newtownabbey	1,518	1,521	1,558
North Down	2,019	2,080	2,061
Omagh	534	559	556
Strabane	318	336	342
Northern Ireland	25,421	25,960	26,059

Individual district council totals do not add to Northern Ireland totals as any individual could have been awarded LPA in more than one district council over the course of the year.

The number of awards of Lone Pensioner Allowance administered by NIHE in 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 to date is 4,906, 4,973 and 4,986 respectively. Analysis of these awards broken down by district council is not currently available.

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what measures his Department is taking to encourage uptake of the Lone Pensioner Allowance.

(AQW 35674/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My Department, through Land & Property Services (LPS), has a dedicated Outreach Officer who addresses small community groups, co-operates with public and private sector organisations and attends public events such as the forthcoming Young at Heart Exhibition being held at The Island Centre, Lisburn on 24 September. LPS has attended 670 events to promote uptake of benefits, including Lone Pensioner Allowance since January 2009.

The LPS Outreach programme was introduced to inform, publicise and educate ratepayers of the different forms of Rate Relief that may be available to them.

LPS also advises ratepayers about the various Rate Reliefs in the Guide to Rates Booklet that issues with all bills. Further information is also available on the NI Direct website.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the procedures for appealing against unfair application or abuse of procurement and tendering regulations within government departments and public bodies.

(AQW 35706/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Public procurement in Northern Ireland is regulated by The Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (as amended), The Utilities Contracts Regulations 2006 (as amended) and the overarching EU Treaty principles. These regulations, which were amended in 2009, set down the procedures that government departments and public bodies must use in awarding public contracts.

The Regulations provide legal recourse for bidders if they feel they have been subject to unfair application or abuse of procurement legislation. Ultimately it is for the courts to rule on matters of compliance with the procurement legislation.

Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy requires each Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE) to have in place a formal supplier complaints procedure.

Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) encourages suppliers to raise concerns regarding individual procurements immediately as they arise through the procurement portal, eSourcingNI. This approach seeks to achieve early resolution of supplier concerns and has the potential to avoid the need for costly legal challenges. Should CPD receive a complaint relating to a procurement in which it is not involved, it will direct the supplier to the appropriate CoPE.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of civil servants, broken down by Department, whose posts are located in the Greater Belfast or Bangor areas but reside in the (i) Omagh; (ii) Strabane; (iii) Cookstown; and (iv) Dungannon districts.

(AQW 35707/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the attached table.

Number of Civil Servants working in Belfast District Council or North Down District Council by Home Districts of Cookstown, Dungannon, Omagh and Strabane by Department at 1 April 2014.

Cookstown		District Council Area				Total
		Cookstown	Dungannon	Omagh	Strabane	
Department Group	DARD	10	5	4	2	21
	DCAL	0	0	1	0	1
	DE	0	3	1	2	6
	DETI	1	3	0	0	4
	DFP	15	21	8	4	48
	DEL	8	8	3	2	21
	DHSSPS	1	3	1	1	6
	DOE	3	9	3	5	20
	DRD	2	4	2	2	10
	DSD	35	41	17	8	101
	OFMDFM	1	1	0	0	2
	DOJ	1	5	0	4	10
	PPS	1	1	2	1	5
	Other*	0	1	2	1	4
Total		78	105	44	32	259

Greater Belfast or Bangor areas have been defined as Belfast District Council and North Down District Council areas.

* Other includes staff working in the Health and Safety Executive for NI; the Office of the Attorney General for NI; and staff of the Assembly Ombudsman for NI, The NI Commissioner for Complaints.

Data at 01 April 2014 and does not include staff on a career break.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether interest is accrued by the Special EU Programmes Body on peace funding; and if so, to detail (i) the total accrued; and (ii) how it has been spent.

(AQW 35825/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) has advised that interest is accrued on PEACE III funding. Interest is earned in both Sterling and Euro. Using an average exchange rate of £1 = €1.225, the total earned during the current programming period (2007 to date) is £560,428.

Interest earned by the SEUPB in relation to PEACE III funding is returned to the Member States involved in the programme, on a quarterly basis. In line with the requirements of EU regulations this resource forms part of the Member State contribution to the programme.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the eligibility criteria for businesses to qualify for the Small Business Relief Scheme; and whether there are plans to extend the scheme beyond 2015.

(AQW 35827/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The main eligibility requirement for the scheme is the assessed Net Annual Value (NAV) of a property and relief is paid automatically.

While the scheme has a general application across all business sectors, certain property types are not eligible, e.g. advertising hoardings, ATMs, car parks, etc. There are also exclusions in place for multiple property owners (banks, bookmakers, etc.) and for those already in receipt of an exemption (industrial derating, freight transport and sport and recreation).

In terms of award levels 50% relief is awarded where the NAV is £2,000 or less, 25% relief is provided where the NAV is between £2,001 and £5,000, and a property with an NAV of between £5,001 and £15,000 receives a 20% discount.

In relation to the future of the scheme, the Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy (NICEP) at the University of Ulster is currently carrying out a full evaluation of the scheme and is due to report findings and recommendations later this month. I will be quickly reviewing these recommendations to allow me to present my proposals on the future of the scheme to the Executive and the Assembly in October.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the amount of capital spend returned from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure in the last year; and how his Department will reallocate this money.

(AQW 35969/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: Through the in-year monitoring process the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure declared capital reduced requirements of £8.2 million in 2013-14 and £35.3 million in 2014-15, both of which related to the regional stadium programme.

Additional capital income received in 2013-14 also resulted in a reduced requirement of £1.4m being declared.

The in-year monitoring process provides a formal system for reviewing spending plans and priorities for each financial year in light of the most up to date position. It provides the Executive with an opportunity to re-direct any surplus resources to other priorities. This includes any reduced requirements surrendered by departments.

Full details of all allocations are detailed in my Statement to the Assembly that follow each monitoring round.

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, since the inception of the Small Business Rates Relief Scheme, to detail (i) the number of small businesses that have benefited from the Scheme in (a) Ballymena; (b) Ballymoney; and (c) Moyle Borough Council areas; and (ii) how much the scheme has saved businesses.

(AQW 36029/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The number of non-domestic properties that have benefitted in the Ballymena, Ballymoney & Moyle Council areas, and the amount by which those properties benefitted since the scheme began in April 2010 is provided in the attached table.

District Council	Number of Non-Domestic Properties that Benefited from SBRR since April 2010	Amount of SBRR
Ballymena	1,236	£2,386,778
Ballymoney	569	£1,024,851
Moyle	462	£872,418

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the equal pay settlement for former Northern Ireland Civil Servants.

(AQO 6653/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In January this year I approved a settlement offer to end 435 breach of contract claims brought by NIPSA on behalf of retired or former NICS staff, following a change in the legal position regarding timescales within which former employees could bring equal pay claims, from six months to six years. I also authorised officials to contact 765 other leavers, who could have brought similar claims but who had not yet done so, to make settlement offers to prevent further cases arising. To date, 372 settlement payments have been made to NIPSA claimants and 506 to non-claimants at a cost of £1.1m.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what impact the current funding crisis will have on his 'road map' to better infrastructure delivery, as set out in June 2014.

(AQO 6657/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The majority of infrastructure projects have been funded from the capital budget. It is positive that capital DEL levels for 2014-15 are over £247m (31%) higher than those announced as part of the 2011-15 Budget.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has consistently affirmed the longer term policy of growing capital DEL at the expense of resource DEL. In this regard, it is anticipated that capital DEL will grow in line with GDP.

As the 2014-15 budget reductions have been applied to resource DEL, there is significant pressure on those projects which are not funded by capital. As this may include maintenance and repair projects, I appreciate that there may be implications for the operational maintenance of Northern Ireland's existing infrastructure. However, the prioritisation and ordering of infrastructure projects is a matter for each Minister and their department to consider.

As Chair of the Procurement Board, I established a Sub-Group to examine all stages of the commissioning and delivery of infrastructure projects.

In response, the Sub-Group has prepared an Action Plan. The Action Plan addresses a number of key areas, namely; prioritisation of key, strategically significant projects that are important to Northern Ireland; a more centralised approach to infrastructure delivery so that experience and expertise can be used to successfully deliver major capital projects; and a change in culture within departments and their sponsored bodies to create a 'delivery focused culture'.

The Action Plan is designed to correct a number of significant issues identified by the Sub-Group that are reducing the likelihood of the successful delivery of infrastructure projects. Without the implementation of the Action Plan these systemic impediments will remain.

A more centralised approach to procuring and delivering construction building projects will reap the benefits of bringing together experience and expertise as well as generating economies of scale and collaboration.

Mr Newton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the 2014 October monitoring round.

(AQO 6659/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There are significant pressures facing the Executive's Resource DEL budget this year. The June Monitoring round resulted in reductions to departmental Resource DEL of 2.1 per cent and indicated that further reductions would be required in the October Monitoring round to address the £87 million reduction to our Resource DEL as a consequence of not implementing Welfare Reform.

There are also significant inescapable pressures across a number of departmental budgets meaning that the level of Resource DEL reductions required in the October Monitoring round is now likely to exceed the 2.3 per cent previously anticipated.

I am therefore keen that the quantum of any further in-year reductions are agreed sooner rather than later, providing departments with early clarification on what they must deliver.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the timeframe for the establishment of the 2015/16 Budget.

(AQO 6660/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In order to give departments time to plan for 2015-16 an agreed Final Budget would need to be in place by early January 2015. Working backwards, the Executive would need to agree final proposals in December. In order to allow sufficient time for Ministerial bi-laterals and a full twelve week public consultation process a draft Budget would therefore need to be in place in the coming weeks.

I will shortly bring a draft Budget scenario to the Executive for agreement, in advance of the consultation process.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on his proposals to resolve the outstanding equal pay settlement issues.

(AQO 6661/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: In January this year I approved a settlement offer to end 435 breach of contract claims brought by NIPSA on behalf of retired or former NICS staff, following a change in the legal position regarding timescales within which former

employees could bring equal pay claims, from six months to six years. I also authorised officials to contact 765 other leavers, who could have brought similar claims but who had not yet done so, to make settlement offers to prevent further cases arising. To date, 372 settlement payments have been made to NIPSA claimants and 506 to non-claimants at a cost of £1.1m.

Turning to former NIO staff and PSNI staff, it has been clearly established that there is no valid equal pay claim upon which to base a settlement for this group, so this is not an 'equal pay issue'. The recommendation and associated expenditure set out in the paper I circulated to Ministerial colleagues before the summer requires their approval, but has not yet been brought forward for discussion. The matter is now in the hands of the Executive.

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline his timetable for presenting the 2015/16 Budget to the Assembly. **(AQO 6662/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: In order to give departments time to plan for 2015-16 an agreed Final Budget would need to be in place by early January 2015. Working backwards, the Executive would need to agree final proposals in December. In order to allow sufficient time for Ministerial bi-laterals and a full twelve week public consultation process a draft Budget would therefore need to be in place in the coming weeks.

I will shortly bring a draft Budget scenario to the Executive for agreement, in advance of the consultation process.

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on his engagements with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. **(AQO 6663/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: I met with representatives of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in September 2013 and discussed with them the possibility of taking forward a public governance review of Northern Ireland to inform the public sector reform agenda. Since then, my officials have engaged with OECD to develop this proposal further.

The Executive at its meeting on 19th June 2014 endorsed my proposal to engage OECD to conduct such a review.

The OECD Review will be overseen by the Executive Sub-committee for Improving Public Services which I chair and which met for the first time on 9 September 2014. OECD representatives attended the meeting to present details of what the review will consist of and how it will be taken forward.

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on digital transformation. **(AQO 6664/11-15)**

Mr Hamilton: The Transformation Programme Milestones are to complete the delivery of 16 digital services by 2016 and increase digital transactions through NI Direct by a further 700,000 by 31 March 2016. The Programme is on target to meet these Milestones with three services having gone live since the start of this financial year.

The uptake of these new digital services delivered through the Transformation Programme this year now totals almost 1 million online transactions. Of this total, 750,000 were made by citizens completing free on-line searches through the Genealogy NI service.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the sickness level of staff employed by the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service, in each of the last three years. **(AQW 35521/11-15)**

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The figures for sickness absence in the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service, are:

- Year ending 31 March 2012 – 5.78%
- Year ending 31 March 2013 – 6.58%
- Year ending 31 March 2014 – 6.61%

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many blood donation sessions have been cancelled in the last three years; and to detail the reason for the cancellations. **(AQW 35522/11-15)**

Mr Poots: The Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service has advised that 1,964 blood donation sessions have taken place and 42 blood donation sessions have been cancelled or postponed in the last three years.

The reasons for the cancellation or postponement of these sessions are as follows;

- Breakdown/malfunction of the BloodMobile (40%)
- Staff shortages (31%)

- Venue hosts declining visit at short notice (12%)
- Severe (snow) weather (12%)
- Venue access restrictions e.g. road closures due to parades (5%)

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 33205/11-15 and AQW 35100/11-15, for an update on whether he has received the recommendations regarding paediatric cardiac services which the Expert Group were expected to report by 1 July 2014; and to detail the expected date of publication.

(AQW 35556/11-15)

Mr Poots: The International Working Group (IWG), led by Dr John Mayer, has finalised its independent assessment of current and future needs for cardiology and cardiac surgery for congenital heart disease in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland. My Department has received the report and it is currently under consideration with the Department of Health in the ROI, with a view to agreeing arrangements for the joint publication of the report in both jurisdictions.

I anticipate that a visit by Dr Mayer may be possible within the next month and that the IWG's report will be published at this time. My Department is discussing the arrangements for this with the Department of Health in the ROI and I will announce the timetable for the publication as soon as possible.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many whole time equivalent specialist Speech and Language Therapists are specifically funded to support the communication skills of patients with dementia.

(AQW 35578/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast Trust has 0.5 WTE funded for a specialist SLT in the Dementia In-Patient Outreach Assessment Unit for People with Dementia and Behavioural Problems, who as part of their duties, supports clients with both communication and swallowing difficulties.

The Southern HSC Trust employs 2.8 WTE SLTs to provide a service to all adults with swallowing difficulties, including those with dementia; this support is provided in other Trust areas as part of the adult SLT caseload.

There are currently no SLTs working as members of community mental health teams supporting people with dementia.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Speech and Language Therapists are specifically funded to support dementia patients with swallowing.

(AQW 35579/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast Trust has 0.5 WTE funded for a specialist SLT in the Dementia In-Patient Outreach Assessment Unit for People with Dementia and Behavioural Problems, who as part of their duties, supports clients with both communication and swallowing difficulties.

The Southern HSC Trust employs 2.8 WTE SLTs to provide a service to all adults with swallowing difficulties, including those with dementia; this support is provided in other Trust areas as part of the adult SLT caseload.

There are currently no SLTs working as members of community mental health teams supporting people with dementia.

Mr McKinney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many whole time equivalent Speech and Language Therapists are members of community mental health teams managing Dementia patients.

(AQW 35580/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast Trust has 0.5 WTE funded for a specialist SLT in the Dementia In-Patient Outreach Assessment Unit for People with Dementia and Behavioural Problems, who as part of their duties, supports clients with both communication and swallowing difficulties.

The Southern HSC Trust employs 2.8 WTE SLTs to provide a service to all adults with swallowing difficulties, including those with dementia; this support is provided in other Trust areas as part of the adult SLT caseload.

There are currently no SLTs working as members of community mental health teams supporting people with dementia.

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of days recorded as sick absence by staff in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, broken down by month, for each of the last five years.

(AQW 35585/11-15)

Mr Poots: The details as supplied by the Ambulance Service Trust are:

Fin Yr	Month	No of Days
2009/10	Aug-09	1735.2
2009/10	Sep-09	1636.6
2009/10	Oct-09	1772.4

Fin Yr	Month	No of Days
2009/10	Nov-09	1911.9
2009/10	Dec-09	2049.0
2009/10	Jan-10	2059.1
2009/10	Feb-10	1595.9
2009/10	Mar-10	1574.8
2010/11	Apr-10	1520.6
2010/11	May-10	1488.1
2010/11	Jun-10	1577.9
2010/11	Jul-10	1535.5
2010/11	Aug-10	1540.3
2010/11	Sep-10	1811.0
2010/11	Oct-10	1887.1
2010/11	Nov-10	1559.7
2010/11	Dec-10	1971.6
2010/11	Jan-11	1832.7
2010/11	Feb-11	1387.6
2010/11	Mar-11	1472.9
2011/12	Apr-11	1413.4
2011/12	May-11	1574.3
2011/12	Jun-11	1459.7
2011/12	Jul-11	1686.0
2011/12	Aug-11	1477.7
2011/12	Sep-11	1600.4
2011/12	Oct-11	1754.0
2011/12	Nov-11	1747.8
2011/12	Dec-11	2143.7
2011/12	Jan-12	2056.6
2011/12	Feb-12	1818.6
2011/12	Mar-12	1937.3
2012/13	Apr-12	1618.9
2012/13	May-12	1655.6
2012/13	Jun-12	1622.3
2012/13	Jul-12	1527.4
2012/13	Aug-12	1657.1
2012/13	Sep-12	1498.2
2012/13	Oct-12	1604.0
2012/13	Nov-12	1788.6
2012/13	Dec-12	2270.4
2012/13	Jan-13	2146.3
2012/13	Feb-13	1913.2
2012/13	Mar-13	2351.2

Fin Yr	Month	No of Days
2013/14	Apr-13	1930.8
2013/14	May-13	1822.6
2013/14	Jun-13	1568.1
2013/14	Jul-13	1699.9
2013/14	Aug-13	1635.8
2013/14	Sep-13	1737.5
2013/14	Oct-13	1972.7
2013/14	Nov-13	2048.1
2013/14	Dec-13	2461.0
2013/14	Jan-14	2468.8
2013/14	Feb-14	2780.7
2013/14	Mar-14	2441.2
2013/14	Apr-14	2399.6
2013/14	May-14	2191.1
2013/14	Jun-14	2293.4
2013/14	Jul-14	2736.3
2013/14	Aug-14	2718.0

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the report into Children's Cardiac Services.

(AQW 35589/11-15)

Mr Poots: The International Working Group (IWG), led by Dr John Mayer, has finalised its independent assessment of current and future needs for cardiology and cardiac surgery for congenital heart disease in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and Northern Ireland. My Department has received the report and it is currently under consideration with the Department of Health in the ROI, with a view to agreeing arrangements for the joint publication of the report in both jurisdictions.

I anticipate that a visit by Dr Mayer may be possible within the next month and that the IWG's report will be published at this time. My Department is discussing the arrangements for this with the Department of Health in the ROI and I will announce the timetable for the publication as soon as possible.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the thirteen recommendations presented by the College of Emergency Medicine in July 2014.

(AQW 35596/11-15)

Mr Poots: I refer the Member to my answer to AQW 35739/11-15.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the concerns raised by the Ambulance Service in August 2014 in relation to staffing and morale issues.

(AQW 35597/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am aware of the concerns raised by the Unison Branch of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust.

It is regrettable that Unison has taken action given that the Trust had engaged in a joint two-day workshop and subsequent Joint Consultative Negotiating Council (JCNC) meeting with the unions to seek resolutions to issues of concern.

I am assured that management at the Trust are being pro-active in addressing these concerns.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of posts in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service are vacant; and to detail the longest period that a vacancy has existed.

(AQW 35609/11-15)

Mr Poots: The most recent published information available is at 31 March 2014 when 16.1% of posts, for which the Trust received recurrent funding, were vacant, based on Whole Time Equivalent information. However, a number of these posts were filled on a temporary basis, and 5.9% of the vacancies remained unfilled when temporary positions are taken into account. The Trust does not currently hold information relating to the duration of vacancies.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the rate of sick absence in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, in the last twelve months.

(AQW 35610/11-15)

Mr Poots: The rate of sick absence, in the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust, for the last twelve months that figures are available, is as follows:

Fin Yr	Month	% Rate of Absence
2013/14	Feb-13	8.13
2013/14	Mar-13	9.09
2013/14	Apr-13	7.85
2013/14	May-13	8.28
2013/14	Jun-13	6.46
2013/14	Jul-13	7.08
2013/14	Aug-13	6.87
2013/14	Sep-13	7.75
2013/14	Oct-13	7.53
2013/14	Nov-13	8.31
2013/14	Dec-13	9.55
2013/14	Jan-14	9.58

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of (i) the current system for determining the value of generic drugs which dictates the amount recuperated by community pharmacists who dispense them; and (ii) it is appropriate to continue to use cost predictions made in England in relation to generic drugs, given market differences and additional costs of transportation and delivery to Northern Ireland, in the context of a devolved health administration.

(AQW 35616/11-15)

Mr Poots: Reimbursement prices for generic medicines are set by the Department of Health in England and listed in the English Drug Tariff. The Northern Ireland Drug Tariff has been informed by the English Drug Tariff since 1 April 2011.

In order to ensure that the Northern Ireland Drug Tariff provides fair and reasonable reimbursement for generic medicines, a collaborative investigation between Government and community pharmacy contractors into available profit margin from generic medicines, known as the Ongoing Margin Survey (OMS), has been ongoing since 2011. The results of the OMS show that the level of profits retained by community pharmacy contractors in Northern Ireland, some 40.46%, is in line with profit levels achieved by contractors in other parts of the UK.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide a breakdown of how much has been spent on Transforming Your Care to date.

(AQW 35677/11-15)

Mr Poots: A total of £19m was spent in 2012/13 in respect of transitional funding for Transforming Your Care (TYC) and other HSC savings initiatives. Spend in respect of TYC in 2013/14 was £6.19m and 2014/15 spend to date is £3.3m. This represents a total spend of £28.49m, as summarised in the following table:

	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m	Apr–Aug 2014 £m	Total £m
Integrated Care Partnerships	1.97	1.37	1.00	4.34
Service Changes	3.65	0.92	1.10	5.67
Implementation Support	3.20	3.90	1.20	8.30
Voluntary Early Retirement/ Voluntary Redundancy	10.18	-	-	10.18
Total TYC Spend	19.00	6.19	3.30	28.49

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update of the review of exceptionality clause contained in the individual funding requests for cancer drugs.

(AQW 35678/11-15)

Mr Poots: The issue of clinical exceptionality will be given consideration as part of the evaluation of the Individual Funding Request process.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been allocated locally following the revised Pharmaceutical Price Regulation scheme signed in January 2014.

(AQW 35679/11-15)

Mr Poots: The latest Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) started on 1 January 2014. A payment of £2.89m in respect of the first quarter of the scheme, i.e. for the period 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2014 was received by the HSC Board in June 2014.

The PPRS is a UK-wide scheme. The quarterly payments made under the provisions of the scheme by the pharmaceutical industry are received by the Department of Health (London) in the first instance and are then allocated to each of the devolved administrations. The apportionments are agreed by the various administrations each year. The payment in respect of the period 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2014 was made under the provisions of the apportionment methodology agreed for the 2013/14 financial year. The methodology for apportioning payments in the 2014/15 financial year has not yet been finalised.

It should be noted that the PPRS does not create new funding – rather monies will no longer be required to meet an increase in the branded drugs bill and ensure that existing budgets are not breached.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for breakdown of the £11.4m that was shifted from acute care to community care in 2012/13, as stipulated in the Programme for Government 2011/15.

(AQW 35715/11-15)

Mr Poots: In 2012-13, some £11.4m was shifted from hospital based services to community based services. This funding was used to resettle 42 learning disability (£7.2m) and 27 mental health clients (£4.2m) into the community and also to strengthen community learning disability and mental health services to prevent people being readmitted to hospital.

2012/13 Learning Disability Shift left:

	£m
Community Integration Resettlements	5.5
Community Infrastructure(1)	1.3
In-year funding to support resettlement process(2)	0.4
Total	7.2

Notes: Involves strengthening those support teams in the community working with clients to prevent them being readmitted to hospital relates to in-year staff funding to support resettlement process e.g. OT assessment

2012/13 Mental Health Shift left:

	£m
Community Integration Resettlements	3.5
Community Infrastructure	0.7
Total	4.2

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many staff are currently on (i) sick leave; and (ii) maternity leave within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, particularly staff located in the Speech and Language Department.

(AQW 35717/11-15)

Mr Poots: Within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust, there are (i) 445 (including 3 Speech and Language Therapy) staff currently on sick leave and (ii) 311 (including 5 Speech and Language Therapy) staff currently on maternity leave.

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he would consider the appointment of a full-time member of staff to take forward the workforce planning proposals required for Transforming Your Care.

(AQW 35737/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are 3 specific proposals within Transforming Your Care related to workforce planning:

Recommendation 79: Make necessary arrangements to ensure critical clinical staff are able to work in a manner which supports the new arrangements.

Recommendation 95: Development of new workforce skills and roles to support the shift towards prevention, self-care, and integrated care that is well co-ordinated, integrated and at home or close to home.

Recommendation 97a: More formal integration of workforce planning into the commissioning process to drive the financial transformation.

Responsibility for taking forward workforce planning, including these recommendations lies with the Human Resources Directorate in the Department which is headed at Director level supported by a dedicated full-time staffing resource. A Regional Workforce Planning Group (RWPG), has been established, which is chaired by the Director of Human Resources and includes membership from across the Department and the wider HSC. This group's initial focus has been to develop a Strategic Framework for Workforce Planning to inform the basis for integrated future workforce planning .

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of the costs associated with the last three reports into workforce planning.

(AQW 35738/11-15)

Mr Poots: The last three workforce planning reports published by my Department were:

- Review of the Medical Workforce 2010,
- Review of the Social Services Workforce 2011; and
- Allied Health Professionals Annual Update Review 2011.

The review of the Medical Workforce was completed by external consultants at a cost of approximately £25K. Both of the 2011 reviews were carried out by Departmental officials at no additional cost.

Currently, there is a number of workforce reviews underway but not yet complete.

Mr B McCreagh asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether his Department intends to increase biomedical research collaboration with research based pharmaceutical companies.

(AQW 35755/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSC Research & Development Division invests significantly in suitable infrastructure to facilitate collaboration between local academic researchers and research active biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies. My Department is supportive of this approach and collaboration will be a key element of the next HSC R & D Strategy. Examples of this infrastructure include:

- The Northern Ireland Clinical Research Network (NICRN)
- The Northern Ireland Cancer Trials Centre & Network (NICTC/N)
- The Northern Ireland Clinical Trials Unit (NICTU)
- The Northern Ireland Clinical Research Facility (NICRF)
- Clinical Transitional Research & Innovation Centre (C-TRIC)
- The Northern Ireland Centre for Stratified Medicine

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many hygiene failings have been identified in each hospital, in each of the last five years; and to detail the number of staff that have been disciplined as a result.

(AQW 35769/11-15)

Mr Poots: The rolling programme of unannounced inspections began in 2008. The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is responsible for these inspections. RQIA publishes a report of each inspection on its website and has also published overview reports. RQIA has also published on its website the Regional Healthcare Hygiene and Cleanliness Audit Tool; the Regional Healthcare Hygiene and Cleanliness Standards; Inspection Process (Methodology, Follow-Up and Reporting), and a series of related audit tools and guidance.

As will be evident in the reports, each hospital area that is inspected is assessed against a series of criteria and is scored out of 100 to reflect the degree of compliance with the standards at the time of the inspection. As the score tables show, this is a matter of degree and red/amber/green ratings rather than simple pass/fail decisions.

No member of staff in the Health and Social Care Trusts has been disciplined on account of the findings of an RQIA unannounced hygiene inspection. The purpose of the programme of unannounced hygiene inspections is not to apportion personal blame for shortcomings identified by the inspections, but to help the HSC Trusts, at all levels within the organisation, to improve their infection prevention and control. The inspections also provide the public with independent and rigorous assurance regarding patient safety. The programme is one of a range of measures which since 2006/07 have helped to reduce *Clostridium difficile* infection episodes in in-patients aged 65 and over by 75%, and reduce MRSA in-patient episodes by 75%.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there is a zero tolerance policy in relation to hospital and administrative staff failing to comply with protocols, policies and articles of governance; and if not, to outline the reasons for this.

(AQW 35771/11-15)

Mr Poots: HSC Trusts have a range of policies and procedures in place which clearly define roles and responsibilities of all staff in relation to Trust governance arrangements and required standards of conduct. All staff are required to comply with such policies.

Trusts also have a Disciplinary Policy designed to help and encourage all employees to achieve and maintain appropriate standards of conduct, performance and behavior. The policy provides guidance for managers on appropriate action to take in instances where these standards are not met.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the timeframe requirement for reporting a Level 3 Serious Adverse Incident.

(AQW 35772/11-15)

Mr Poots: All adverse incidents should be reported within 72 hours of the incident being discovered.

Revised procedures on the management of Serious Adverse Incidents (SAIs) were published on 1 October 2013 which included replacing a single investigation process for all (SAIs) with three levels of investigation.

The third level of investigation is the Independent Investigation. Timescales for submitting the Terms of Reference, membership of the investigation team and the final investigation report will be agreed between the reporting organisation and the HSCB/PHA Designated Review Officer (DRO) as soon as it is determined that the SAI requires a Level 3 investigation.

A copy of the revised procedure can be accessed at -

http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/publications/Policies/102%20Procedure_for_the_reporting_and_followup_of_Serious_Adverse_Incidents-Oct2013.pdf

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cancer drugs provided through the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme as of January 2014.

(AQW 35782/11-15)

Mr Poots: The latest 2014 Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS), which commenced on 1 January 2014, is a single UK-wide agreement for the pricing of NHS branded medicines. The PPRS agreement covers those medicines prescribed for the treatment of cancer which satisfy the conditions for inclusion in the scheme.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the 'dementia tax' faced by carers of dementia patients, to cover expenses directly related to their needs, but only partly covered by the Health Service or local council funding.

(AQW 35831/11-15)

Mr Poots: Unlike the rest of the UK, Northern Ireland has an integrated health and social care service, and services for people with dementia are provided by Health and Social Care Trusts.

Trusts do not charge for domiciliary care services, or full costs for meals, transport or day care.

However, there is undoubtedly an additional cost associated with any disability, and with "caring" in general. In recognition of this, and in addition to arranging social care support services, Trusts can also provide financial assistance to any carers who are experiencing financial difficulties as a result of their caring role. In the 2012/13 financial year, for example, some 1,938 "one-off" Carers' Grants were provided to individual carers by Trusts across Northern Ireland.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for a breakdown of how much his Department has spent on treating dementia since 2013, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 35839/11-15)

Mr Poots: Responsibility for providing services to people with dementia rests with Health and Social Care Trusts. The information requested has been provided by Trusts and is set out in the table below.

Health & Social Care Trust	2013/2014 £m.	2014/2015 £m
Belfast H&SCT	£15,964,597	-
Northern H&SCT	£23,667,497	£8,153,241(4mths ended 31/07/2014)
South Eastern H&SCT	£3,509,313	£1,210,305 (4mths ended 31/07/2014)
Southern H&SCT	£22.14	£10.12 (5mths 31/08/2014)

Health & Social Care Trust	2013/2014 £m.	2014/2015 £m
Western H&SCT1	-	-

1 Western Health & Social Care Trust have advised that the information requested is not collected in the format required.

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to review the services provided to people living with dementia in North Antrim.

(AQW 35848/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust is responsible for providing services to people living with dementia in North Antrim. The Trust aims to provide tailored support that will meet the assessed care needs of individuals within their community. It reviews on an on-going basis the provision of services to individuals with Dementia in light of demographic needs.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust have assessed as requiring Community Meals, in the last twelve months.

(AQW 35862/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not held centrally and was therefore requested from the Northern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust. Their response is provided below.

837 service users were assessed for the year 1 September 2013 to 1 September 2014.

This is the number of service users who have received an assessment for community meals and have received assistance for same from the internal Homecare service or the independent sector providers (this is for meals provision or preparation of meals).

This number does not however include the number of service users who have been assessed and signposted to other providers of meals provision in their own area.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the (i) budget; and (ii) staff complement of the Personality Disorder Service across each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 35868/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) has confirmed that a total of £1.174M is allocated to HSC Trusts each year for Personality Disorder Services. Allocations for each Trust are as follows:-

Belfast HSC Trust	Northern HSC Trust	South Eastern HSC Trust	Southern HSC Trust	Western HSC Trust
£0.237M	£0.261M	£0.285M	£0.207M	£0.184M

The staff complement for PD services in each HSC Trust is as follows:-

Belfast HSC Trust	5.5 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) staff
Northern HSC Trust	4 WTE staff
South Eastern HSC Trust	3.5 WTE staff <i>Prison Health</i> 2 WTE staff
Southern HSC Trust	2 WTE staff
Western HSC Trust	1.5 WTE staff

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of personnel working in the Headquarters of the Southern Command of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service on a regular basis; (ii) the overheads for this facility; and (iii) the number of times the Area Commander and the Area Business Manager worked in Portadown in the last eighteen months.

(AQW 35904/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) has provided the answers below in response to the questions raised.

- (i) The number of personnel working in Southern Area Command Headquarters in Portadown is 17.
- (ii) The overhead costs for Southern Area Command Headquarters for 2013/14 were £79,991.

- (iii) NIFRS is unable to provide information relating to the number of times the Area Commander and Area Business Manager have worked in Portadown in the last eighteen months.

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) whether, given its success in terms of reducing morbidity and mortality, and the consequent impact on long-term care costs, there are plans to continue the 'F.A.S.T' awareness programme spearheaded by the Stroke Association beyond the original projected end date of 2014; and (ii) whether his Department has given consideration, in a circumstance where 'F.A.S.T' resources have been developed and the cost of continuing this programme is reduced, to diverting the remaining Public Health Agency monies ring-fenced for stroke awareness towards other promising initiatives such as the Stroke Association's 'Lessons 4 Life' schools programme and the 'It's not just a funny turn' campaign, which helps people to identify when someone has experienced a Transient Ischaemic Attack.

(AQW 35921/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) The PHA has not commissioned a re-run of the FAST campaign during 2014/15 for a number of reasons including:
1. Government limits on advertising expenditure.
 2. The non recurrent budget for the programme terminated at the end of 2013/14.
 3. Public Health England were developing and launching their new campaign in 2014/15 and it was determined that there would be value in awaiting the outcome of its initial evaluation report prior to deciding if it should go forward for consideration within the PHA campaign programme for 2015/16 (all subject to available funding /Government approvals etc).
- (ii) The resources needed for FAST are still available if a decision is taken to re-run the public awareness campaign in the future. The PHA has no plans at this stage to commission the two programs listed.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of registered childcare providers in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) East Londonderry, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35946/11-15)

Mr Poots: At 16 September 2014, there were 5,185 childcare providers in Northern Ireland, 289 of which were located in the East Londonderry Constituency. These figures were taken from a live database of childcare providers that is updated on a regular basis and maintained by the Health and Social Care (HSC) Board. As it is a live database, it is not possible to use this database to provide figures for previous years.

The table below contains the number of childcare providers at 31 March in 2012 and 2013. These figures have been taken from the HSC Board's Delegated Statutory Functions Returns that provide aggregated information on children's social care activity including childcare. As the East Londonderry constituency falls within both the Northern and Western HSC Trusts, figures on childcare provision have been provided for both Trusts.

Table 1: The Number of Childcare Providers in the Northern HSC Trust, the Western HSC Trust and Northern Ireland at 31 March (2012 – 2013)

Area	2012 No. Childcare Providers	2013 No. Childcare Providers
Northern HSC Trust	1,660	1,547
Western HSC Trust	851	868
Northern Ireland	5,320	5,336

Source: Health and Social Care Board Delegated Statutory Functions Returns

Note: Childcare providers include childminders, crèches, day nurseries, after school clubs, playgroups, two year old programmes and summer schemes

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps his Department is taking to work with Health and Social Care Adoption and Fostering to ensure that, where possible, siblings who are placed into foster care are not separated.

(AQW 35949/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Children (NI) Order 1995 and associated guidance promotes that siblings, as far as reasonably practicable, are accommodated together in foster care placements.

In circumstances where an emergency placement is required for a sibling group of children and a placement is not available that can accommodate all the siblings together, steps are taken to ensure that sibling relationships are maintained through regular contact or a future change of placement. Where it is determined that separate placements are in the children's best

interests, robust sibling contact arrangements will be established and the case monitored through the Looked After Children's review process where changes to these arrangements can be made if deemed necessary.

The Regional Adoption and Fostering Service continues to actively promote the benefits of fostering with the aim of recruiting and supporting suitable foster carers and kinship carers for children, including siblings, throughout Northern Ireland.

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will ensure that any assessment process to access community meals is fair, balanced and equitable across all of Northern Ireland and one which allows frail and vulnerable elderly people, who are no longer able to make a main hot meal for themselves, to avail of the community meals service.

(AQW 35951/11-15)

Mr Poots: HSC Trusts use regionally agreed eligibility criteria to ensure that access to the provision of the community meals service is the same for all clients across Northern Ireland, regardless of which Trust is responsible for their care.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been spent on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Extra Contractual Referrals in each of the last five years.[R]

(AQW 35960/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information is only available on expenditure for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Extra Contractual Referrals in each of the last three years as set out in the table below: this expenditure is for treatment only and does not include patient travel.

Year	£m
2013/14	1.50
2012/13	1.42
2011/12	1.14

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patient referrals made by the Health Service to the North West Private Hospital in Ballykelly, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35971/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of patient referrals made by the Health Service to the North West Private Hospital in Ballykelly is not available.

However, information is available on the number of outpatient attendances and inpatient admissions at the North West Private Hospital in Ballykelly. This information is detailed in Tables 1 and 2 below, for each of the last 5 years, broken down by the transferring HSC Trust.

Table 1: Outpatient attendances carried out by the North West Private Hospital in Ballykelly by transferring Trust: 2009/10 – 2013/14.

HSC Trust	Financial Year				
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Belfast	0	872	2,200	3,047	3,438
Northern	1,840	237	110	5,089	4,685
South Eastern	0	0	55	574	1,455
Southern	33	4	156	104	8
Western	5,153	2,313	4,477	4,486	4,452
Northern Ireland	7,026	3,426	6,998	13,300	14,038

Source: HSCB

Table 2: Inpatient admissions at the North West Private Hospital in Ballykelly, by transferring Trust: 2009/10 – 2013/14.

HSC Trust	Financial Year				
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Belfast	219	216	707	811	950
Northern	854	353	385	2,016	1,770
South Eastern	73	0	140	318	633

HSC Trust	Financial Year				
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Southern	23	2	67	27	0
Western	1,722	1,232	2,441	2,749	2,034
Northern Ireland	2,891	1,803	3,740	5,921	5,387

Source: HSCB

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the departmental services, provided through statutory and non-statutory bodies, to address the needs of alcohol and drug dependents in North Antrim.
(AQW 36030/11-15)

Mr Poots: Through my Department's New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs Phase Two, the Health & Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency commission a full range of alcohol and drug services – from education and prevention through to treatment and support – that are provided across the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area, both by Statutory and Voluntary/Community sectors.

Details of the full range of alcohol and drug services, for both young people and adults, in the Northern area can be found on the PHA website at the following link:

http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/DrugsAlcohol_Directory_Northern_12_12.pdf

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the proposals to support people with disabilities following the withdrawal of the Independent Living Fund.
(AQW 36036/11-15)

Mr Poots: The UK Government decided to close the Independent Living Fund (ILF) with effect from 30 June 2015. As I have made very clear, my Department will do all it can to ensure that those in Northern Ireland who are affected by the decision of the Department for Work and Pensions are not disadvantaged.

My Department is currently undertaking a full and comprehensive public consultation on how best to support Independent Living Fund (ILF) users in Northern Ireland following the closure of the fund. The consultation closes on 30 November 2014 and I would encourage everyone to share their views on this crucial issue. Following consultation, I will carefully consider the results before deciding on the way forward.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the waiting times on arrival for pre-arranged antenatal appointments in the Braid Valley hospital; and whether targets have been met.
(AQW 36062/11-15)

Mr Poots: The waiting times on arrival for pre-arranged antenatal appointments in Braid Valley hospital is not recorded by Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

My Department's current outpatient waiting times target reports on the waiting times of patients who are currently waiting for a first consultant led outpatient appointment. It does not monitor the length of time patients waited for their appointment following their arrival at a pre-arranged appointment.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 34921/11-15, to detail the contact between his Department and the Department of Health.
(AQW 36080/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department maintains ongoing contact with the Department of Health England regarding this issue. This has included participation in the national Meningitis B Immunisation Project Board, which normally meets once a month.

It is difficult to estimate when the Men B vaccine would be available following the successful completion of the procurement process as that would depend on how quickly adequate supplies of the vaccine would be available from the manufacturer to allow a vaccination programme to begin. My Department will endeavor to ensure a vaccination programme is in place as quickly as possible should there be a successful completion of the procurement process.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 34921/11-15, for an estimated timescale of the vaccine being made available to patients following the successful completion of negotiations regarding procurement of the Meningitis B vaccine.
(AQW 36081/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department maintains ongoing contact with the Department of Health England regarding this issue. This has included participation in the national Meningitis B Immunisation Project Board, which normally meets once a month.

It is difficult to estimate when the Men B vaccine would be available following the successful completion of the procurement process as that would depend on how quickly adequate supplies of the vaccine would be available from the manufacturer to allow a vaccination programme to begin. My Department will endeavor to ensure a vaccination programme is in place as quickly as possible should there be a successful completion of the procurement process.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total number of patients registered with each Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 36083/11-15)

Mr Poots: Patients are not registered with Trusts in Northern Ireland, but with GP practices. Included below are the number of patients registered with GP practices that are located geographically within the five Trust areas.

Please note that patients do not necessarily reside within the same Trust area.

GP practice lists for Health and Social Care Trusts areas, July 2014

Trust	Registered patients in GP practices ¹	Number of GP practices in Trust area
Belfast	432,160	85
South Eastern	331,420	56
Northern	455,604	78
Southern	385,906	74
Western	324,187	57
Northern Ireland	1,929,277	350

1 All patients registered with a General Practice at July 2014.

Source: Family Practitioner Services, Information and Registration Unit, BSO.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 35778/11-15 and in relation to the further survey, to detail (i) the date in November that it is scheduled to begin; (ii) the number of weeks that the consultation is scheduled to last; and (iii) when the results will be published.

(AQW 36084/11-15)

Mr Poots: (i) The exact dates of the survey in November 2014 are unknown at present because the procurement process to appoint a company to undertake the survey is not yet complete. (ii) The fieldwork period for the survey will last for four weeks. (iii) The results are due to be submitted to me by the Public Health Agency in February 2015.

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of people in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust who suffered a stroke, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 36117/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of people who were admitted to HSC Hospitals in the Northern HSC Trust with a primary diagnosis of stroke in each of the last five years is detailed in the table below.

Financial Year	Individuals admitted
2009/10	519
2010/11	492
2011/12	532
2012/13	572
2013/14	592

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

Notes

Stroke has been defined using International Classification of Disease (revision 10) codes as follows.

I61 – Intracerebral haemorrhage

I62 – Other non-traumatic intracranial haemorrhage

I63 – Cerebral infarction

I64 – Stroke, not specified as haemorrhage or infarction

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the number of people in Northern Ireland who have (i) Progressive Supranuclear Palsy; and (ii) Corticobasal Degeneration.

(AQW 36142/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of people in Northern Ireland living with (i) Progressive Supranuclear Palsy or (ii) Corticobasal Degeneration is not available.

The number of individuals admitted to HSC Hospitals in Northern Ireland with Progressive Supranuclear Palsy or Corticobasal Degeneration is detailed in the table below for each of the last three years.

Financial Year	Progressive Supranuclear Palsy	Corticobasal Degeneration
2011/12	50	20
2012/13	63	36
2013/14	50	28

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

Ms McGahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the proposed closure of Loane House in Dungannon by the Southern Health and Social Care Trust is not subject to a full impact assessment in relation to the rural domain.

(AQW 36183/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Southern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust has informed my Department that its proposals for Loane House are set within the context of Transforming Your Care and commissioning intentions, and that a sustainability development assessment was undertaken which included the rural domain. The Trust's Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) identifies any likely impact which the proposals may have on people living in rural areas.

The Trust has also advised that pending the outcome of the current public consultation it would keep its EQIA under review to ensure all local equality and human rights issues are identified and addressed. The Trust will review responses and prepare a final report for a decision by the Trust's Board in November 2014.

Mr B McCreagh asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 36237/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of people diagnosed with cystic fibrosis is not available.

However, information is available on the number of individuals admitted to HSC Hospitals in Northern Ireland with a diagnosis of cystic fibrosis, which is detailed in the table below for each of the last three years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

HSC Trust	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Belfast	180	176	182
Northern	<5	<5	<5
South Eastern	<5	8	6
Southern	10	<5	9
Western	7	7	11

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

In order to protect patient confidentiality, cell sizes of less than five have been masked.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the new Omagh Enhanced Local Hospital.

(AQO 6676/11-15)

Mr Poots: Construction commenced on site in July 2014 and contract completion is scheduled for July 2016. The hospital is expected to become operational in Autumn 2016.

It will provide for a Local Hospital with 40 Intermediate Care beds and will include a range of services such as a 24 place renal dialysis unit, a Health & Care Centre including GP Accommodation and an Urgent Care and Treatment Centre.

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on how much has been spent to date on Transforming Your Care.

(AQO 6672/11-15)

Mr Poots: A total of £19m was spent in 2012/13 in respect of transitional funding for Transforming Your Care (TYC) and other HSC savings initiatives; spend in respect of TYC in 2013/14 was £6.19m; in 2014/15 spend to date is £3.3m. This represents a total of £28.49m spend over the three year period to date.

These investments have helped to make a positive impact on the delivery of care in acute, primary and community care settings.

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the Northern Ireland Connected Health Ecosystem.

(AQO 6673/11-15)

Mr Poots: The NI Connected Health Eco-System brings together the health, academic, independent, and industry sectors, as well as patient representation, to consider and accelerate the adoption of connected health solutions within Northern Ireland, which will ultimately improve the delivery of services to patients, and at the same time contribute to sustainable economic growth

Since its launch in September 2012 there have been 14 events organised through the Eco-System focussing on such areas as Medicines Management, healthcare analytics, independent living, improving health and well-being, and healthcare transformation. Further events are planned for October and December this year.

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when public residential care homes will be allowed to admit new permanent residents.

(AQO 6674/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Stage One consultation report on the future of statutory residential care homes was approved by the Health and Social Care Board on 12 June 2014. The report provides a thorough analysis of views shared during consultation and sets out the final criteria for evaluating statutory residential homes for older people.

Health and Social Care Trusts have now been asked by the Health and Social Care Board to review their residential care homes using the new criteria and then to review their positions on admissions once they have made proposals for the future of each home. This work will be completed in the coming months.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many domiciliary care packages exist in the Mid Ulster Constituency.

(AQO 6675/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not collected centrally by my Department. Statistics on domiciliary care provision cannot be disaggregated by geographical areas smaller than HSC Trust.

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what impact the current funding pressures are having on independent health providers and their patients.

(AQO 6677/11-15)

Mr Poots: In the context of wider health funding pressures, the Health and Social Care Board instructed Health and Social Care Trusts in July to temporarily pause sending further patients to the independent sector for elective care assessment or treatment.

Regrettably this has had an adverse impact on the waiting times for some patients. I am also aware of the potential impact on some local independent sector providers.

My Department, working with the Health and Social Care Board, is keeping this matter under ongoing review.

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department is taking in response to the Independent Review of the Actions Taken in Relation to Concerns Raised about the Care Delivered at Cherry Tree House, Carrickfergus.

(AQO 6678/11-15)

Mr Poots: Senior officials from my Department met in August with the Health and Social Care Board and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority to consider the 22 recommendations made by the review. It was agreed that they would most effectively be delivered by the delegation of individual recommendations to each responsible organisation.

My Department will monitor the overall implementation of the recommendations, with each organisation required to submit an interim progress report by the end of October. It is intended that all the recommendations will be fully implemented by the end of this year.

Mr Sheehan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the Terms of Reference for the review into unscheduled care have not been agreed.

(AQO 6679/11-15)

Mr Poots: The terms of reference for this review have been agreed. I announced the terms of reference for the RQIA's review of unscheduled care on 10 February 2014. The RQIA published its report on 1 July 2014 and in an oral statement to the

Assembly, also on 1 July, I announced the terms of reference for a task group, co-chaired by the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Nursing Officer, to implement the RQIA's recommendations.

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the provision of specialist respite care in East Antrim.

(AQO 6680/11-15)

Mr Poots: Respite or short break services are provided on assessed need and can be provided in a variety of ways, for example: in a residential or nursing home; through the use of day care facilities; a sitting service; or through Direct Payments, where the service user makes their own arrangements.

For Northern Trust service users, specialist respite services include, for physical disability - Cuisle in Roscommon, Corrymeela in Ballycastle, Disabled Christian Fellowship in Lisburn and the MS centre in Ballymoney. For children with disabilities, residential respite can be provided at Whitehaven in Whitehead. For children with complex conditions overnight care can be provided in their own home. For those with a learning disability, respite can be provided at Ellis Court in Carrickfergus.

Department of Justice

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice why persons facing serious criminal charges and brought to court under a Public Prosecution Service summons are not required, unless and until committed for Trial at preliminary enquiry, to (i) attend court in person; and (ii) enter into bail terms; and whether he plans to amend this in the interests of assuring cooperation and protection of both the investigation and witnesses or victims from interference and intimidation

(AQW 35670/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Both summons and charge procedures are available to bring persons to court and decisions to charge or summons are matters for the independent police and prosecution authorities. Charging or using summonses are matters based on the individual circumstances of each case, taken in light of the need to protect the investigation process, victims and witnesses. Bail conditions can be imposed in appropriate cases, for example, to ensure attendance at court and for protections of witnesses and victims. I am content with the procedures and protections available to police and courts in the investigation and prosecution of crime and have no plans at this stage to make any legislative change.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister of Justice what action his Department has taken to target racist behaviour outside the Belfast area, specifically in East Londonderry.

(AQW 35686/11-15)

Mr Ford: Through the Community Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2012 – 2017, my Department is committed to tackling all forms of hate crime, including racist hate crime, and reducing the harm it causes through prevention, awareness and education. My officials are also working with OFMDFM officials, who are responsible for wider racial equality, to tackle race hate and behaviours which may not manifest into crime.

Regionally, the Department of Justice delivers a range of initiatives to tackle hate crime. Examples include part funding a Hate Incident Practical Action Scheme to provide personal protection and safety measures at, or in the vicinity of, the home of a hate crime victim; investing in the hate crime advocacy service to ensure support for victims; and part funding an initiative to identify a Tension Monitoring model with a view to rolling it out to all areas through PCSPs. The Probation Board Northern Ireland and the Youth Justice Agency, among others, are also delivering initiatives to prevent offending through early stage intervention and support a range of programmes to address offending behaviour, including community and restorative approaches. My officials continue to develop links with local groups representing ethnic minorities to increase understanding of the issues faced and to increase confidence in the justice sector.

At a local level, my Department funds the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) which deliver a range of initiatives to tackle hate crime. For example, in East Londonderry, the PCSPs financially support projects such as 'Hands off My Friend' and 'YES' which are designed to challenge attitudes that contribute to hate crime. Such projects engage with local schools to educate young people about prejudice and raise awareness of the impact of hate crime. On a practical level, assistance is also offered to victims of racist attacks including arranging community service squads to clean racist graffiti.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) whether he is aware that some police officers do not feel they are being adequately and appropriately represented by the recognised staff associations and representative bodies over proposed pension changes; (ii) what action is being taking to address this, particularly in respect of a lack of transparency by failure to fully disclose decisions taken without proper consultation or with the views of serving officers as to being denied fair treatment; and (iii) whether the current proposed policy in its present form is lawful in the absence of appropriate consultation or engagement.

(AQW 35768/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have been made aware of the concerns raised by a number of police officers and have brought these to the attention of the Chairman and Secretary of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland. In accordance with the Public Sector Pension Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, my Department has gone through the appropriate mechanisms to consult on the matter.

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the future of Downpatrick Court House.
(AQW 35791/11-15)

Mr Ford: The future of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) estate, which includes Downpatrick Courthouse, is being considered as part of the Department of Justice Estate Strategy and in the context of budgetary constraints. No final decision has been made in relation to any of the existing courthouses across the NICTS estate.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33408/11-15 and his response "A more stringent multi-agency selection process is in place to select prisoners for Burren House" and "A more robust progression/regression policy is in place, and staff employed there will write reports on the prisoners for the Parole Commissioners" to detail (i) how this selection process was applied in the decision to return the prisoner to this unit and why this was acceptable given his previous offending whilst an inmate of Burren House in its former title as the Prisoner Assessment Unit; and (ii) whether this decision will be reviewed.

(AQW 35810/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would refer the Member to the response to AQW/35540/11-15.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 35230/11-15, whether the consultation reports have been made available to recognised staff associations and representative bodies of serving police officers, confidentially or otherwise; and if so, whether the intention is that these bodies will share the content directly with those they represent.

(AQW 35811/11-15)

Mr Ford: The consultation does not conclude until 16 October and as such, no report has yet been prepared.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many new recruits or new intake Prison Officers are working on landings without senior officer support; and whether this practice is subject to a risk assessment.

(AQW 35812/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are no new recruits or new intake Prison Officers working on the residential landings without Senior Officer support. It should also be noted that Unit Managers and Senior Governors are also present to lend support to staff working with prisoners.

Risk Assessments are in place for all areas.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice why his Department's Head of Internal Audit did not complete an audit of the Disabled Police Officers Association Northern Ireland despite an agreement to do so on 20 February 2014.

(AQW 35814/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Head of Internal Audit did not carry out any audit of the Disabled Police Officers Association Northern Ireland. There was no agreement to carry out an internal audit when he met officials from the Association on 20 February 2014, and before any such agreement could subsequently be made, he was informed of the Charity Commission's statutory inquiry. He agreed with the Charity Commission that it would not be appropriate for the DOJ to carry out an internal audit.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice what assurances are required by his Department and the Northern Ireland Police Fund before relevant funding can be allocated to the Disabled Police Officers Association Northern Ireland.

(AQW 35815/11-15)

Mr Ford: I intend to await the outcome of the Charity Commission's statutory inquiry into the governance and administration of the Disabled Police Officers' Association of Northern Ireland before considering next steps. I understand that the Police Fund, too, intends to await the outcome of the inquiry before considering further funding.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how much of the cuts in expenditure in the Prison Service were made to (i) its headquarters; and (ii) prisons.

(AQW 35817/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below sets out the prison pressures funded and savings identified for the last three years. The savings have been split (i) its headquarters; and (ii) prisons.

	2011/12 £m	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m
Budget 2010 Allocation	121.8	121.8	121.8

	2011/12 £m	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m
Additional Pay and VER pressures funded	18.8	19.0	3.5
(i) Savings identified headquarters	-1.2	-1.6	-2.5
(ii) savings identified prisons	-3.1	-21.0	-21.0
Increase(Reduction) in Budget Allocation	14.5	-3.6	-20.0
New Baseline Funding	136.3	118.2	101.8

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the cuts to the budget of the Northern Ireland Prison Service.
(AQW 35818/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below details the cuts to the budget of Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS). The main part of the cuts is in connection with the savings identified by the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme (VER).

Details of Resource DEL Budget NIPS

	2011/12 £m	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m
Budget 2010 Allocation	121.8	121.8	121.8
Additional Pay pressures funded	1.5	1.8	3.5
Additional Funding for VER Scheme	17.3	17.3	
Reform Savings Identified	-4.3	-22.7	-23.5
New Baseline Funding	136.3	118.2	101.8
Increase(Reduction) in Budget Allocation	14.5	-3.6	-20.0

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice whether the level of security checks on visitors entering prisons are the same as those carried out in (i) 2012; and (ii) 2013.

(AQW 35819/11-15)

Mr Ford: The current level of security checks on visitors entering prisons is the same as those carried out in 2012 and 2013.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how current Prison Officer staff numbers at Maghaberry Prison compare with (i) 2012; and (ii) 2013.

(AQW 35820/11-15)

Mr Ford: The current number of Prison Officer staff in post in Maghaberry (Full Time Equivalent) compared with those in post in 2012 and 2013 are as follows:

- (i) 31 July 2012 – 662.39 staff in post
- (ii) 1 August 2013 – 739.36 staff in post
- (iii) 1 August 2014 – 688 staff in post

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how current staff numbers at Prison Service Headquarters compare with (i) 2012; and (ii) 2013.

(AQW 35821/11-15)

Mr Ford: The current number of staff in post in Headquarters (Full Time Equivalent) figures compared with those in post in 2012 and 2013 are as follows:

- (i) 31 July 2012 – 212.70 Staff in post
- (ii) 1 August 2013 – 201.45 Staff in post
- (iii) 1 August 2014 – 174 Staff in post

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to recently published figures of drugs seizures, how many seizures accounted for unlawfully held prescription drugs.

(AQW 35877/11-15)

Mr Ford: It would not be possible to provide the information as required without disproportionate cost. Those occasions where substances are found, and can be attributed to an individual are referred to PSNI as part of the joint operation to combat drugs misuse. These substances are analysed for evidential purposes in regard to prosecutions.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether there are instances of, or opportunities for, automatic transfer for prison staff to the Northern Ireland Prison Service from counterpart facilities in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 35879/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no policy or agreement in existence to allow an automatic transfer for prison staff to the Northern Ireland Prison Service from counterpart facilities in England, Scotland, Wales or the Republic of Ireland. All appointments to the Northern Ireland Civil Service, including those to Northern Ireland Prison Service must be made in accordance with the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commissioner's Code and based on merit through an open competition.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 35230/11-15, whether he has consulted directly with serving Police Officers; and if not, when he intends to do so.

(AQW 35880/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department's consultation is a targeted one, aimed at those bodies with a direct role and responsibility for police pensions and the recognised staff associations and representative bodies. This approach is consistent with that of other Departments in relation to the changes to public sector pension schemes.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 35258/11-15, of those prisoners transferring from outside the UK to serve their sentence in Northern Ireland, how many, transferred since 2010, have (i) repaid; and (ii) failed to repay the expenses incurred in their transfer.

(AQW 35895/11-15)

Mr Ford: Of the ten successful applications for repatriation processed by the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) since devolution nine were from prisoners being held in jails in the Republic of Ireland. While the Repatriation of Prisoners Act 1984 provides for United Kingdom prison authorities to require transferring prisoners to sign an undertaking to repay expenses incurred in connection with their conveyance to a United Kingdom entry point no such expenses were incurred in any of these cases. This is because the Irish Prison Service takes responsibility for escorting repatriating prisoners to the border with Northern Ireland where they are handed over to NIPS. Therefore none of these nine applicants was asked to make a payment. The tenth application was from a prisoner whose repatriation involved a flight to the United Kingdom. This individual paid for this in full following his return to Northern Ireland.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 33830/11-15, for a breakdown of the £243,017 expenditure on hospitality by his Department's arm's-length bodies.

(AQW 35899/11-15)

Mr Ford: A breakdown of expenditure on hospitality by the arm's-length bodies of the Department of Justice in the 2013/14 financial year is shown in the table below:

Arm's-length Body	Total spend - £
Police Service of Northern Ireland	218,800
Northern Ireland Policing Board	12,695
Probation Board Northern Ireland	6,120
Office of the Police Ombudsman Northern Ireland	2,516
RUC George Cross Foundation	1,782
Prisoner Ombudsman	344
Northern Ireland Law Commission	299
Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland	267
Northern Ireland Police Fund	194
Total	243,017

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the threshold in which a criminal charge can be (i) brought straight to court; (ii) put onto a 28 days charge sheet; and (iii) required to be sent to the Public Prosecution Service for a decision on whether to prosecute.

(AQW 35974/11-15)

Mr Ford: Decisions as to the method, timing and approach by which a criminal offence or charge is brought to the court are operational matters for the police and the Public Prosecution Service. The decision to charge or submit a file to the Public Prosecution Service is, for example, a matter for police.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 35230/11-15 and given that the Executive decided to switch to a new Career Average Revalued Earnings scheme model on 8 March 2012, which was six months before the announcement on 5 September 2012 and in advance of Staff Side officially accepting the changes, (i) whether he or his officials pre-empted Staff Side acceptance, or was there no opportunity to object; (ii) to provide the dates of the meetings held with Staff Side prior to 5 September 2012 in which Career Average Revalued Earnings was discussed; and (iii) on what date between 8 March and 5 September 2012 are Staff Side recorded as accepting the changes.

(AQW 35975/11-15)

Mr Ford: Public sector pension schemes are not subject to negotiation or arbitration. On 6 November 2012 following due consideration, I agreed to adopt the same approach to a new police pension scheme as that being proposed in Great Britain, in line with the Executive decision of 8 March 2012. Under Section 34 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998, my department is required to consult with the Police Negotiating Board (PNB) (now the Police Pension Consultative Forum). Currently my department is engaged in a consultation on the scheme regulations and will give consideration to the responses once consultation closes on 16 October 2014.

Consultation on the police pension reform has been ongoing since January 2012. Any member of the PNB has had the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have. The dates of meetings with staff side are detailed in my response to AQW/35671/11-15.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 35439/11-15, whether he wishes to review this answer in light of the answer to AQW 34456/11-15.

(AQW 35976/11-15)

Mr Ford: As noted in AQW/35439/11-15 I am not aware of my Department transferring an Assembly Question to a Freedom of Information Request. The reference in AQW/34456/11-15 to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) notes that the Department, as a Responsible Authority, has a duty to ensure any disclosure is in line with the relevant legislative requirements.

An earlier response was provided to the associated question AQW/33915/11-15 that included the requested information and advised that a request for a copy of the report would be considered in line with FOIA and the Data Protection Act 1998 given potential third party interests that may be affected by disclosure.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Justice to detail the cost of fitting out the office of the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service in Laganside House.

(AQW 35977/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is permanently based in Laganside House in an office which was fitted out as part of the former Northern Ireland Court Service Headquarters relocation from Windsor House and Bedford House in 2008. It is not possible to identify specific costs for alterations made solely to the Chief Executive's office as invoices relate to work completed as part of the fitting out of the entire building.

In September 2012 modifications were made to the Chief Executive's office to create additional office space for a member of the senior management team, at a cost of £9,397 excluding VAT.

The Chief Executive does not have an office in either Massey House or Parliament Buildings. The only designated parking space for the postholder is in Laganside car park.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Justice to detail the cost of fitting out the office of the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service in Massey House.

(AQW 35978/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is permanently based in Laganside House in an office which was fitted out as part of the former Northern Ireland Court Service Headquarters relocation from Windsor House and Bedford House in 2008. It is not possible to identify specific costs for alterations made solely to the Chief Executive's office as invoices relate to work completed as part of the fitting out of the entire building.

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The Chief Executive does not have an office in either Massey House or Parliament Buildings. The only designated parking space for the postholder is in Laganside car park.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Justice to detail the cost of fitting out the office of the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service in Parliament Buildings, including feature walls and sound-proofing.

(AQW 35979/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is permanently based in Laganside House in an office which was fitted out as part of the former Northern Ireland Court Service Headquarters relocation from Windsor House and Bedford House in 2008. It is not possible to identify specific costs for alterations made solely to the Chief Executive's office as invoices relate to work completed as part of the fitting out of the entire building.

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The Chief Executive does not have an office in either Massey House or Parliament Buildings. The only designated parking space for the postholder is in Laganside car park.

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Justice to list the reserved car parking spaces provided for the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service, including at Massey House and Castle Buildings.

(AQW 35980/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS) is permanently based in Laganside House in an office which was fitted out as part of the former Northern Ireland Court Service Headquarters relocation from Windsor House and Bedford House in 2008. It is not possible to identify specific costs for alterations made solely to the Chief Executive's office as invoices relate to work completed as part of the fitting out of the entire building.

In September 2012 modifications were made to the Chief Executive's office to create additional office space for a member of the senior management team, at a cost of £9,397 excluding VAT.

The Chief Executive does not have an office in either Massey House or Parliament Buildings. The only designated parking space for the postholder is in Laganside car park.

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice for an estimate of the amount that will be spent in the current financial year on progressing the preparatory works associated with the construction of the new prison at Magilligan.

(AQW 36024/11-15)

Mr Ford: There has been no spend in the current financial year on progressing the preparatory works associated with the construction of the new prison at Magilligan. Work continues on the development of the business case for the project, securing DFP approval and capital funding. Once such approval is secured and funding has been made available, work will then commence on further development of the project including the preparation of an exemplar design and the procurement of a contractor to complete the design and build of the new facility.

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice to detail any contact that he, or his officials had, with Ms Catriona Ruane MLA or Mr Gerry Kelly MLA prior to the completion of the Deputy Chief Constable selection process by the Northern Ireland Policing Board; and for his assessment of the impact of Ms Ruane's public statement prior to the completion of the interview process.

(AQW 36041/11-15)

Mr Ford: Neither I, nor my officials, had any contact with Ms Catriona Ruane MLA or Mr Gerry Kelly MLA prior to the completion of the Deputy Chief Constable selection process by the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

Following the completion of the process, I met with the Chair and Chief Executive of the Policing Board and consulted with the independent advisor from HM Inspectorate of Constabulary. I also met with Ms Ruane, who was accompanied by Mr Kelly, to discuss her concerns.

On the basis of the assurances I received, I am content that the Policing Board's procedures in relation to the selection process were properly adhered to.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what are the implications for the current, and any forthcoming, local contract for drugs testing services carried out by the Scottish Prison Service should Scotland obtain independence in the pending referendum.

(AQW 36064/11-15)

Mr Ford: NIPS did not expect there to be any immediate implications for the existing contract with Scottish Prison Service if Scotland had voted for independence.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the creation of a Prison Service museum.

(AQW 36071/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service is committed to the preservation of artefacts, but competing priorities have resulted in progress being slower than anticipated.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 35310/11-15, to address parts (i) and (iii) of the original question.

(AQW 36136/11-15)

Mr Ford: NIPS do not conduct searches solely for drugs, searching is directed against all unauthorised articles. Since 1 January 2014 NIPS have conducted 41953 searches. Legal highs are not one of the categories listed for recording finds. All finds of unauthorised articles attributed to an individual will be treated as a breach of prison rules and dealt with under the adjudication process.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to whom the Central Committee of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland are accountable.

(AQW 36138/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Central Committee of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland is accountable to the members of the Federation.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 35311/11-15, to detail (i) who is preparing the tender; and (ii) when work commenced on the preparation.

(AQW 36139/11-15)

Mr Ford: The tender is being prepared by the Scottish Prison Service. NIPS do not have the exact date on which the work commenced but have been advised it is ongoing.

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice why there has been a default in implementing Section 30 of the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014; and to detail the "technical issues" which exist.

(AQW 36143/11-15)

Mr Ford: As previously stated, I remain keen to give effect to Section 30 of the Public Service Pensions Act (Northern Ireland) 2014. There are, however, a number of issues which must first be fully understood and resolved before payments can commence.

I raised concerns during the Assembly debate on the Bill regarding the potential for Section 30 to be deemed to be repercussive. If this were to be the case, it could fall to the NI Assembly and the Executive to meet the associated costs across schemes in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

I have written to the Finance Minister seeking to address these issues urgently and I understand he is engaging with HM Treasury on the matter. I await a substantive response. While the necessary preparatory work continues, I will not be in a position to authorise the Policing Board to commence payments until these issues have been resolved.

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the timescale for the proposed Mental Capacity Bill.

(AQW 36152/11-15)

Mr Ford: The timetable for the Mental Capacity Bill is a challenging one and, as such, is being kept under close review. Subject to Executive agreement, it is the intention of the two Departments to introduce the Bill as early as possible in 2015, to enable enactment by March 2016. Following enactment, it is envisaged that a further year will be required prior to the Bill becoming fully operational, in order to introduce supporting secondary legislation and provide necessary training.

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Justice, for his assessment of the response to AQW 35508-11/15, in light of a number of vulnerable prisoners that have self-harmed and who have referred themselves as being unable to access mental health services particularly within Maghaberry Prison.

(AQW 36157/11-15)

Mr Ford: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust is responsible for healthcare provision in prison establishments.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service and the South Eastern Trust are committed to providing effective services to vulnerable prisoners and will continue to work in partnership to support those prisoners being managed under the Supporting Prisoners at Risk procedures.

Department for Regional Development

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what measures will be carried out to prevent a repeat of the flooding in Dunloy that took place during summer 2014.

(AQW 35382/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): I am aware of the extreme intense rainfall which Dunloy and the surrounding area encountered on Friday 8 August 2014 and was constantly appraised, by my officials, of the responsive action being undertaken during the afternoon and evening.

I am pleased to confirm the swift action of my Department helped clear road drainage outlets, reopen flooded roads, provide sand bags to properties under threat of flooding and carry out road surface repairs before the day was out.

This was a short lived, exceptional and torrential rainfall event and whilst the roads are currently well serviced by the current road drainage system which is able to accommodate normal levels of rainfall, it was on this occasion overwhelmed by the additional volume of water, particularly that flowing from private farm lands and laneways onto the road due to the topography of the land.

Whilst I empathise with residents affected by this flooding, in the current constrained budgetary climate it would not be economically viable to fund further upgrades to the existing infrastructure to cater for such exceptional weather events.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail how much has been spent on grass cutting in the North Down area, in each of the last two years.

(AQW 35527/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise the Member that my Department analyses spend on a District Council basis by financial year. The following costs have been incurred by my Department for grass cutting and environmental maintenance within North Down District Council area in each of the last two years:

Function	2012-13 £k	2013-14 £k
Grass Cutting and Environmental Maintenance	176	139

The Member should also note that figures for 2013-14 could be subject to change as the Accounts have yet to be signed off by the NIAO.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the transfer of powers for on street parking to councils will include the power to introduce resident parking schemes.

(AQW 35702/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: No. The Off-Street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Bill aims only to put in place the wish of the Executive to transfer off-street car parks (other than Park and Ride and Park and Share) from my Department to district councils.

Residents' parking schemes relate to on street car parking arrangements and are, therefore, not covered by the Bill.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the cost to his Department of operating the Strangford ferry.

(AQW 35741/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the operating costs for the Strangford Lough Ferry Service, for the last three financial years, are set out in the table below:

Year	Operating Costs (£)
2011/12	1,856,818
2012/13	1,442,800
2013/14	1,458,455

Please note that these figures incorporate staff, fuel and operations and maintenance costs, but exclude indirect and notional costs.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's long term plans for the Strangford ferry service.

(AQW 35742/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department regularly reviews the delivery and operation of the Strangford Lough Ferry Service.

In 2013, my Department undertook a Strategic Review of the service which concluded that the current level of service provision at the Strangford Lough Ferry Service remains appropriate and the continued in-house delivery of the service also remains appropriate at present.

The review also recommended the Department continues to work towards procuring a replacement vessel for the MV Strangford and that future delivery options for the Strangford Lough Ferry Service should be reviewed, once a replacement vessel for the MV Strangford has been procured.

Tender documents for the provision of a new ferry for the Strangford Lough Ferry Service have recently issued to a select list of shipbuilders. The procurement of the new ferry is expected to cost £6.3 million with delivery scheduled for Summer 2016.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on the use of taxis in each of the last three years.

(AQW 35746/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The amount spent by my Department on the use of taxis in each of the last three years is shown below.

Financial Year	Spend on Taxis
2011-12	£3,252
2012-13	£3,442
2013-14	£2,610

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the reasons for the 40mph speed limit on the C560 Aughrim Road, Magherafelt.

(AQW 35761/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Over the years there have been a number of requests for safety measures or a reduced speed limit at Aughrim Road, Magherafelt and, in June 2013, my Department agreed to undertake a joint assessment for a reduced speed limit in conjunction with the Police Service of Northern Ireland Road Policing Unit.

This assessment considered the extent of development, existing road layout and topography, collision history, local facilities, existing warning signage and recorded vehicle speeds. The assessment concluded the criteria for a 30mph speed limit was not met, but a 40mph limit should be provided to generally improve safety for pedestrians in the area and to assist motorists accessing their dwellings, the filling station and the local church parking.

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development what public consultation was held prior to the introduction of a 40mph speed limit on the C560 Aughrim Road, Magherafelt.

(AQW 35762/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Following discussions between my officials and PSNI Roads Policing in June 2013, a decision was made to proceed with proposals to implement a 40mph speed limit at Aughrim Road, Magherafelt. Magherafelt District Council was consulted on 20 January 2014 regarding this proposal, which was subsequently advertised in the Irish News, News Letter and Belfast Telegraph on 26 March 2014. This consultation allowed a 22-day period for receipt of comments or representations. No objections to the proposed speed limit were received.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions have taken place with HM Treasury to extend the TaxSmart scheme to rail travel.

(AQW 35773/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In January my Department wrote to the Department of Finance and Personnel in their role as lead department in the liaison with HM Treasury on public expenditure and taxation issues regarding the extension of the Taxsmart scheme from bus only to include rail. At this time I was seeking to engage directly with HMRC on the matter. Simon Hamilton committed to writing to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on behalf of my Department, which he did on 24 February 2014.

The Department of Finance and Personnel has advised that no update has been received from HM Treasury since the Minister wrote to the Chancellor in February 2014 regarding any possible extension of the Taxsmart scheme in Northern Ireland.

I welcome the opportunity to prioritise this issue and will continue to liaise with the Department of Finance and Personnel for an update on this matter.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the operating costs of Translink, in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 35794/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that their operating costs in each of the last three financial years are as follows:

	2013/14 £'000	2012/13 £'000	2011/12 £'000
Translink total operating costs*	169,147	165,915	156,664

*operating costs = operating and engineering costs (including claims)

Transport NI: Gritting Vehicles

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of gritting vehicles owned by Transport NI.

(AQW 35795/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Transport NI currently has 135 gritting vehicles in service, with a further 62 vehicles which are at various stages of disposal.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the (i) number; and (ii) type of vehicles used by Transport NI. (AQW 35796/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Transport NI currently owns 675 vehicles across a range of categories that are at various stages of their lifecycle. Around 555 are available for operational use, with the remainder due for disposal. Further detail relating to category/type of the operational vehicles is set out in the table below:

Category	Number in Operation
Lorries 3.5 to 26 tonne (excluding interchangeable gritting units)	271
Specialist vehicles for gully emptying, sweeping, patching, inspecting and surveying.	93
Light Commercial	51
Gritters	135
Snowblowers	5

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many vehicles currently owned by Transport NI require an annual MOT test.

(AQW 35797/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Transport NI currently has 555 vehicles available for operational use, 544 of which are presented for Goods Vehicle Certification (GVC) testing each year.

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) what his Department has done, or would be prepared to do, to promote public hire taxis as a method of public transport, paying particular attention to their accessibility for people with a disability; and (ii) whether he would be prepared to meet public hire representatives to discuss this issue.

(AQW 35813/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Through the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities and the Rural Transport Fund, my Department already provides funding to a range of service providers to deliver transport for people with disabilities and those living in rural areas. However, I acknowledge the role public hire services play in providing transport options for members of the travelling public, including people with disabilities. Such flexibly-routed services enable people, who may not have access to a car or cannot access conventional fixed-route public transport services, to undertake essential journeys, particularly at times of the day when the public transport system is not operating.

I would therefore be happy for my officials to meet with public hire representatives to discuss the options available to help promote these services as part of the overall public transport mix. This can be arranged by contacting my office.

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department has spent on improving road infrastructure in Lagan Valley since 2013.

(AQW 35837/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department records expenditure by Council area rather than on a constituency basis. Expenditure in the Lisburn City Council area on improving road infrastructure (including resurfacing) during the period 1 April 2013 to 31 August 2014 was £5.7 million.

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his Department's evaluation of the road safety benefits of the planned A5 Western Transport Corridor.

(AQW 35854/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As an integral part of an overall Traffic and Economics assessment carried out on the proposed A5 Western Transport Corridor project, the issue of road safety has been examined and evaluated in detail.

I can confirm it is estimated that implementation of the entire project would reduce the number of collisions by approximately 1,000 over a 60-year scheme assessment period.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many new road projects have been cancelled by his Department in the last three financial years.

(AQW 35885/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: No road projects have been cancelled by my Department in the last three financial years.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the current value of land assets held by his Department. (AQW 35886/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As of 31 March 2014, the value of land assets held by my Department was £90.8m.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many car parks are owned by his Department.

(AQW 35888/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department owns/operates 358 off-street pay and free car parks, including a number of park and ride/share car parks.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of service delivery and quality of the joint Translink and Bus Eireann x1 Service to Dublin following the utilisation of private contracted companies to part operate this route.

(AQW 35893/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am aware that Bus Eireann use sub-contractors in the provision of the X1/X2 service and have done so for some time as part of their wider operating model. I have yet to be convinced of the merits of this practice and Translink do not use private contracted companies on this service.

I understand from Translink that it has not received any customer complaints made specifically about X1/X2 services provided by Bus Eireann or its sub-contractors and I am satisfied that Translink provides a good service on this route.

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development, over the last five years, how many new road projects have been delayed because of archeological digs.

(AQW 35954/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Two major road scheme projects have been delayed within the last five years because of archaeological investigations:

A32 Cherrymount Link Road, Enniskillen (excavation of a medieval Crannog); and

A26 Ballee Road East to M2 Ballymena Bypass dual carriageway (excavation of an unrecorded Neolithic hilltop enclosure).

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much TransportNI has spent on fuel in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 35956/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of expenditure on fuel, in each of the last three years, are set out in the table below:

2011-12 £k	2012-13 £k	2013-14 £k
2,538	2,676	2,409

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

(AQW 35957/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The amount spent by my Department, including TransportNI, on fuel in each of the last three years is provided below.

Financial Year	Spend on Fuel £000's
2011-12	2,543
2012-13	2,681
2013-14	2,414

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many new sewage pumping stations are required.

(AQW 35983/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The need for new pumping stations arises for two main reasons:-

The rationalisation of wastewater treatment by replacing a treatment works with a pumping station and pumping effluent away for treatment at another location; or

Under certain circumstances where a developer requests that a new development be connected to the public sewerage system. Generally NI Water tries to accommodate this through the provision of a gravity sewer but there are occasions where this is not possible and a pumping station has to be constructed.

In its Business Plan submission for the PC15 period (2015 to 2021) NI Water currently plans to construct eight new pumping stations as part of its rationalisation of treatment works.

The provision of new pumping stations to serve new developments is market driven and it is not possible to estimate the number of pumping stations required.

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development whether (i) recent; or (ii) anticipated future cuts will have any impact on the provision of the 60 Plus SmartPass.

(AQW 36102/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Free travel on public transport for the over 60s and other vulnerable groups is an Executive commitment in the current Programme for Government. It contributes in a very positive way to reducing social isolation for older people and has played an important part in revitalising Public Transport. I fully support the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme, which includes the 60+ Scheme and will continue to argue strongly for it to be retained and adequately funded.

There are around 62,000 active 60+ smart card holders. Last year some 3 million journeys were undertaken by those card holders.

I argued strongly in the June monitoring round that the necessary funding was provided to allay current uncertainty and widespread public concern in regard to the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme. Some funding was provided but this was not at the level requested. I will continue to argue for the full funding to be provided this year and as we move forward.

Department for Social Development

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the loans advanced by his Department through the Financial Transactions Capital Scheme in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) East Londonderry, since 1 April 2013.

(AQW 35265/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The following loans have been advanced by DSD's Housing Division through the Financial Transactions Capital Scheme in Northern Ireland since 1 April 2013:

UK Get Britain Building initiative	Pilot rent to purchase initiative	Pilot empty homes initiative	Total £
7,200,000	5,000,000	3,700,000	15,900,000

The above amounts were advanced to Housing Associations. As Housing Associations may utilise funding across Northern Ireland, the Department does not hold information on the amounts used specifically in East Londonderry.

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development how many (i) Housing Executive and (ii) registered housing association properties have been sold at a discount under the Right to Buy scheme in each council area, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 35676/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive has advised that it does not collate details of houses sold under the Right to Buy scheme by Council Area. The Housing Executive has however provided details of the number of its properties sold to sitting tenants under the Right to Buy scheme by NIHE District Office area, as shown in Table 1 below.

Housing Associations have provided the figures regarding their properties sold under the Right to Buy scheme by Council area, as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 1: NIHE properties sold under Right to Buy Scheme

NIHE District Office Area	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Belfast 1	6	4	4	7	5
Belfast 2	9	5	4	2	14
Belfast 3	4	7	3	6	14
Belfast 4	5	9	8	8	12
Belfast 5	12	15	15	17	18
Belfast 6	7	4	6	6	9
Belfast 7	10	10	5	12	32
Bangor	5	4	6	8	16
Newtownards	6	8	10	8	11

NIHE District Office Area	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Castlereagh	8	3	8	5	15
Lisburn 1 &2	8	10	12	8	31
Lisburn 3	9	5	1	3	9
Downpatrick	9	6	3	3	11
Banbridge	5	6	2	7	13
Newry	10	8	6	12	26
Armagh	16	13	13	12	15
Lurgan/Brownlow	11	12	8	7	21
Portadown	7	6	7	7	9
Dungannon	8	9	5	5	12
Fermanagh	15	8	10	8	18
Ballymena	6	8	6	7	14
Antrim	9	5	8	9	21
Newtownabbey 1	3	9	10	13	17
Newtownabbey 2	4	8	7	5	16
Carrick	8	5	6	11	9
Larne	4	5	0	4	6
Ballycastle	3	4	2	5	2
Ballymoney	6	5	7	6	13
Coleraine	7	11	5	9	10
Londonderry 1	6	4	5	11	10
Londonderry 2	10	8	7	12	21
Londonderry 3	7	4	7	6	24
Limavady	5	3	2	7	11
Magherafelt	5	2	3	3	12
Strabane	10	8	7	15	20
Omagh	9	6	11	10	19
Cookstown	0	2	7	6	13
Total	272	249	236	290	549

Table 2: Housing Association properties sold under the Right to Buy scheme by Council Area, in each of the last five years.

District Council	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Antrim Borough Council	1	2			
Ards Borough Council					2
Armagh City & District Council	2				1
Ballymena Borough Council	1			1	
Ballymoney Borough Council					
Banbridge District Council					1
Belfast City Council	3	6	7	12	18
Carrickfergus Borough Council					3
Castlereagh Borough Council		1			

District Council	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Coleraine Borough Council					
Cookstown District Council					
Craigavon Borough Council			1		
Derry City Council		1	2	12	3
Down District Council	1		1	1	1
Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council					
Fermanagh District Council	1				1
Larne Borough Council					1
Limavady Borough Council	2				2
Lisburn City Council	1			3	3
Magherafelt District Council					
Moyle District Council		1			
Newry & Mourne District Council			3	1	1
Newtownabbey Borough Council					
North Down Borough Council			1		2
Omagh District Council	1	2		1	2
Strabane District Council	2	2			
Totals	15	15	14	29	41

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.

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development why the Union Flag was not flown from Banbridge Social Security Office on 17 July 2014.
(AQW 35700/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister issue a directive to NICS Departments in November of each year which includes a list of the designated days in the next calendar year on which the Union flag must be flown. 17 July 2014 was not a designated day on which the Union flag must be flown.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development how many Comprehensive Development Schemes have been delivered in the last five years, broken down by constituency.
(AQW 35719/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Comprehensive Development Schemes (CDS) comprises a process of land acquisition and disposal to secure the better planning and regeneration of selected areas of towns and cities. They enable the Department to unlock development opportunities by releasing underused or derelict land and buildings.

The numbers of schemes delivered for the last five years (09/10 – 13/14) broken down by parliamentary constituency is detailed in the table attached.

Comprehensive Development Schemes* (2009/10 to 2013/14)

Constituency	Numbers	Constituency	Numbers
East Antrim	0	North Belfast	3
East Belfast	2	North Down	0
East Londonderry	0	South Antrim	0
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	0	South Belfast	2
Foyle	0	South Down	0
Lagan Valley	2	Strangford	0

Constituency	Numbers	Constituency	Numbers
Mid Ulster	0	Upper Bann	2
Newry & Armagh	3	West Belfast	4
North Antrim	0	West Tyrone	0

* A scheme has been defined as delivered with the issue of a development brief

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development how much his Department has spent on Comprehensive Development Schemes in the last five years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 35720/11-15)

Mr McCausland: A Comprehensive Development Scheme comprises a process of land acquisition and disposal to secure the better planning and regeneration of selected areas of towns and cities. They enable the Department to unlock development opportunities by releasing underused or derelict land and buildings.

Departmental expenditure on Comprehensive Development Schemes in the last five years (09/10 – 13/14) broken down by parliamentary constituency is detailed in the table below.

Comprehensive Development Schemes (2009/10 to 2013/14)

Constituency	Expenditure	Constituency	Expenditure
East Antrim	0	North Belfast	£412,636
East Belfast	£780,535	North Down	0
East Londonderry	0	South Antrim	0
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	0	South Belfast	£30,110
Foyle	0	South Down	0
Lagan Valley	£24,000	Strangford	0
Mid Ulster	0	Upper Bann	£405,058
Newry & Armagh	£108,000	West Belfast	£1,554,100
North Antrim	0	West Tyrone	0

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development how many Environmental Improvement Schemes have been delivered in the last five years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 35722/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Environmental Improvement Schemes (EIS) are used to improve the appearance of our towns and cities and to regenerate areas by restoring confidence and attracting new investment.

The numbers of EIS in the last five years (09/10 – 13/14) by parliamentary constituency is detailed in the table below.

Environmental Improvement Schemes – (2009/10 to 2013/14)

Constituency	Number of Schemes	Constituency	Number
East Antrim	2	North Belfast	35
East Belfast	32	North Down	1
East Londonderry	5	South Antrim	2
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	3	South Belfast	17
Foyle	37	South Down	5
Lagan Valley	1	Strangford	4
Mid Ulster	3	Upper Bann	5
Newry & Armagh	7	West Belfast	48
North Antrim	4	West Tyrone	2

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development how much his Department has spent on Environmental Improvement Schemes in the last five years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 35723/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Environmental Improvement Schemes (EIS) are used to improve the appearance of our towns and cities and to regenerate areas by restoring confidence and attracting new investment.

Departmental expenditure on EIS for the last five years (09/10 – 13/14) by parliamentary constituency is detailed in the table below.

Environmental Improvement Schemes (09/10 – 13/14)

Constituency	Expenditure	Constituency	Expenditure
East Antrim	£1,753,531	North Belfast	£4,821,546
East Belfast	£6,440,731	North Down	£2,353,538
East Londonderry	£2,349,758	South Antrim	£1,601,610
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	£2,391,889	South Belfast	£14,668,980*
Foyle	£11,685,166	South Down	£3,545,648
Lagan Valley	£2,372,000	Strangford	£1,655,819
Mid Ulster	£541,984	Upper Bann	£6,055,885
Newry & Armagh	£3,684,536	West Belfast	£11,897,507
North Antrim	£595,293	West Tyrone	£585,000

* The Belfast Streets Ahead project is largely situated within the South Belfast constituency.

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the Environmental Improvement Schemes funded in South Down, in the last five years.

(AQW 35736/11-15)

Mr McCausland: To date my Department has invested funding of £3,547,638.75 in taking forward 4 Environmental Improvement Schemes in South Down. The funding relates to the following schemes:

- Kilkeel town centre £1,298,550
- Downpatrick town centre £2,100,000
- Downpatrick Market Lane £81,700
- Warrenpoint development costs £69,398.75

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development how many neighbourhood wardens are employed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and to detail their (a) location; and (b) function.

(AQW 35766/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive advises that it currently employs 60 Neighbourhood Officers throughout Northern Ireland. The table below details the number of Neighbourhood Officers based across 31 locations.

Office Location	Number of Neighbourhood Officers
Antrim	2
Ards	2
Armagh	2
Ballycastle	1
Ballymena	2
Ballymoney	1
Banbridge	1
Bangor	2
Belfast (Shankill)	3
Belfast (North)	4
Belfast (West)	4

Office Location	Number of Neighbourhood Officers
Belfast (South and East)	6
Carrickfergus	2
Castlereagh	1
Coleraine	1
Cookstown	1
Downpatrick	1
Dungannon	2
Fermanagh	1
Lisburn	4
Lisburn (Dairy Farm)	2
Londonderry(Collon Terrace)	2
Londonderry (Waterloo Place)	1
Londonderry (Waterside)	2
Magherafelt	1
Newry	1
Newtownabbey 1	1
Newtownabbey 2	1
Omagh	1
Portadown	1
Strabane	2
Staff on Career Break	2

The Housing Executive explains that the roles and responsibilities that its Neighbourhood Officers are required to undertake are tailored to the local needs of individual estates, but would be drawn from the following areas: -

Estate Management

- To monitor and identify abandoned properties to local office.
- To monitor void properties and advise local office.
- To monitor and clean communal areas. This will include cleaning duties, Health and Safety checks and assisting maintenance staff as well as tenants.
- To liaise and report repairs to local office. Work will include visits to elderly or vulnerable tenants to assist in accurate reporting of repairs etc.
- To undertake accompanied viewing of 'difficult to let' properties and to assist in securing occupation. To assist in the promotion of the local area including property located within the area. To provide advice on redecoration assistance, should it be required.
- To assist in the provision of an 'on the spot' housing management service and provide advice on Housing Executive housing policies and procedures to tenants.
- To visit with elderly or vulnerable tenants and be able to identify any other agencies which may assist tenants. This would include reference to Health Trust staff, regarding individuals released from care, or Social Workers or PBNI involved in youth work etc.

Environmental Management

- To monitor the condition of open spaces and advise local offices.
- Assist Environmental Health Officers where illegal dumping is an issue (especially if tenants are responsible), and to advise local office.
- To ensure that abandoned cars are removed promptly and maintain accurate records of all incidences and the action taken.
- To work with grounds maintenance and local office staff in addressing environmental issues.
- To provide information on land use on estates and provide a link between communities and the Housing Executive.
- To assist in the identification of planned schemes as well as response grounds maintenance issues.

Estate Security

- To act on local information provided on alleged anti-social behaviour. To make initial contact with tenants, advising of allegations and possible breach of tenancy action. To produce a report on each incident and report incidents to local office management.
- To liaise with the police (where appropriate) on issues of anti-social behaviour and develop a working relationship with community safety officers.
- To work with local communities in addressing anti-social behaviour on the estate.
- To keep accurate records of all cases of anti-social behaviour.
- To assist with dealing with localised neighbourhood nuisance.

Community Development

- To assist the Housing Executive's representatives at residents/community association meetings, deal with tenant queries, produce progress reports on Neighbourhood Officer activity and provide feedback to tenants on general Housing Executive activity on estates.
- To cooperate with community representatives on a range of local issues.
- To provide assistance/information for local manager (nominee) who attends inter-agency meetings etc.
- To cooperate in community development through liaison with the statutory, voluntary and community sector.

Neighbourhood Officers may also undertake other 'scheduled' or 'unscheduled' tasks daily. Scheduled tasks may range from cleaning duties to the monitoring and inspection of vacant properties. Unscheduled tasks would include housing management visits, requests for certain tasks to be carried out and attendance at meetings.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of applications for social housing in East Londonderry in each of the last three years; and (ii) the average time spent on the social housing waiting list.
(AQW 35830/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because due to a recording system change to the Housing Executive's Housing Management System in July 2011 the figures for 2011/12 are not available.

However, the table below provides: -

- details of the total applicants on the waiting list for East Londonderry at 31 March 2013 and 31 March 2014
- the mean average month/median average month calculations.

Waiting List at 31 March 2013			Waiting List at 31 March 2014		
Total Applicants	Mean Average Months	Median Average Months	Total Applicants	Mean Average Months	Median Average Months
1,863	29.5	15.0	1,790	30.5	15.0

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Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development what proposals are being investigated to bridge the £758m investment gap in the Housing Executive landlord function.
(AQW 35834/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Bridging a £758m investment gap presents clear challenges. The Social Housing Reform Programme through its landlord project is embarking on a detailed analysis of the current and future investment needs for the housing stock to determine these future requirements in more detail. The programme in its development of options for delivery of Landlord functions will seek to address how future requirements will be met. In the meantime I will continue to work with the NI Housing Executive to address the current pressing investment needs including the development of an asset management strategy and strategies around tower blocks and non traditional builds.

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the total number of new social housing units constructed in each of the last ten years, broken down by (a) number of bedrooms; and (b) local council area.
(AQW 35866/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive advises that the data is not readily available for New Build completions by the number of bedrooms, but has instead provided figures for New Build starts. The Housing Executive further advises that the number of bedrooms is only available from 2007-2008 onwards.

The information is set out in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Social Housing Starts - by Number of Bedrooms

Programme Year	One-bed	Two-bed	Three-bed	Four-bed	Four-bed+	Shared
2007-2008	77	687	663	90	3	75
2008-2009	15	519	511	67	0	24
2009-2010	110	841	740	94	2	51
2010-2011	86	1,134	1,027	119	4	48
2011-2012	42	635	642	36	7	48
2012-2013	53	658	529	25	3	111
2013-2014	163	710	329	22	0	75
Totals	546	5,184	4,441	453	19	432

Table 2: Social Housing Starts - by District Council

District Council	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Antrim	14	35	41	0	4	5	98	1	57	24
Ards	5	28	13	93	84	150	77	74	17	68
Armagh	23	0	11	0	6	2	44	59	16	0
Ballymena	1	11	0	0	6	48	16	52	75	14
Ballymoney	11	0	0	0	4	9	0	6	5	0
Banbridge	0	38	0	18	16	82	47	6	0	0
Belfast	720	1,003	410	800	275	623	853	384	286	583
Carrick	19	26	5	0	18	12	0	22	0	12
Castlereagh	15	39	78	32	2	34	30	27	79	39
Coleraine	0	40	3	0	1	43	11	17	0	35
Cookstown	0	5	0	3	0	9	5	0	0	0
Craigavon	21	0	4	26	42	53	70	18	0	38
Londonderry	148	60	146	143	160	197	263	211	237	62
Down	30	22	13	12	19	57	220	33	32	32
Dungannon	10	0	22	55	25	133	73	66	24	44
Fermanagh	37	4	45	11	5	97	36	6	24	14
Larne	14	0	0	6	0	24	0	0	16	7
Limavady	1	6	0	16	1	0	0	23	0	0
Lisburn	133	132	96	154	189	32	270	178	149	155
Magherafelt	3	0	0	2	1	6	54	18	42	23
Moyle	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	10	7	0
Newry & Mourne	52	27	34	72	98	61	112	59	151	73
Newtownabbey	5	27	3	32	72	37	96	84	107	58
North Down	29	9	99	77	85	111	15	50	44	18
Omagh	7	7	0	0	0	13	4	6	11	0
Strabane	19	0	9	40	23	0	24	0	0	0
Totals	1,317	1,519	1,032	1,595	1,136	1,838	2,418	1,410	1,379	1,299

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.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development what communication his Department has had with landlords of privately rented properties which qualify for the Affordable Warmth Scheme, to ensure that they are registered with the Landlord Registration scheme, and give consent for energy efficiency improvements to be completed for which they must contribute towards costs.

(AQW 35914/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department launched a public consultation exercise on 17 February 2014 on proposals for a new Affordable Warmth Scheme. It also held 6 public consultation events across Northern Ireland in week commencing 3 March 2014. These events were held in Belfast, Enniskillen, Londonderry, Ballymena, Newry and Coleraine with a total of 100 people attending those events including a number of landlords.

The public consultation "From Fuel Poverty to Achieving Affordable Warmth" included consultation about landlord contribution and registering with the Landlord Registration Scheme. It is a legal requirement for all landlords who let properties under a private tenancy in Northern Ireland to register with the Landlord Registration Scheme. Landlords with an existing tenancy must register with the Landlord Registration Scheme before 25 February 2015.

My Department included the Landlord Association of Northern Ireland in its public consultation by sending it a copy of the public consultation document. Whilst the Landlord Association of Northern Ireland did not formally respond to the public consultation; it has published the Public Consultation "From Fuel Poverty to Achieving Affordable Warmth" on its website.

My Department received a total of 66 responses to the public consultation. Of those who responded to the public consultation about the landlord contribution, 40% agreed that landlords should contribute, 25% were unsure, 20% disagreed and 15% did not specify their preference. Landlords have a responsibility for maintaining the energy efficiency of their property and my Department will monitor the uptake of the Scheme amongst privately rented properties to ensure tenants are not disadvantaged.

The Affordable Warmth Scheme is based on the householder's gross income which must be less than £20,000. Once the householder satisfies the income criteria, the Housing Executive will check if the landlord is registered with my Department's Landlord Registration Scheme and will seek the landlord's permission before commencing any installation work. Once the energy efficiency measures have been installed and Building Control approval received, the Housing Executive will pay the landlord the 50% contribution towards the measures.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the Coleraine Education Project.

(AQW 35942/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Coleraine Education Community Project, funded by DSD's Neighbourhood Renewal Programme has successfully met its targets and has demonstrated improvements in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Literacy and Numeracy. Attendance rates in all the primary schools across the sectors have improved by 1.6%. In the post-primary sector the number of pupils remaining in education at Year 13 has increased well beyond the final year target by just over 10%.

The project has therefore assisted in contributing to the overall objectives of the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme and the tackling of deprivation particularly in the Coleraine neighbourhood renewal areas.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the future support of the Coleraine Education Project.

(AQW 35944/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Coleraine Education Community Project is currently in receipt of funding through the Department of Education's Community Education Initiatives Programme. This funding is due to cease on 31 October 2014.

It was hoped that funding support could be found for the project from the Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund to extend it to 31 March 2015. However, as you will be aware, we are in the midst of a difficult financial environment and as the Neighbourhood Renewal budget is currently fully committed, I am unable to provide any funding for this project.

There is always a possibility that this situation will change and if so, the Coleraine Education Community Project will be considered for further funding support.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development to detail any recent changes to funding commitments made by his Department for Neighbourhood Renewal Projects in East Londonderry.

(AQW 35972/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There have been no recent changes to funding commitments made by my Department for Neighbourhood Renewal Projects in East Londonderry. All projects currently in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal funding will continue to do so, in line with their Contracts for Funding, up to 31 March 2015.

Ms Sugden asked the Minister for Social Development whether departmental funding for Neighbourhood Renewal Projects in East Londonderry will continue in the immediate future, particularly funding for the Coleraine Education Community Project.

(AQW 35973/11-15)

Mr McCausland: All projects currently in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal funding will continue to do so, in line with their Contracts for Funding, up to 31 March 2015.

The Coleraine Education Community Project is currently in receipt of funding through the Department of Education's Community Education Initiatives Programme. This funding is due to cease on 31 October 2014.

It was hoped that funding support could be found for the project from the Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund to extend it to 31 March 2015. However, as you will be aware, we are in the midst of a difficult financial environment and as the Neighbourhood Renewal budget is currently fully committed, I am unable to provide any funding for this project.

There is always a possibility that this situation will change and if so, the Coleraine Education Community Project will be considered for further funding support.

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Magherafelt Public Realm Scheme; and to detail the level of funds committed for the scheme.

(AQW 36058/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Work on the Magherafelt Public Realm Scheme began following the launch of the Magherafelt Masterplan in July 2011. A high level design and economic appraisal has been completed. In May this year, I approved funding of up to £90,000 to bring the scheme up to detailed design. Since then Magherafelt District Council have completed a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire exercise and issued the Invitation to Tender Documents to a select list of consultants to progress the scheme to a detailed design. When the detailed design has been completed my Department and the Mid Ulster Council will have to assess the availability of funding to allow the project to proceed to construction stage.

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 35448/11-15, to detail (i) how many houses have been completed; and (ii) whether there are people living in the houses.

(AQW 36059/11-15)

Mr McCausland: None of the houses listed in the answer to AQW 35448/11-15 have been completed.

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what action his Department is taking to maximise the uptake of social welfare entitlements in North Down.

(AQW 36074/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Through the network of 35 local and centralised offices, my Department provides information and advice on a full range of social security benefits as part of its daily business to make people aware of their entitlements.

In addition, since 2005, the Department has delivered Benefit Uptake Programmes targeting difficult to reach customers such as older people, people with disabilities and people with caring responsibilities. These programmes cover all Northern Ireland council areas and have included direct targeting, mailshots, Outreach services, partnership working and the "Make the Call" advertising campaign. As a result, over £67million of additional annual benefit and arrears has been generated. In the 2013/14 Benefit Uptake Programme, nearly 2,500 people from North Down constituency were offered a benefit entitlement check.

A breakdown of the annual benefit and arrears generated through the Benefit Uptake Programme at Council level is only available from 2010. Since then, £34m has been generated and, the proportion for the North Down constituency, which covers North Down Borough Council area, is over £1.4m

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Social Development what departmental services he has made available to the public via the post office network.

(AQW 36092/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Currently 152,500 claimants have a range of social security benefits paid into the Post Office Card account and claimants can draw their money out at their local Post Office or at an Automated Teller Machine, where available.

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what funding his Department, or any of its arm's-length bodies, provided to the Ardoyne community festival held in August 2014.

(AQW 36204/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department for Social Development, nor its arms length bodies; did not provide any funding to the Ardoyne Community Festival in August 2014

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development what work his Department has carried out in relation to making Wi-Fi available throughout Ballycastle.

(AQW 36303/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Wi-Fi provision within towns is delivered directly by Councils and may be eligible for financial support from the Department if the scheme supports the revitalisation of town centres. To date the Department has not been asked by Moyle District Council to provide any assistance towards making Wi-Fi available in Ballycastle.

Any request for funding contributions to support these schemes would be subject to a satisfactory business case and sufficient resources being available in the Departmental budget.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Mr Flanagan asked the Assembly Commission whether any consideration has been given to including a stipulation in any future procurement contracts that all employees of successful tendering companies be paid at a rate no less than the living wage.

(AQW 35423/11-15)

Mrs Cochrane (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission has not adopted a policy of making the living wage a mandatory condition of contracts at this time. The Commission utilises a series of contractual terms such as working hours, minimum wage, health and safety, etc. to enhance a socially responsible approach to contracting.

However, the case to introduce the living wage as a minimum requirement in contracts is complex. It is worth noting that the Commission's procurement activities amount to approximately £7.5m per annum. By way of background, there are presently only 4 Northern Ireland based companies who pay the living wage (according to the Living Wage Data - September 14). Therefore, adopting a living wage policy has the potential to rule out local suppliers from Assembly contracting.

The Commission, in common with many other public sector bodies, utilises large UK-wide procurement frameworks. As these frameworks were established without reference to the living wage, the adoption of the living wage as a contract condition would have the effect of removing these frameworks as sourcing solutions for the Commission.

The Commission will, of course, continue to focus upon the achievement of value for money and placing sustainability at the core of its procurement activities. We will maintain our focus on fair and equitable conditions of contract including, where appropriate, contract conditions relating to salaries.

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission what assessment has been conducted in respect of any health risk posed by unwrapped mints being offered within the Assembly Chamber in circumstances where they can be handled by multiple members.

(AQW 35824/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): We can confirm that no assessment has been conducted in respect of any health risk posed by unwrapped mints being offered within the Assembly Chamber due to soft mints being classified as low risk food.

Revised Written Answers

This section contains the revised written answers to questions tabled by Members. The content of the responses is as received at the time from the relevant Minister or representative of the Assembly Commission, and it has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process or changed.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Revised Written Answers

Department of the Environment

In this Bound Volume, page WA 43 please replace AQW 35116/11-15 with:

Approvals and Refusals

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 33267/11-15, how many of the 103 applications reviewed have been issued as (i) approvals; and (ii) refusals.

(AQW 35116/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): Further to my response dated 9 July 2014, I can now advise that from the year 2010- 2012 (the period of review) the Department issued 100 Planning Approvals and three Planning Refusals.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

In Bound Volume 96, page WA 38 please replace AQW 33961/11-15 with:

Renal Unit

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients have been repatriated from consultants at the Renal Unit at the Belfast City Hospital to Renal Consultants in other Health and Social Care Trusts in each month of the last two years; and how many were (i) by patient request; and (ii) at the instigation of the consultant.

(AQW 33961/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Since the initial response to AQW 33961/11-15, Belfast Trust has completed a manual review of all patients who have attended the Belfast City Hospital from April 2012 until March 2014.

In total, 101 renal transplant recipients have been repatriated to other units from Belfast City hospital (BCH).

This is always by agreement of all parties (patient, BCH consultant, non-BCH consultant).

In Bound Volume 96, page WA 39 please replace AQW 34015/11-15 with:

ITH Pharma Supplies

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether ITH Pharma supplies either total parenteral nutrition or parenteral nutrition to any Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 34015/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): I have been advised that of the five Health and Social Care Trusts, four purchase adult parenteral nutrition products produced by ITH Pharma either directly from them or indirectly through a third party. One Trust has advised that they also purchase paediatric parenteral nutrition products from ITH Pharma.

All the Trusts have advised that they do not purchase neonatal parenteral nutrition products either directly or indirectly from ITH Pharma.

Department of Justice

In this Bound Volume, page WA 205 please replace AQW 35113/11-15 with:

Serious Case Review

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 34383/11-15, whether he will specifically address the point on the approved residence being in an area of families with young children, and given the victim in the case was a child of the neighbourhood to detail whether (i) this point was considered prior to the approval of residence and due cognisance given to the offender's previous behaviour and targets; (ii) he will amend risk assessments in these instances taking on board vulnerability of potential victims; and (iii) he will tighten residence criteria to remove or reduce reoffending in similar instances. **(AQW 35113/11-15)**

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice):

Part (i)

In any case of this type the consideration of any address for approval will be conducted by the Designated Risk Manager which may be Probation or PSNI. In this case, PSNI as the Designated Risk Manager, considered the address. Factors taken into account in considering an address are offending history, risk factors and proximity to educational establishments. Any proposed address that is in close proximity to a former victim or their family will not be approved.

All agencies involved in the approval of addresses in Northern Ireland face challenges regarding location – particularly in terms of proximity to educational establishments. The vast majority of urban residential areas will have families present to some degree.

Parts (ii) and (iii)

The independent reviewer in this case found that the agencies involved had discharged their responsibilities fully and conscientiously in the management of the offender in the community, including the careful assessment of proposed accommodation prior to approval being granted.

Additionally, the reviewer concluded that given the thoroughness of supervision in the period leading up to the offence it is unlikely that any different assessment of the risk posed could have resulted in different actions being taken which might have prevented reoffending in this case.

Agencies involved in Public Protection recognise that access to suitable accommodation is a significant factor in preventing re-offending and reducing the risk that sex offenders present within the community. Each case is carefully considered and decisions regarding the suitability of accommodation are made following consultation between a number of agencies. The location and type of accommodation will always be determined by the individual offender's circumstances.

Journal of Proceedings

Minutes of Proceedings

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 8 September 2014

The Assembly met at noon, the Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Speaker's Business

2.1 Royal Assent

The Principal Deputy Speaker informed Members that Royal Assent had been signified on 16 July 2014 to the Budget (No. 2) Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

2.2 The late Mr Sam Foster CBE

The Speaker announced the death of Mr Sam Foster CBE, a former Member for the Fermanagh and South Tyrone constituency.

Members paid tribute to Mr Foster on behalf of their parties.

3. Matters of the Day

3.1 The Death of former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds

Mr Martin McGuinness made a statement, under Standing Order 24, in relation to the death of former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds. Other Members were also called to speak on the matter.

3.2 Carl Frampton becoming Super-bantamweight World Champion

Mr William Humphrey made a statement, under Standing Order 24, in relation to Carl Frampton becoming super-bantamweight world champion. Other Members were also called to speak on the matter.

4. Executive Committee Business

4.1 Statement - British Irish Council meeting on Misuse of Substances

The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Edwin Poots, made a statement regarding the British Irish Council meeting on Misuse of Substances, following which he replied to questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

4.2 Statement - The adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

The Minister of the Environment, Mr Mark Durkan, made a statement regarding the adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan.

The statement was suspended for Question Time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

5. Question Time

5.1 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Questions were put to, and answered by, the deputy First Minister Mr Martin McGuinness. The junior Minister, Ms McCann, also answered a number of questions.

5.2 Regional Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Regional Development, Mr Danny Kennedy.

6. Executive Committee Business (Cont'd)

6.1 Statement - The adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (cont'd)

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) took the Chair.

The Minister of the Environment, Mr Mark Durkan, continued with his statement regarding the adoption of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, following which he replied to questions.

7. Committee Business

7.1 Motion – Report on the Inquiry into allegations, arising from a BBC Northern Ireland Spotlight programme aired on 3 July 2013, of impropriety or irregularity relating to Northern Ireland Housing Executive managed contracts and consideration of any resulting actions (NIA 157/11-15)

A valid Petition of Concern was presented under Standing Order 28, on Friday 05 September 2014 in relation to the Motion (Appendix 1).

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the Report of the Committee for Social Development on Phase 1 of its Inquiry into allegations, arising from a BBC NI Spotlight programme aired on 3 July 2013, of impropriety or irregularity relating to NIHE managed contracts and consideration of any resulting actions (NIA 157/11-15), which deals specifically with allegations that the Committee was misled by the Minister for Social Development over his decision to seek a review of the specification for the supply and fitting of double glazing.

Chairperson, Committee for Social Development

Debate ensued.

The Speaker took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **negatived** on a cross-community vote (Division).

8. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 6.12pm.

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA
Principal Deputy Speaker

8 September 2014

Appendix 1

Northern Ireland Assembly

The undersigned Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly presented a Petition of Concern, in accordance with Standing Order 28, on Friday 05 September 2014 in relation to the following motion:

Report on the Inquiry into allegations, arising from a BBC Northern Ireland Spotlight programme aired on 3 July 2013, of impropriety or irregularity relating to Northern Ireland Housing Executive managed contracts and consideration of any resulting actions (NIA 157/11-15)

That this Assembly notes the Report of the Committee for Social Development on Phase 1 of its Inquiry into allegations, arising from a BBC NI Spotlight programme aired on 3 July 2013, of impropriety or irregularity relating to NIHE managed contracts and consideration of any resulting actions (NIA 157/11-15), which deals specifically with allegations that the Committee was misled by the Minister for Social Development over his decision to seek a review of the specification for the supply and fitting of double glazing.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| ■ Mr Sydney Anderson | ■ Mr William Humphrey |
| ■ Mr Jonathan Bell | ■ Mr William Irwin |
| ■ Ms Paula Bradley | ■ Mr Ian McCrea |
| ■ Mr Thomas Buchanan | ■ Mr David McIlveen |
| ■ Mrs Pam Cameron | ■ Miss Michelle McIlveen |
| ■ Mr Gregory Campbell | ■ Mr Adrian McQuillan |
| ■ Mr Trevor Clarke | ■ The Lord Morrow |
| ■ Mr Jonathan Craig | ■ Mr Stephen Moutray |
| ■ Mr Sammy Douglas | ■ Mr Robin Newton |
| ■ Mr Gordon Dunne | ■ Mr Edwin Poots |
| ■ Mr Alex Easton | ■ Mr George Robinson |
| ■ Mrs Arlene Foster | ■ Mr Peter Robinson |
| ■ Mr Paul Frew | ■ Mr Alastair Ross |
| ■ Mr Paul Girvan | ■ Mr Jimmy Spratt |
| ■ Mr Paul Givan | ■ Mr Mervyn Storey |
| ■ Mrs Brenda Hale | ■ Mr Peter Weir |
| ■ Mr Simon Hamilton | ■ Mr Jim Wells |
| ■ Mr David Hilditch | ■ Mr Sammy Wilson |

Northern Ireland Assembly

8 September 2014

Division

Motion – Report on the Inquiry into allegations, arising from a BBC Northern Ireland Spotlight programme aired on 3 July 2013, of impropriety or irregularity relating to Northern Ireland Housing Executive managed contracts and consideration of any resulting actions (NIA 157/11-15)

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the Report of the Committee for Social Development on Phase 1 of its Inquiry into allegations, arising from a BBC NI Spotlight programme aired on 3 July 2013, of impropriety or irregularity relating to NIHE managed contracts and consideration of any resulting actions (NIA 157/11-15), which deals specifically with allegations that the Committee was misled by the Minister for Social Development over his decision to seek a review of the specification for the supply and fitting of double glazing.

Chairperson, Committee for Social Development

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 57

Noes: 36

AYES

Nationalist:

Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mr Dallat, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ni Chuilin, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Unionist:

Mr Allister, Mr Beggs, Mr Copeland, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Elliott, Mr Hussey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCallister, Mr B McCrea, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mr Swann.

Other:

Mr Agnew, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Ford, Ms Lo, Mr Lyttle.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Flanagan and Mr Ó hOisín.

NOES

Unionist:

Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

Total votes	93	Total Ayes	57	[61.3%]
Nationalist Vote	37	Nationalist Ayes	37	[100.0%]
Unionist Votes	50	Unionist Ayes	14	[28.0%]
Other Votes	6	Other Ayes	6	[100.0%]

The Motion was **negatived** on a cross-community vote.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 02 July – 08 September 2014

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly

2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly

3. Orders in Council

4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Probation Board Accounts for Northern Ireland - Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DOJ).

Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company Annual Report and Accounts 2013/14 (DRD).

Report of the Appointed Person in Northern Ireland under Section 291 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 for 2013-2014 (DOJ).

Rivers Agency Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DARD).

Forest Service Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DARD).

Northern Ireland Policing Board Annual Report and Accounts for the Period 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014 (Northern Ireland Policing Board).

Department of Education Annual Report and Accounts for the Year ended 31 March 2014 (DE).

Northern Health and Social Care Trust -Charitable Trust Fund Accounts - for the year ending 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Health and Social Care Board - Annual Report and Accounts - for the year ending 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Public Health Agency - Annual Report and Accounts - for the year ending 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Southern Health and Social Care Trust -Charitable Trust Fund Accounts - for the year ending 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Southern Health and Social Care Trust - Annual Report and Accounts - for the Year Ending 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service - Annual Report and Accounts 2013 – 2014 (DOJ).

Social Security Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2013 – 2014 (DSD).

Northern Ireland Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts 2013 – 2014 (Northern Ireland Prison Service).

Sports Council for Northern Ireland 2013 - 2014 Annual Report and Accounts (DCAL).

Arts Council for Northern Ireland 2013 - 2014 Annual Report and Accounts (DCAL).

Armagh Observatory and Planetarium 2013 - 2014 Annual Report and Accounts (DCAL).

Police Service of Northern Ireland Annual Reports and Accounts 2013-14 (DOJ).

Forensic Science Northern Ireland Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (FSNI).

Invest Northern Ireland Annual Report and Accounts 2013-2014 (DETI).

Youth Council for Northern Ireland Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14 (DE).

Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessments (NICCEA) Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14 (DE).

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14 (DFP).

Council for the Catholic Maintained Schools Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14 (DE).

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Department of the Environment Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Department of Social Development Resource Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Department of Education – Teachers' Superannuation Annual Scheme statements for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Department of Finance and Personnel Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Department of Finance and Personnel – Superannuation and Other Allowances for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Department of Justice Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety – HSC Pension Scheme Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

NI Authority for Utility Regulation Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Northern Ireland Assembly Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards Annual Report and Accounts 2013/2014 (DOE).

Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14 (DARD).

Public Prosecution Service (NI) Annual Report and Accounts 2013/2014 (DOJ).

Western Health and Social Care Trust – Charitable Trust Fund Accounts for year ended 31March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Western Health and Social Care Trust Annual Report and Accounts for year ended 31March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Annual Report and Accounts for year ended 31March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Business Services Organisation Annual Report and Accounts for year ended 31March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Annual Report and Accounts for year ended 31March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Northern Health and Social Care Trust Annual Report and Accounts for year ended 31March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Investment Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (NICTS).

Youth Council for Northern Ireland Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DENI).

Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt – Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Investment Account – Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DOJ).

Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14 (DOJ).

Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Annual Report for the period to 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (Amendment No.3) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DFP).

British Library Annual Report and Accounts 2013/14 (British Library).

Youth Justice Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2013-2014 (DOJ).

SOCA Annual Report and Accounts 2013/14 (DOJ).

Meeting Carbon Budgets - 2014 Progress Report to Parliament - Committee on Climate Change - July 2014 (DOE).

Big Lottery Fund Annual Reports and Accounts for the Financial Year Ended 31 March 2014 (Big Lottery Fund).

The Sports Council for Northern Ireland Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DCAL).

Probation Board Northern Ireland Annual Report 2013-2014 (DOJ).

Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA) Annual Report and Accounts: 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 (GLA).

Courts and Tribunals Annual Report and Accounts 13/14 (DOJ).

Northern Ireland Water Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DRD).

The Patient and Client Council Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ending 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ending 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Northern Ireland Audit Office Annual Report and Accounts 2013-2014 (NIAO).

Office of the First and Deputy First Minister Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (OFMDFM).

Department of Justice Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DOJ).

The State Pathologist's Department for Northern Ireland Report (DOJ).

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority Annual Report and Accounts 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Department of Education – Teacher's Superannuation Annual Scheme Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

Department of Education Resource Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

The Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

DFP Minute on the Direction of Accruing Resources (DFP).

Annual Report of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland for the year ended 31 March 2014 (OFMDFM).

Police Pension Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 (DOJ).

Tourism Ireland Limited Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2013 (DETI).

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency Annual Report and Accounts 2013/14 (DOE).

Health and Social Care Board Annual Report and Accounts for the period ended 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Driver and Vehicle Agency Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DOE).

Draft Social and Environmental Guidance for Water and Sewerage Services (2015-21) (DRD).

Provision of Northern Ireland Water Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DRD).

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Charitable Trust Fund Accounts for the Year Ending 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ending 31 March 2014 (DHSSPS).

PSNI Police Pension Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DOJ).

PSNI Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DOJ).

Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee Annual Report and Accounts 2013/2014 (DOE).

Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust (PRRT)/Futures (NI) Limited – Annual Report and Accounts 2013/14 (DOJ).

5. Assembly Reports

Report into its Inquiry into the Barroso Task Force (NIA 179/11-15) (Committee for the Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister) .

Report on Inquiry allegations, arising from a BBC NI Spotlight programme aired on 3 July 2013, of impropriety or irregularity relating to NIHE managed contracts and consideration of any resulting actions (NIA 157/11-15) (Committee for Social Development).

Report on an investigation into the conduct of Mr Jimmy Spratt MLA (NIA 185/11-15) (Committee on Standards and Privileges).

6. Statutory Rules

S.R. 2014/180 The Bus and Coach Passengers Rights and Obligations (Designation and Enforcement) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

S.R 2014/184 The Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DARD).

S.R. 2014/190 The Planning (Hazardous Substances) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

S.R. 2014/196 The Trade in Animals and Related Products (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DARD).

S.R. 2014/198 The Energy Efficiency Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DETI).

S.R. 2014/199 The U6007 Meadowlands, Downpatrick (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).

S.R. 2014/201 The Lower Galliagh Road Londonderry (Abandonment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).

S.R. 2014/202 The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (Charges) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE) .

S.R. 2014/204 The Pensions (2012 ACT) (Transitional, Consequential and Supplementary Provisions) regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD).

S.R. 2014/206 The Road Passenger Transport (Qualifications of Operators) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

S.R. 2014/208 The Groundwater (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

S.R. 2014/209 The Sea Fishing (Licences and Notices) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DARD).

S.R. 2014/213 The Pensions (2012 Act) (Consequential and Supplementary Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD).

S.R 2014/215 The Health and Personal Social Services (General Medical Services Contracts) (Prescription of Drugs Etc.) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DHSSPS).

S.R 2014/216 The Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

S.R 2014/218 The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (Constitution) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DE).

S.R 2014/219 The Crown Court (Amendment) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOJ).

S.R 2014/220 The Rules of the Court of Judicature (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) 2014 (DOJ).

S.R 2014/221 The Magistrates' Courts (Amendment No. 2) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOJ).

S.R 2014/222 The Criminal Appeal (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Rules 2014 (DOJ).

S.R 2014/223 The Food Information Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DHSSPS).

For Information Only

S.R. 2014/183 The Pensions (2005 Order) (Commencement No. 15) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD).

S.R. 2014/200 The Motor Hackney Carriages (Newcastle) Bye-Laws (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).

S.R 2014/203 The Pensions (2012 Act) (Commencement Order No. 4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD).

S.R 2014/205 The Road Races (Armoy Motorcycle Race) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).

- S.R 2014/210 The Road Races (Craigantlet Hill Climb) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).
- S.R 2014/211 The Parking and Waiting Restrictions (Omagh) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).
- S.R 2014/212 The Road Races (Ulster Grand Prix Bike Week) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).
- S.R 2014/214 The Road Races (Ulster Rally) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).
- S.R 2014/217 The Road Races (Garron Point Hill Climb) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).

7. Written Ministerial Statements

- Capital Investment Advancing New Schools in Planning (DENI).
- Publication of Planning Appeals Commissions Report on the Northern Area Plan 2016 (NAP) (DOE).
- Building a Prosperous and United Community: One Year On (OFMDFM).
- Regulation of the Teaching Profession (DE)
- Public Expenditure 2013-14 Provisional Outturn / 2014-15 June Monitoring Round (DFP)

8. Consultation Documents

- Statutory Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) for Small Scale Technologies (DETI).
- Consultation Paper on the Draft Water Framework Directive (Priority Substances and Classification) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).
- Consultation on a Proposal to Introduce Primary Legislation for the Use of Health and Social Care Service User Identifiable Information for Secondary Purposes in Controlled Circumstances (DHSSPS).
- Consultation - Review of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Wider Tourism Structures July 2014 (DETI).
- Consultation on Draft Waste Management (Amendment No. X) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).
- Consultation on Proposed Changes to Contributions for Members of the NI Teachers' Pension Scheme (NITPS) 2015 (DENI).
- Consultation on the Implementation of Directive 2013/56 – The Draft Batteries and Accumulators (Placing on the Market) (Amendment) 2015 (DOE).
- Consultation on Policy Proposals for a New Fisheries Bill (DARD).
- Consultation Document on Proposed Scheme Governance and Draft Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).
- Consultation on the Draft Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (NI) (DHSSPS).
- Consultation Paper on the Proposal for the Donaghadee Harbour (Transfer of Harbour Undertaking) Order (Northern Ireland) 201* (DRD).

9. Departmental Publications

- 2014 Annual Report on the Concordat between the Voluntary and Community Sector and the Northern Ireland Government (DSD).
- Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland – Annual Report 2013-14 (OFMDFM).
- World Police and Fire Games Annual Report and Accounts for the period ending 24 March 2014 (DCAL).
- Making Life Better - A Whole System Strategic Framework for Public Health 2013 – 2023 (DHSSPS).
- Community Resuscitation Strategy for Northern Ireland (DHSSPS).
- Department of Finance and Personnel Memorandum on the Twenty First and Twenty Second Reports from the Public Accounts Committee Mandate 2011-2015 (DFP).
- Department of Finance and Personnel Memorandum on the Twenty Third Report from the Public Accounts Committee Mandate 2011-2015 (DFP).

Criminal Cases review Commission Annual Report and Accounts 2013/14 (DOJ).

Publication of a Report by the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council of the Effects of Treatment and the Medical Assessment of Chronic Bronchitis and Emphysema (DSD).

10. Agency Publications

11. Westminster Publications

12. Miscellaneous Publications

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta Annual Report and Accounts year ended 31/03/2014 (CnG).

The United Kingdom Sports Council – Grant Aid and Lottery Distribution Fund Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (UK Sport).

General Dental Council Annual Report Accounts 2013 (GDC).

National Lottery Commission Report and Accounts for the six months ended 30 September 2013 (NLC).

Gambling Commission Annual Report and Accounts 2013/14 (GC).

UK Statistics Authority Annual Report and Accounts 2013/14 (UKSA).

UK Anti-Doping Annual Report and Accounts 2013/14 (UKAD).

National Heritage Memorial Fund Lottery Distribution Annual Report and Accounts for the year Ended 31 March 2014 (Heritage Lottery Fund).

National Heritage Memorial Fund Report and Accounts 2013-2014 (National Heritage Memorial Fund).

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 9 September 2014

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Private Members' Business

2.1 Motion – Ardoyne Fleadh

A valid Petition of Concern was presented under Standing Order 28, on Monday 08 September 2014 in relation to the Motion (Appendix 1).

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes with grave concern the remarks made by The Druids and the leading of young people in pro-IRA chanting at the recent Ardoyne Fleadh; and calls for all public funding to be withdrawn from the Ardoyne Fleadh event.

*Mr W Humphrey
Mr N McCausland
Mr A Easton
Mr J Wells*

2.2 Amendment 1

Proposed:

Proposed: Insert after first 'Fleadh;':

'deplores the lack of action by the investigative and prosecuting authorities in respect of the criminal offence of incitement to hatred;'

Mr J Allister

2.3 Amendment 2

Proposed:

Proposed: Leave out all after first 'Fleadh;' and insert:

'denounces sectarianism of any kind; and calls on the Executive to work to ensure that all publicly funded events remain free from sectarianism or hatred of any kind and to implement measures to ensure such events remain open and shared for everyone.'

*Mr C Lyttle
Ms A Lo
Mr S Dickson*

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, Amendment No. 1 **fell** (Division 1).

The Question being put, Amendment No. 2 was **made** (Division 2).

The Question being put, the Motion, as amended, was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

The sitting was suspended at 12.47pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) in the Chair.

3. Question Time

3.1 Social Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Social Development, Mr Nelson McCausland.

3.2 Agriculture and Rural Development

Questions were put to, **and answered by, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs Michelle O'Neill.**

4. Committee Business

4.1 Motion – Report on the Inquiry into the Barroso Taskforce

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes the Report of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (NIA 179/11-15) on its Inquiry into the Barroso Taskforce; and calls on the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to implement the recommendations contained in the Report.

Chairperson, Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

5. Adjournment

Mr Paul Givan spoke to his topic regarding road infrastructure improvements required on Knockmore/Prince William Road in Lisburn known as the Lisburn and Dunmurry 1 Development Area.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 5.12pm

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA
Principal Deputy Speaker

9 September 2014

Appendix 1

Northern Ireland Assembly

The undersigned Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly presented a Petition of Concern, in accordance with Standing Order 28, on Monday 08 September 2014 in relation to the following motion:

Ardoyne Fleadh

That this Assembly notes with grave concern the remarks made by The Druids and the leading of young people in pro-IRA chanting at the recent Ardoyne Fleadh; and calls for all public funding to be withdrawn from the Ardoyne Fleadh event.

- Ms Megan Fearon
- Mr Chris Hazzard
- Mr Cathal Boylan
- Mr Daithí McKay
- Mr Cathal Ó Hoisín
- Ms Michaela Boyle
- Ms Carál Ní Chuilín
- Mr Mickey Brady
- Ms Maeve McLaughlin
- Ms Sue Ramsey
- Mr Raymond McCartney
- Mr Pat Sheehan
- Mr Mitchel McLaughlin
- Mr Seán Lynch
- Ms Caitríona Ruane
- Ms Bronwyn McGahan
- Mr Alex Maskey
- Mr Barry McElduff
- Ms Rosaleen McCorley
- Mr Gerry Kelly
- Mr Declan McAleer
- Mr Oliver McMullan
- Mr John O'Dowd
- Ms Jennifer McCann
- Mr Fra McCann
- Mr Phil Flanagan
- Mrs Michelle O'Neill
- Mr Ian Milne
- Mr Martin McGuinness
- Mr John Dallat
- Mr Seán Rogers
- Mr Alex Attwood
- Mr Fearghal McKinney
- Mr Joe Byrne
- Mr Colum Eastwood
- Mrs Dolores Kelly
- Mrs Karen McKeivitt
- Me Patsy McGlone
- Mr Alban MaGinness
- Mr Dominic Bradley
- Dr Alasdair McDonnell
- Mr Pat Ramsey

Northern Ireland Assembly

09 September 2014
Division 1

Motion – Ardoyne Fleadh – Amendment 1

Proposed:

Insert after first ‘Fleadh;’:

‘deplores the lack of action by the investigative and prosecuting authorities in respect of the criminal offence of incitement to hatred;’

Mr J Allister

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 42

Noes: 42

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Copeland, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Hussey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kinahan, Mr I McCrea, Mr McGimpsey, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr G Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Allister and Mr McNarry.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr McCallister, Mr F McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Milne, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Ms Ruane and Mr Ó hOisín.

The Amendment **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

09 September 2014
Division 2

Motion – Ardoyne Fleadh – Amendment 2

Proposed:

Leave out all after first ‘Fleadh;’ and insert:

‘denounces sectarianism of any kind; and calls on the Executive to work to ensure that all publicly funded events remain free from sectarianism or hatred of any kind and to implement measures to ensure such events remain open and shared for everyone.’

Mr C Lyttle

Ms A Lo

Mr S Dickson

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 44

Noes: 42

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr McCallister, Mr F McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr Mitchel McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mrs Cochrane and Mr Dickson.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Clarke, Mr Copeland, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Hussey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kinahan, Mr I McCrea, Mr McGimpsey, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr G Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

The Amendment was **made**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 09 September 2014

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
Consultation – Draft Equality Impact Assessment for the Proposals for the Reform of the NI Teachers' Pensions Scheme 2015 (DENI).
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 10 September 2014

2011-2016 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13				
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13	3.12.13	10.02.14	18.02.14	25.03.14
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13	26.11.13	28.01.14	25.02.14	10.03.14	28.04.14
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13	11.12.13	11.02.14	24.02.14	04.03.14	28.04.14
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13	27.11.13	14.01.14	27.01.14	04.02.14	11.03.14
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13	05.12.13	04.03.14	25.03.14	07.04.14	12.05.14

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill 27/11-15	16.09.13	24.09.13	11.12.13	04.12.13	20.01.14	28.01.14	11.02.14	11.04.14
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14	20.02.14	18.03.14 & 19.03.14	01.04.14	08.04.14	12.05.14
Road Races (Amendment) Bill 29/11-15	18.11.13	26.11.13	/	/	2.12.13	9.12.13	10.12.13	17.01.14
Reservoirs Bill 31/11-15	20.01.14	04.02.14	04.07.14	24.06.14				
Budget Bill 32/11-15	10.02.14	11.02.14	/	/	17.02.14	18.02.14	24.02.14	19.03.14
Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill 33/11-15	31.03.14	08.04.14	20.06.14	18.06.14				
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	30.11.14					
Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 35/11-15	12.05.14	27.05.14	27.03.15					
Budget (No.2) Bill 36/11-15	09.06.14	10.06.14	/	/	16.06.14	17.06.14	30.06.14	16.07.14
Justice Bill 37/11-15	16.06.14	24.06.14	30.09.14					

**2011-2015 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15	17.06.13 Bill fell. Re-introduced as Bill 30/11-15 (see below)							
Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 26/11-15	24.06.13	23.09.13 & 24.09.13	11.04.14	11.04.14				

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 30/11-15	09.12.13							

/ Bill progressing by accelerated passage

** Please note that any bills that received Royal Assent in the previous session have been removed from the table.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 15 September 2014

The Assembly met at noon, the Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Assembly Business

2.1 Motion: Suspension of Standing Order 20(1)

Proposed:

That Standing Order 20(1) be suspended for 15 September 2014.

*Mr P Weir
Ms C Ruane
Mr P Ramsey
Mr R Swann*

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

3. Assembly Business

The Principal Deputy Speaker announced the death of the former First Minister the Rt Hon The Lord Bannside.

Members paid tribute to Lord Bannside.

4. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly was, by leave, adjourned at 1.37pm as a mark of respect to the late Lord Bannside.

**Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA
Principal Deputy Speaker**

15 September 2014

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 10th September – 15th September 2014

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
 - Northern Ireland Housing Executive 43rd Annual Report 2013/14 (DSD).
 - Department for Employment and Learning Resource Accounts 2013/14 (DFP).
 - Department of Finance and Personnel Superannuation and Other Allowances Resource Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).
 - Department of Finance and Personnel Resource Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).
 - Salmon and Inland Fisheries Annual Reports Covering the Period 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 (DCAL).
 - Health & Safety Executive Northern Ireland Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2013-214 (DETI).
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 16 September 2014

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Public Petition

2.1 Public Petition – Elective Home Education

Mr Mervyn Storey was granted leave, in accordance with Standing Order 22, to present a Public Petition regarding elective home education.

3. Assembly Business

3.1 Motion – Membership for the Committee of the Regions

Proposed:

That this Assembly nominates Ms Megan Fearon as a full member, and Mr Fearghal McKinney as an alternative member on the UK delegation to the Committee of the Regions; and notes that the Northern Ireland Local Government Association has nominated Councillor Trevor Cummings as a full member, and Alderman Arnold Hatch as an alternative member.

*Mr P Weir
Ms C Ruane*

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** with cross-community support *nemine contradicente*.

4. Executive Committee Business

4.1 Statement – Inter-Governmental Agreement on Cooperation on Criminal Justice Matters

The Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford, made a statement regarding the Inter-Governmental Agreement on Cooperation on Criminal Justice Matters, following which he replied to questions.

4.2 Consideration Stage – Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill (NIA 33/11-15)

The Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford, moved the Consideration Stage of the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill.

Twenty two amendments were tabled to the Bill, eight by the Minister of Justice and fourteen by Mr Tom Elliott MLA.

Debate ensued.

Clauses

After debate, Amendment 1 to Clause 1 was **negatived** (Division 1).

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Clause 1 stand part of the Bill.

Amendment 2 was not moved.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Clause 2 stand part of the Bill.

After debate, Amendment 3 to Clause 3 was **negatived** without division.

As Amendment 3 was not made, Amendments 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 were not called.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Clause 3 stand part of the Bill.

Amendment 9 was not moved.

As Amendment 9 was not moved, Amendments 10, 11, and 12 were not called.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Clauses 5 to 13 stand part of the Bill.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Schedule 1 stand part of the Bill.

As Amendment 2 was not moved, Amendment 13 was not called.

The debate was suspended at 12.34pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) in the Chair.

5. Question Time

5.1 Employment and Learning

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry.

5.2 Enterprise Trade and Investment

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton on behalf of the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

5.3 Culture, Arts and Leisure

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, Ms Carál Ní Chuilín.

5.4 Education

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Education, Mr John O'Dowd.

6. Executive Committee Business (cont'd)

6.1 Consideration Stage – Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill (NIA 33/11-15) (cont'd)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

Debate resumed on the Bill.

After debate, Amendments 14 to 18 to Schedule 2 were **made** without division.

As Amendment 2 was not moved, Amendment 19 was not called.

After debate, Amendments 20 and 21 to Schedule 2 were **made** without division.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Schedule 2 as amended stand part of the Bill.

After debate, Amendment 22 to Schedule 3 was **made** without division.

The question being put, it was **agreed** without division that Schedule 3 as amended stand part of the Bill.

The question being put, the Long Title was **agreed** without division.

NIA Bill 33/11-15 stood referred to the Speaker.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) took the Chair.

7. Private Members' Business

7.1 Motion – Altnagelvin Hospital

Proposed:

That this Assembly recognises the importance of Altnagelvin Hospital in delivering excellent healthcare in the North West of Ireland; praises the professionalism and commitment of staff working throughout the Western Health and Social Care Trust; and calls on the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to ensure that the radiotherapy unit and cardiac centre at Altnagelvin Hospital are progressed without delay resulting in the delivery of critical services to the population of the North West.

Mr F McKinney

Mr C Eastwood

Mr P Ramsey

Mr J Dallat

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

8. Adjournment

Ms Maeve McLaughlin spoke to her topic regarding University of Ulster Expansion at Magee Campus.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 7.29pm

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA

Principal Deputy Speaker

16 September 2014

Northern Ireland Assembly

16 September 2014
Division

Consideration Stage – Legal Aid and Coroners’ Courts Bill (NIA 33/11-15) – Amendment 1

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 10

Noes: 77

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Cree, Mrs Dobson, Mr Elliott, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hussey, Mr Kinahan, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Elliott and Mr Swann.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Mr Boylan, Mr D Bradley, Ms P Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Durkan, Mr Easton, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Ms McCorley, Mr I McCrea, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O’Dowd, Mrs O’Neill, Mr P Ramsey, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Rogers, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Dickson and Mr McCarthy.

The Question was **negatived**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 16 September 2014

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
 - S.R. 2014/226 The Jobseeker's Allowance (Maternity Allowance) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD).
 - Draft S.R. The Local Government (Indemnities for Members and Officers) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).
7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 17 September 2014

2011-2016 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13				
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13	3.12.13	10.02.14	18.02.14	25.03.14
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13	26.11.13	28.01.14	25.02.14	10.03.14	28.04.14
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13	11.12.13	11.02.14	24.02.14	04.03.14	28.04.14
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13	27.11.13	14.01.14	27.01.14	04.02.14	11.03.14
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13	05.12.13	04.03.14	25.03.14	07.04.14	12.05.14

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill 27/11-15	16.09.13	24.09.13	11.12.13	04.12.13	20.01.14	28.01.14	11.02.14	11.04.14
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14	20.02.14	18.03.14 & 19.03.14	01.04.14	08.04.14	12.05.14
Road Races (Amendment) Bill 29/11-15	18.11.13	26.11.13	/	/	2.12.13	9.12.13	10.12.13	17.01.14
Reservoirs Bill 31/11-15	20.01.14	04.02.14	04.07.14	24.06.14				
Budget Bill 32/11-15	10.02.14	11.02.14	/	/	17.02.14	18.02.14	24.02.14	19.03.14
Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill 33/11-15	31.03.14	08.04.14	20.06.14	18.06.14	16.09.14			
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	30.11.14					
Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 35/11-15	12.05.14	27.05.14	27.03.15					
Budget (No.2) Bill 36/11-15	09.06.14	10.06.14	/	/	16.06.14	17.06.14	30.06.14	16.07.14
Justice Bill 37/11-15	16.06.14	24.06.14	30.09.14					

**2011-2015 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15	17.06.13 Bill fell. Re-introduced as Bill 30/11-15 (see below)							
Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 26/11-15	24.06.13	23.09.13 & 24.09.13	11.04.14	11.04.14				

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 30/11-15	09.12.13							

/ Bill progressing by accelerated passage

** Please note that any bills that received Royal Assent in the previous session have been removed from the table.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 22 September 2014

The Assembly met at 12.00 noon, the Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Assembly Business

2.1 Authorisation to Exercise Functions

The Principal Deputy Speaker informed Members that he received a letter from the Speaker, advising that under Standing Order 5(2), he has designated the Principal Deputy Speaker, to exercise all of his procedural functions relating to proceedings of the Assembly. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Assembly Library.

3. Matter of the Day

3.1 Scottish Referendum Result

Mr Mike Nesbitt made a statement, under Standing Order 24, in relation to the Scottish referendum result. Other Members were also called to speak on the matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

4. Executive Committee Business

4.1 Statement – North South Ministerial Council Meeting in Aquaculture and Marine Sectoral Format

The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs Michelle O'Neill, made a statement regarding the North South Ministerial Council meeting in Aquaculture and Marine Sectoral Format, held on Friday 27 June 2014, following which she replied to questions.

5. Committee Business

5.1 Motion – Extension of Committee Stage: Justice Bill (NIA 37/11-15)

Proposed:

That, in accordance with Standing Order 33(4), the period referred to in Standing Order 33(2) be extended to 27 March 2015, in relation to the Committee Stage of the Justice Bill (NIA 37/11-15).

Chairperson, Committee for Justice

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6. Private Members' Business

6.1 Motion – Development Proposals from the Western Education and Library Board

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes Development proposals 260, 261 and 262 by the Western Education and Library Board regarding the proposed closure of the Collegiate Grammar School and Portora Royal School; commends the staff and pupils of both schools for the excellent GSCE and A-level results achieved again this year; and requires the Minister of Education to reject the development proposals and seek consensus on the future of these schools with broad community support.

*Lord Morrow
Mrs A Foster*

6.2 Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'Portora Royal School' and insert:

'and the creation of a new school; commends the staff and pupils of both schools for the excellent GCSE and A-level results achieved again this year; and calls on the Minister of Education to ensure that his decision on these development proposals ensures that all of the young people served by the controlled sector in Enniskillen are given equality of access to high quality education, including the provision of a new build for Devenish College.'

*Mr C Hazzard
Ms M McLaughlin
Mr P Sheehan
Mr P Flanagan*

Debate ensued.

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) took the Chair.

7. Question Time

7.1 Office of the First and deputy First Minister

Questions were put to, and answered by, the First Minister the Rt. Hon Peter Robinson. The junior Minister, Mr Bell, also answered a number of questions.

7.2 Minister of the Environment

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of the Environment, Mr Mark H Durkan.

8. Private Members' Business (Cont'd)

8.1 Motion – Development Proposals from the Western Education and Library Board (Cont'd)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

Debate resumed.

The Question being put, the Amendment **fell** (Division 1).

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** (Division 2).

8.2 Motion – Replacement of the Current 2011-2015 Budget

Proposed:

That this Assembly recognises that the 2011-2015 Budget Settlement is unravelling; expresses concern about the impact that the current funding crisis may have on the sick and the vulnerable across Northern Ireland and how this will be further compounded if penalties are passed down from Westminster; accepts that on-going implementation of the current four year Budget is now untenable; and calls on the Executive to bring forward a new Budget, accompanied by a revised Programme for Government which takes account of the new financial environment.

*Mr M Nesbitt
Mr D Kennedy*

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **negatived** (Division 3).

9. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Principal Deputy Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 6.17pm

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA
Principal Deputy Speaker

22 September 2014

Northern Ireland Assembly

22 September 2014
Division 1

Motion – Development Proposals from the Western Education and Library Board – Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'Portora Royal School' and insert:

'and the creation of a new school; commends the staff and pupils of both schools for the excellent GCSE and A-level results achieved again this year; and calls on the Minister of Education to ensure that his decision on these development proposals ensures that all of the young people served by the controlled sector in Enniskillen are given equality of access to high quality education, including the provision of a new build for Devenish College.'

*Mr C Hazzard
Ms M McLaughlin
Mr P Sheehan
Mr P Flanagan*

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 43

Noes: 47

AYES

Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dallat, Mr Dickson, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mrs O'Neill, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Hazzard and Mr Sheehan.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCallister, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

The following Member voted in both Lobbies and is therefore not counted in the result: Mr Agnew.

The Amendment **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

22 September 2014
Division 2

Motion – Development Proposals from the Western Education and Library Board

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes Development proposals 260, 261 and 262 by the Western Education and Library Board regarding the proposed closure of the Collegiate Grammar School and Portora Royal School; commends the staff and pupils of both schools for the excellent GSCE and A-level results achieved again this year; and requires the Minister of Education to reject the development proposals and seek consensus on the future of these schools with broad community support.

Lord Morrow
Mrs A Foster

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 47

Noes: 32

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McNarry, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

NOES

Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr Brady, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mr Hazzard, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lunn, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mrs O'Neill, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Hazzard and Mr Sheehan.

The following Members voted in both Lobbies and are therefore not counted in the result: Mr Agnew, Mr McCallister.

The Motion was **carried**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

22 September 2014
Division 3

Motion – Replacement of the Current 2011-2015 Budget

Proposed:

That this Assembly recognises that the 2011-2015 Budget Settlement is unravelling; expresses concern about the impact that the current funding crisis may have on the sick and the vulnerable across Northern Ireland and how this will be further compounded if penalties are passed down from Westminster; accepts that on-going implementation of the current four year Budget is now untenable; and calls on the Executive to bring forward a new Budget, accompanied by a revised Programme for Government which takes account of the new financial environment.

*Mr M Nesbitt
Mr D Kennedy*

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 19

Noes: 70

AYES

Mr Attwood, Mr Byrne, Mr Copeland, Mrs Dobson, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Mr Gardiner, Mrs D Kelly, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kinahan, Mr McGlone, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Mr A Maginness, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Nesbitt and Mrs Overend.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms P Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr McCallister, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Ms McCorley, Mr I McCrea, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McKay, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs O'Neill, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

The following Member voted in both Lobbies and is therefore not counted in the result: Mr Allister.

The Motion was **negatived**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 17 - 22 September 2014

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
 - Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14 (DHSSPS).
 - DETI Resource Accounts – Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).
 - Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).
5. Assembly Reports
 - NIA 192/11-16 Review of Waiting Times Report (DHSSPS).
 - NIA 193/11-16 Review of Supported Living for Older People in the Context of Transforming Your Care (DHSSPS).
6. Statutory Rules
 - S.R. 2014/228 The Private Crossings (Signs and Barriers) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).
 - S.R. 2014/229 The Level Crossing (McConaghy's) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).
 - S.R. 2014/235 The Social Security (Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance) (Waiting Days) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DSD).
7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
 - Consultation Paper on The Proposals for the Level Crossing (Cullybackey South) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 23 September 2014

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Private Members' Business

2.1 Motion – Persecution of Christians in Iraq and Syria

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes with great concern the widespread persecution and genocide of the Christian minority community in Iraq and Syria; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to take immediate action within the International Community to provide emergency aid and protection for this religious group.

*Mr J Wells
Mr M Storey
Mr D McIlveen*

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

2.2 Motion – Welfare Cuts

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes with deep concern the disastrous impact of welfare cuts in Britain, particularly on the most vulnerable in society including families on low income, those with disabilities and those who are unemployed; asserts that a modern, caring society should place the protection of its most vulnerable citizens at the very top of its agenda; and calls on the Executive to oppose this Tory cuts agenda.

*Mr A Maskey
Mr M Brady
Mr F McCann*

2.3 Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'notes' and insert:

'the negative impact of elements of the current Welfare Reform agenda in Great Britain; welcomes the proposed package developed by the Minister for Social Development in conjunction with the First Minister and deputy First Minister in the summer of 2013, which will mitigate the most negative elements of Welfare Reform; and calls for the implementation of this revised and improved Welfare Reform package for Northern Ireland to avoid the unsustainable cost of opting out of Welfare Reform, which will impact on public services, the most vulnerable in society, including families on low income, people with disabilities, people who are unemployed and the thousands of public servants who will face unemployment.

*Ms P Bradley
Mr T Clarke
Mr G Campbell
Mr S Wilson*

Debate ensued.

The debate was suspended at 12.29pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) in the Chair.

3. Question Time

3.1 Finance and Personnel

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Finance and Personnel, Mr Simon Hamilton.

3.2 Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Mr Edwin Poots.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) took the Chair.

4. Private Members Business (Cont'd)

Motion – Welfare Cuts (Cont'd)

Debate resumed.

The Question being put, the Amendment **fell** (Division 1).

The Question being put, the Motion was **negatived** (Division 2).

5. Adjournment

Mr Sammy Wilson spoke to his topic regarding Northern Ireland Environment Agency disposing of waste tyres in East Antrim.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Principal Deputy Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 5.26pm

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA
Principal Deputy Speaker

23 September 2014

Northern Ireland Assembly

23 September 2014
Division 1

Motion – Welfare Cuts – Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'notes' and insert:

'the negative impact of elements of the current Welfare Reform agenda in Great Britain; welcomes the proposed package developed by the Minister for Social Development in conjunction with the First Minister and deputy First Minister in the summer of 2013, which will mitigate the most negative elements of Welfare Reform; and calls for the implementation of this revised and improved Welfare Reform package for Northern Ireland to avoid the unsustainable cost of opting out of Welfare Reform, which will impact on public services, the most vulnerable in society, including families on low income, people with disabilities, people who are unemployed and the thousands of public servants who will face unemployment.

Ms P Bradley
Mr T Clarke
Mr G Campbell
Mr S Wilson

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 44

Noes: 46

AYES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Ms Lo, Mr McCallister, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Newton, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

NOES

Mr Agnew, Mr Attwood, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mr Copeland, Mr Cree, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Gardiner, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Kinahan, Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr B McCrea, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Nesbitt, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mrs Overend, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr Boylan and Mr Brady.

The Amendment **fell**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

23 September 2014
Division 2

Motion – Welfare Cuts

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes with deep concern the disastrous impact of welfare cuts in Britain, particularly on the most vulnerable in society including families on low income, those with disabilities and those who are unemployed; asserts that a modern, caring society should place the protection of its most vulnerable citizens at the very top of its agenda; and calls on the Executive to oppose this Tory cuts agenda.

Mr A Maskey

Mr M Brady

Mr F McCann

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 36

Noes: 54

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Attwood, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mr Durkan, Mr Eastwood, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mr McKay, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr McKinney, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O'Dowd, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Boylan and Mr Brady.

NOES

Mr Allister, Mr Anderson, Mr Beggs, Mr Bell, Ms P Bradley, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Copeland, Mr Craig, Mr Cree, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Dunne, Mr Easton, Mr Elliott, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Gardiner, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Kinahan, Ms Lo, Mr McCallister, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr B McCrea, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Moutray, Mr Nesbitt, Mr Newton, Mrs Overend, Mr Poots, Mr G Robinson, Mr P Robinson, Mr Ross, Mr Spratt, Mr Storey, Mr Swann, Mr Weir, Mr Wells, Mr Wilson.

Tellers for the Noes: Mr McQuillan and Mr G Robinson.

The Motion was **negatived**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 23 September 2014

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
Department for Regional Development Resource Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
7. Written Ministerial Statements
Planning Policy Statement 15 — Planning & Flood Risk (DOE).
Evaluation of the Individual Funding Request Process (DHSSPS).
Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services (DHSSPS).
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 24 September 2014

2011-2016 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13				
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13	3.12.13	10.02.14	18.02.14	25.03.14
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13	26.11.13	28.01.14	25.02.14	10.03.14	28.04.14
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13	11.12.13	11.02.14	24.02.14	04.03.14	28.04.14
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13	27.11.13	14.01.14	27.01.14	04.02.14	11.03.14
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13	05.12.13	04.03.14	25.03.14	07.04.14	12.05.14

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill 27/11-15	16.09.13	24.09.13	11.12.13	04.12.13	20.01.14	28.01.14	11.02.14	11.04.14
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14	20.02.14	18.03.14 & 19.03.14	01.04.14	08.04.14	12.05.14
Road Races (Amendment) Bill 29/11-15	18.11.13	26.11.13	/	/	2.12.13	9.12.13	10.12.13	17.01.14
Reservoirs Bill 31/11-15	20.01.14	04.02.14	04.07.14	24.06.14				
Budget Bill 32/11-15	10.02.14	11.02.14	/	/	17.02.14	18.02.14	24.02.14	19.03.14
Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill 33/11-15	31.03.14	08.04.14	20.06.14	18.06.14	16.09.14			
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	30.11.14					
Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 35/11-15	12.05.14	27.05.14	27.03.15					
Budget (No.2) Bill 36/11-15	09.06.14	10.06.14	/	/	16.06.14	17.06.14	30.06.14	16.07.14
Justice Bill 37/11-15	16.06.14	24.06.14	27.03.15					

**2011-2015 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15	17.06.13 Bill fell. Re-introduced as Bill 30/11-15 (see below)							
Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 26/11-15	24.06.13	23.09.13 & 24.09.13	11.04.14	11.04.14				

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 30/11-15	09.12.13							

/ Bill progressing by accelerated passage

** Please note that any bills that received Royal Assent in the previous session have been removed from the table.

Northern Ireland Assembly

Monday 29 September 2014

The Assembly met at noon, the Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Speaker's Business

2.1 Ministerial Appointments

The Principal Deputy Speaker informed Members that, on 23 September 2014, Mr Jim Wells had taken up the office of Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and that, on 23 September 2014, Mr Mervyn Storey had taken up the office of Minister for Social Development.

2.2 Committee Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson Nominations

The Principal Deputy Speaker informed Members that the following resignations took effect from 23 September 2014: Mr Mervyn Storey as Chairperson of the Committee for Education; Miss Michelle McIlveen as Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure; Mr Paul Frew as Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development; Mr Jimmy Spratt as Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development; Mr Jim Wells as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety; and Mr William Irwin as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure. The Principal Deputy Speaker also informed Members that, with effect from 23 September 2014, Miss Michelle McIlveen had been nominated as Chairperson of the Committee for Education; Mr Nelson McCausland had been nominated as Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure; Mr William Irwin had been nominated as Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development; Mr Trevor Clarke had been nominated as Chairperson of the Committee for Regional Development; Ms Paula Bradley had been nominated as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety; and Mr Gordon Dunne had been nominated as Deputy Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure and confirmed the appointments.

3. Assembly Business

3.1 Motion – Committee Membership

Proposed:

That Mr Kieran McCarthy replace Mrs Judith Cochrane as a member of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development; that Mr Chris Lyttle replace Mr Kieran McCarthy as a member of the Committee for Regional Development; and that Ms Anna Lo replace Mr Chris Lyttle as a member of the Committee for Employment and Learning, with effect from Monday 29 September 2014.

*Mr S Dickson
Mr T Lunn*

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

4. Private Members' Business

4.1 Motion - Funding for Students Facing Financial Hardship

Proposed:

That this Assembly believes that funding provided for students in financial hardship is vital in ensuring that students, many of whom are experiencing financial independence and budgeting for the first time, are able to continue studying in times of financial difficulty; and calls on the Minister for Employment and Learning to ensure that funding for student support is prioritised for those in greatest need and to ensure that his Department, working proactively with students' union organisations, colleges and universities, makes students aware of the availability of this support and how it can be accessed.

*Mr P Flanagan
Ms B McGahan
Mr F McCann*

Debate ensued.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) took the Chair.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

4.2 Motion – Postal Charges

Proposed:

That this Assembly expresses concern at the continuing existence of barriers to greater north-south economic development; fully recognises the importance of a reliable, affordable and effective postal delivery service, particularly to micro and small businesses; further recognises the findings in the recent Ofcom Communications Market Report whereby 47 per cent of people questioned felt that the current costs of posting a letter across the border represented poor value for money; further expresses concern at the significant additional cost differential and time delay to deliver post intended for across the border; calls for all companies and agencies involved in postal delivery to introduce a single pricing structure for mail being delivered anywhere on the island of Ireland; and further calls for the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to raise this matter at a forthcoming meeting of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) when it meets in Trade & Business Sectoral Format and to use the NSMC to exert maximum pressure on the above companies and agencies.

*Mr P Flanagan
Ms M Fearon*

4.3 Amendment

Proposed:

Leave out all after 'small businesses;' and insert:

'expresses concern at the threat to the viability of rural post offices that direct delivery competition presents and the significant additional cost differential and time delay to deliver cross border mail; and calls on the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to assist businesses by working in conjunction with her North South Ministerial Council colleagues and her counterparts in the Westminster Government to ensure the long term viability of a universal postal service which incorporates a value for money cross border service.'

*Mr P McGlone
Mr J Dallat
Mr D Bradley*

Debate ensued.

The debate was suspended for Question Time.

The Principal Deputy Speaker (Mr McLaughlin) took the Chair.

5. Question Time

5.1 Justice

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford.

5.2 Employment and Learning

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Employment and Learning, Dr Stephen Farry.

6. Private Members' Business (Cont'd)

6.1 Motion – Postal Charges (Cont'd)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

Debate resumed.

The Question being put, the Amendment was **made** without division.

The Question being put, the Motion, as amended, was **carried** without division.

7. Adjournment

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Principal Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 3.57pm

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA

Principal Deputy Speaker

29 September 2014

Northern Ireland Assembly

Papers Presented to the Assembly on 24 September – 29 September 2014

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly

2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly

3. Orders in Council

4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Arts Council of Northern Ireland's Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2014 (DCAL).

Northern Ireland Census 2011 Key Statistics Summary Report (DFP).

Public Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended 31 March 2014 (DFP).

5. Assembly Reports

Report on Tackling Social Housing Tenancy Fraud in Northern Ireland (NIA 197/11-16) (Public Accounts Committee).

6. Statutory Rules

S.R. 2014/225 The Health and Personal Social Services (Superannuation), Health and Social Care (Pension Scheme) (Amendment No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DHSSPS).

S.R. 2014/227 The Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

S.R. 2014/230 The Road Traffic Offenders (Additional Offences) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

S.R. 2014/231 The Road Traffic (Fixed Penalty) (Offences) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

S.R. 2014/232 The Road Traffic (Fixed Penalty) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

S.R. 2014/233 The Road Traffic (Financial Penalty Deposit) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

S.R. 2014/234 The Road Traffic (Financial Penalty Deposit) (Appropriate Amount) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DOE).

S.R. 2014 236 The Prohibition of Waiting (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).

S.R. 2014/237 The Parking Places (Disabled Persons' Vehicles) (Amendment No.4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (DRD).

7. Written Ministerial Statements

Executive's Response to the Agri-Food Strategy Board's Going for Growth report (DETI/DARD)

Joint statement by Interdepartmental Ministerial Group on Modern Slavery to mark Anti Slavery Day (DOJ)

8. Consultation Documents

Consultation on Guidance on Planning Element of Councillors' Code of Conduct (DOE).

UK-wide Consultation on Complying with the European Union Third Directive (EU3D) on Driving Licences – 2006/126/EC (DOE).

Research for Better Health and Social Care - Draft for Consultation (DHSSPS).

9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly

Tuesday 30 September 2014

The Assembly met at 10.30am, the Principal Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

1. Personal Prayer or Meditation

Members observed two minutes' silence.

2. Executive Committee Business

2.1 Further Consideration Stage – Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill (NIA 33/11-15)

The Minister of Justice, Mr David Ford, moved the Further Consideration Stage of the Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill.

Two amendments were tabled to the Bill.

Debate ensued.

Clauses

After debate, Amendment 1 to Clause 2 was **made** on division (Division 1).

After debate, Amendment 2 to Clause 3 was **negatived** on division (Division 2).

Bill (NIA 33/11-15) stood referred to the Speaker for consideration in accordance with section 10 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

3. Private Members' Business

3.1 Motion – Investigation of Allegations of Abuse at Kincora Boys' Home

Proposed:

That this Assembly notes with deep concern the allegation of sexual abuse that took place in Kincora Boys' Home during the 1970s and 1980s; further notes allegations that senior politicians, military personnel, paramilitary figures and businessmen from Northern Ireland and Great Britain were involved both in the commissioning and subsequent cover-up of the abuse, as well as allegations that members of the intelligence service were complicit in a cover-up of this scandal; believes that the nature and seriousness of the allegations, especially that MI5 were involved in a cover-up, means that this cannot be adequately considered in any way other than a Westminster Government-led inquiry; and urges the Home Secretary to include Kincora Boys' Home in the inquiry by Fiona Woolf as the most appropriate means of achieving truth and justice.

*Mr C Lyttle
Mrs J Cochrane
Mr S Dickson
Mr K McCarthy*

Debate ensued.

The sitting was suspended at 12.33pm.

The sitting resumed at 2.00pm, with the Deputy Speaker (Mr Dallat) in the Chair.

4. Question Time

4.1 Social Development

Questions were put to, and answered by, the Minister for Social Development, Mr Mervyn Storey.

4.2 Agriculture and Rural Development

Questions were put to, **and answered by, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs Michelle O'Neill.**

5. Private Members' Business (Cont'd)

5.1 Motion – Investigation of Allegations of Abuse at Kincora Boys' Home (Cont'd)

Debate resumed.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs) took the Chair.

5.2 Motion – Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Team

Proposed:

That this Assembly recognises the tremendous achievement of the entire Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games team at the recent Glasgow Games, in particular the boxing team; congratulates all those involved; and calls on the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to urgently reassess other sports which might be expected to excel in the 2018 Commonwealth Games and ensure the appropriate training, resources and facilities are in place to maximise our medal return in 2018.

Mr G Campbell

Mr W Irwin

Miss M McIlveen

Mr D Hilditch

Debate ensued.

The Question being put, the Motion was **carried** without division.

6. Adjournment

Mr Cathal Ó hOisín spoke to his topic regarding Adequate Sporting Provision in Dungiven.

Proposed:

That the Assembly do now adjourn.

The Principal Deputy Speaker

The Assembly adjourned at 5.51pm

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin MLA

Principal Deputy Speaker

30 September 2014

Northern Ireland Assembly

30 September 2014
Division 1

Further Consideration Stage – Legal Aid and Coroners’ Courts Bill (NIA 33/11-15) – Amendment 1

Proposed:

Clause 2, Page 2, Line 18

At end insert – '(2)The selection of the person to be so designated must be on the basis of merit through fair and open public competition.'

Mr T Elliott

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 46

Noes: 33

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Allister, Mr Attwood, Mr Beggs, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Mr D Bradley, Mr Brady, Mr Byrne, Mr Dallat, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Hazzard, Mrs D Kelly, Mr G Kelly, Mr Lynch, Mr McAleer, Mr McCallister, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCartney, Ms McCorley, Dr McDonnell, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr McGlone, Mr M McGuinness, Mrs McKeivitt, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr A Maginness, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Mr Nesbitt, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O’Dowd, Mrs Overend, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Elliott and Mr Nesbitt.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Ms P Bradley, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Ms Lo, Mr Lyttle, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCausland, Mr I McCrea, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Mr McQuillan, Lord Morrow, Mr Poots, Mr P Robinson, Mr Spratt, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mrs Cochrane and Mr McCarthy.

The Amendment was **made**.

Northern Ireland Assembly

30 September 2014
Division 2

Further Consideration Stage – Legal Aid and Coroners’ Courts Bill (NIA 33/11-15) – Amendment 2

Proposed:

Clause 3, Page 2, Line 27

After ‘directions’ insert ‘, issued under this section or under any other statutory provision,’

Mr T Elliott

The Question was put and the Assembly divided.

Ayes: 21

Noes: 61

AYES

Mr Agnew, Mr Allister, Mr Attwood, Mr Beggs, Mr D Bradley, Mr Byrne, Mr Dallat, Mr Eastwood, Mr Elliott, Mrs D Kelly, Mr McCallister, Dr McDonnell, Mr McGlone, Mrs McKeivitt, Mr A Maginness, Mr Nesbitt, Mrs Overend, Mr P Ramsey, Mr Rogers, Ms Sugden, Mr Swann.

Tellers for the Ayes: Mr Elliott and Mr Nesbitt.

NOES

Mr Anderson, Mr Boylan, Ms Boyle, Ms P Bradley, Mr Brady, Mrs Cameron, Mr Campbell, Mr Clarke, Mrs Cochrane, Mr Craig, Mr Dickson, Mr Douglas, Mr Easton, Dr Farry, Ms Fearon, Mr Flanagan, Mr Ford, Mrs Foster, Mr Frew, Mr Girvan, Mr Givan, Mrs Hale, Mr Hamilton, Mr Hazzard, Mr Hilditch, Mr Humphrey, Mr Irwin, Mr G Kelly, Ms Lo, Mr Lynch, Mr Lyttle, Mr McAleer, Mr F McCann, Ms J McCann, Mr McCarthy, Mr McCartney, Mr McCausland, Ms McCorley, Mr I McCrea, Mr McElduff, Ms McGahan, Mr M McGuinness, Mr D McIlveen, Miss M McIlveen, Ms Maeve McLaughlin, Mr McMullan, Mr McQuillan, Mr Maskey, Mr Milne, Lord Morrow, Mr Newton, Ms Ní Chuilín, Mr Ó hOisín, Mr O’Dowd, Mrs O’Neill, Mr Poots, Mr P Robinson, Ms Ruane, Mr Sheehan, Mr Spratt, Mr Weir.

Tellers for the Noes: Mrs Cochrane and Mr McCarthy.

The Amendment **fell**.

Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill

Annotated Marshalled List of Amendments

Further Consideration Stage

Tuesday 30 September 2014

Amendments tabled up to 9.30 am Thursday, 25 September 2014 and selected for debate

Amendment 1 [Made on division]

Clause 2, Page 2, Line 18

At end insert -

'(2) The selection of the person to be so designated must be on the basis of merit through fair and open public competition.'

Mr Tom Elliott

Amendment 2 [Negatived on division]

Clause 3, Page 2, Line 27

After 'directions' insert ', issued under this section or under any other statutory provision,'

Mr Tom Elliott

Northern Ireland Assembly

**Papers Presented to the Assembly on
30 September 2014**

1. Acts of the Northern Ireland Assembly
2. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly
3. Orders in Council
4. Publications Laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly
5. Assembly Reports
6. Statutory Rules
Draft S.R. 2014/000 – The Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.
7. Written Ministerial Statements
8. Consultation Documents
9. Departmental Publications
10. Agency Publications
11. Westminster Publications
12. Miscellaneous Publications

Northern Ireland Assembly Legislation:

Stages in Consideration of Public Bills

First Stage: Introduction of Bill.

Second Stage: General debate of the Bill with an opportunity for Members to vote on its general principles.

Committee Stage (Comm. Stage): Detailed investigation by a Committee which concludes with the publication of a report for consideration by the Assembly.

Consideration Stage (CS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, the details of the Bill including amendments proposed to the Bill.

Further Consideration Stage (FCS): Consideration by the Assembly of, and an opportunity for Members to vote on, further amendments to the Bill.

Final Stage: Passing or rejecting of Bill by the Assembly, without further amendment.

Royal Assent.

Proceedings as at 1 October 2014

2011-2016 Mandate

Executive Bills

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Marine Bill 5/11-15	21.02.12	05.03.12	06.07.12	05.07.12	30.04.13	13.05.13	21.05.13	17.09.13
Welfare Reform Bill 13/11-15	01.10.12	09.10.12	19.02.13	14.02.13				
Education Bill 14/11-15	02.10.12	15.10.12	08.04.13	08.04.13				
Planning Bill 17/11-15	14.01.13	22.01.13	07.06.13	06.06.13	24.06.13 & 25.06.13			
Tobacco Retailers Bill 19/11-15	15.04.13	23.04.13	18.10.13	09.10.13	3.12.13	10.02.14	18.02.14	25.03.14
Carrier Bags Bill 20/11-15	03.06.13	11.06.13	30.11.13	26.11.13	28.01.14	25.02.14	10.03.14	28.04.14
Financial Provisions Bill 22/11-15	17.06.13	01.07.13	13.12.13	11.12.13	11.02.14	24.02.14	04.03.14	28.04.14
Public Service Pensions Bill 23/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	29.11.13	27.11.13	14.01.14	27.01.14	04.02.14	11.03.14
Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill 24/11-15	17.06.13	25.06.13	13.12.13	05.12.13	04.03.14	25.03.14	07.04.14	12.05.14

Title & NIA Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill 27/11-15	16.09.13	24.09.13	11.12.13	04.12.13	20.01.14	28.01.14	11.02.14	11.04.14
Local Government Bill 28/11-15	23.09.13	01.10.13	20.02.14	20.02.14	18.03.14 & 19.03.14	01.04.14	08.04.14	12.05.14
Road Races (Amendment) Bill 29/11-15	18.11.13	26.11.13	/	/	2.12.13	9.12.13	10.12.13	17.01.14
Reservoirs Bill 31/11-15	20.01.14	04.02.14	04.07.14	24.06.14				
Budget Bill 32/11-15	10.02.14	11.02.14	/	/	17.02.14	18.02.14	24.02.14	19.03.14
Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill 33/11-15	31.03.14	08.04.14	20.06.14	18.06.14	16.09.14	30.09.14		
Work and Families Bill 34/11-15	28.04.14	12.05.14	30.11.14					
Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 35/11-15	12.05.14	27.05.14	27.03.15					
Budget (No.2) Bill 36/11-15	09.06.14	10.06.14	/	/	16.06.14	17.06.14	30.06.14	16.07.14
Justice Bill 37/11-15	16.06.14	24.06.14	27.03.15					

**2011-2015 Mandate
Non-Executive Bills**

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 25/11-15	17.06.13 Bill fell. Re-introduced as Bill 30/11-15 (see below)							
Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 26/11-15	24.06.13	23.09.13 & 24.09.13	11.04.14	11.04.14				

Title & Bill Number	First Stage	Second Stage	Comm. Stage to Conclude	Report Ordered to be Printed	CS	FCS	Final Stage	Royal Assent
Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bill 30/11-15	09.12.13							

/ Bill progressing by accelerated passage

** Please note that any bills that received Royal Assent in the previous session have been removed from the table.

